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# The Routledge Handbook of Architecture, Urban Space and Politics, Volume I Violence, Spectacle and Data

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Routledge

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# THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF ARCHITECTURE, URBAN SPACE AND POLITICS, VOLUME I

For architecture and urban space to have relevance in the 21st Century, we cannot merely reignite the approaches of thought and design that were operative in the last century. This is despite, or because of, the nexus between politics and space often being theorized as a representation or by-product of politics. As a symbol or an effect, the spatial dimension is depoliticized. Consequently, architecture and the urban are halted from fostering any systematic change as they are secondary to the event and therefore incapable of performing any political role. This handbook explores how architecture and urban space can unsettle the unquestioned construct of the spatial politics of governing.

Considering both ongoing and unprecedented global problems – from violence and urban warfare, the refugee crisis, borderization, detention camps, terrorist attacks to capitalist urbanization, inequity, social unrest and climate change – this handbook provides a comprehensive and multidisciplinary research focused on the complex nexus of politics, architecture and urban space. Volume I starts by pointing out the need to explore the politics of spatialization to make sense of the operational nature of spatial oppression in contemporary times. The operative and active political reading of space is disseminated through five themes: Violence and War Machines; Security and Borders; Race, Identity and Ideology; Spectacle and the Screen; and Mapping Landscapes and Big Data.

This first volume of the handbook frames cutting-edge contemporary debates and presents studies of actual theories and projects that address spatial politics. It provides comprehensive and multidisciplinary research focused on the complex nexus of politics, architecture and urban space and will be of interest to anyone seeking to meaningfully disrupt the reduction of space to an oppressive or neutral backdrop of political realities.

**Nikolina Bobic** is an academic and an architect. After completing her PhD in Architecture at the University of Sydney (Australia), she moved to the UK and is now based at the University of Plymouth. Apart from her extensive experience in teaching in Australia, Hong Kong and the UK, Bobic has also given lectures in the Netherlands and New Zealand. Engaging with the two disciplines in which she is trained, architecture and sociology, her research addresses the intersections of power, politics, and space in their oppressive and liberatory mechanisms. Bobic is the author of *Balkanization and Global Politics: Remaking Cities and Architecture* (Routledge, 2019), and in 2020 she coedited *Interstices: A Journal of Architecture*

and *Related Arts* thematic issue 20 'Political Matters'. She is also the coeditor of *The Routledge Handbook of Architecture, Urban Space and Politics, Vol I: Violence, Spectacle and Data* (2022) and *The Routledge Handbook of Architecture, Urban Space and Politics, Vol II: Ecology, Social Participation and Marginalities* (forthcoming 2023).

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THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK  
OF ARCHITECTURE, URBAN  
SPACE AND POLITICS,  
VOLUME I

Violence, Spectacle and Data

*Edited by Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi*

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# CONTENTS

<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xix</i>

## **PART I**

### **Introduction** **1**

- 1 Spatialization of oppression: Contemporary politics of architecture and the urban 3  
*Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi*

## **PART II**

### **Violence and war machines** **27**

- 2 Introduction to violence and war machines 29  
*William M. Taylor*
- 3 The rise of zoöpolitics: On urbanism and warfare 45  
*Lieven De Cauter*
- 4 The 2015 Paris terrorist attack: A threat to urban life and territorial integrity 57  
*John Hanna*
- 5 Whose vision, which city?: Planning and unseeing in urban Asia 76  
*Redento B. Recio, Ishita Chatterjee, Lutfun Nahar Lata and Neeraj Dangol*
- 6 Architecture as infrastructure: The spatial politics of extractivism 94  
*Hélène Frichot and Sepideh Karami*

7	Manus Prison: The brutality of offshore detention <i>Daniel Grincer</i>	107
<b>PART III</b>		
<b>Security and borders</b>		<b>127</b>
8	Introduction to security and borders <i>Anoma Pieris</i>	129
9	Dialogic dilemmas: Citizen participation in built environment alterations in Malmö, Sweden <i>Gunnar Sandin</i>	140
10	Regenerating Shanghai through urban spatial design?: The limits to experimentalism and participation <i>Yunpeng Zhang and Weilun Zhang</i>	155
11	The city and the camp: Destabilizing a spatial-political dichotomy <i>Irit Katz</i>	171
12	Architectures of motion at the US–Mexico border <i>Thomas Nail</i>	187
13	Belfast’s ‘peace walls’: How the politics and policy of 1969–1971 shaped the city’s contemporary ‘interface areas’ <i>James O’Leary</i>	203
<b>PART IV</b>		
<b>Race, identity and ideology</b>		<b>221</b>
14	Introduction to race, identity and ideology <i>Stephen F. Gray and Anne Lin</i>	223
15	The space of labor: Racialization and ethnicization of Port Kembla, Australia <i>Mirjana Lozanovska</i>	233
16	The audit: Perils and possibilities for contesting oppression in the heritage landscape <i>Catherine D’Ignazio, Wonyoung So and Nicole Ntim-Addae</i>	250
17	The persistent design-politics of race: Power and ideology in American public housing redevelopment <i>Lawrence J. Vale</i>	267

18	The socialist past is a foreign country: Mass housing and uses of heritage in contemporary Eastern Europe <i>Maroš Krivý</i>	285
19	Collectivity and privacy in housing: Path dependencies and limited choices <i>Tahl Kaminer</i>	301
<b>PART V</b>		
<b>Spectacle and the screen</b>		<b>317</b>
20	Introduction to spectacle and the screen <i>Francesco Proto</i>	319
21	A ‘crisis’ of indeterminacy in the architectural photograph: Architectural spectacle and everyday life in the photography of Lacaton & Vassal’s Coutras House <i>Robin Wilson</i>	330
22	Mediated spectacles: Urban representation and far-right propaganda in crisis Athens <i>Aikaterini Antonopoulou</i>	346
23	Street protest and its representations: Urban dissidence in Iran <i>Farzaneh Haghighi</i>	361
24	Western fantasy and tropical nightmare: Spectacular architecture and urban warfare in Rio <i>Pedro Fiori Arantes and Cláudio Rezende Ribeiro</i>	379
25	The political construction of Medellín’s global image: Strategies of replacement, erasure and disconnection via urban and architectural interventions <i>Christina Deluchi</i>	395
<b>PART VI</b>		
<b>Mapping landscapes and big data</b>		<b>415</b>
26	Introduction to mapping landscapes and big data <i>Ate Poorthuis</i>	417
27	The sociocultural construction of urban wasteland: Mapping of the Antwerp Southside <i>Cecilia Furlan and Manola Colabianchi</i>	427



*Contents*

28	Brownfields as climate colonialism: Land reuse and development divides <i>Shiloh Krupar</i>	446
29	The bomb, the circle and the drawing undone <i>Endriana Audisho and Francesca Hughes</i>	463
30	Infrastructures of urban simulation: Digital twins, virtual humans and synthetic populations <i>Farzin Lotfi-Jam</i>	479
31	Posthuman urbanism: Datafication, algorithmic governance and Covid-19 <i>Ignas Kalpokas</i>	496
	<b>PART VII</b>	
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>509</b>
32	Intermission: Critical mappings of spatial politics and aesthetics <i>Stephen Walker</i>	511
	<i>Bibliography</i>	527
	<i>Index</i>	592

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# PART I

## Introduction



# 1

## SPATIALIZATION OF OPPRESSION

### Contemporary politics of architecture and the urban

*Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi*

Considering both ongoing and unprecedented global problems – from the refugee crisis, the US–Mexico border, terrorist attacks, detention camps, numerous worldwide urban demonstrations, to climate change, the housing crisis and the coronavirus pandemic – the lack of comprehensive and multidisciplinary research focused on the nexus of politics, architecture and the urban is surprising. There have been a number of exemplary studies concerned with the spatialization of *politics*; however, what is missing is a wide-lens discussion. Current studies tend to treat architecture and the urban as an instrument of power,<sup>1</sup> focus on a single theory for a very limited audience<sup>2</sup> and/or interrogate neoliberalism as the only malicious force responsible for such crises.<sup>3</sup> Such studies also mainly draw upon examples from the so-called Global North (particularly Western European and Anglophone contexts) and consequently remain limited in their geographical and institutional reach.<sup>4</sup> This handbook addresses the identified gaps and maps and connects the complex spatial trajectories of *politics* across multidisciplinary fields while covering diverse geographical and socioeconomic contexts. The gap in the literature was first identified through a conference and an edited journal issue. In July 2019, we organized an international conference, *Political Matters: Spatial Thinking of the Alternative*, at The University of Auckland in New Zealand. An aspect of this conference included facilitating workshops and discussions with the presenters as well as the audience, which subsequently informed the coedited and peer-reviewed journal *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* on the same theme as *Political Matters*, published in December 2020. This process was foundational to the handbook, as it enabled some of the identified thematic concerns, collaborators and reviewers to be brought into this project. As well as the global list of contributors in these handbooks, when necessitated, we engaged in Zoom discussions with some of the collaborators, which further helped shape the focus and narrative.

A number of other critical handbooks have been written on architecture and the urban, all of which are commendable in their own right. *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (2012), for example, is successful beyond its novel methodological process of production as the sectional topics open up a breadth of themes that assist in understanding the theorization of architecture.<sup>5</sup> Although the *SAGE Handbook* notes that architectural theory has been largely Anglo-American, its rectification is minimal, with the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand amounting to only about six papers. At the urban level, we have the *Oxford Handbook of Urban Politics*, also



published in 2012, which addresses urban and political links across myriad examples and issues, from policy to sustainability; however, the focus remains on the US and Europe.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the urban tends to be understood through population growth and the densification of cities. Another example is the *Routledge Companion to Critical Approaches to Contemporary Architecture* (2019), which aims to define the architecture and spatial practices of the 21st Century from a broad range of critical perspectives (including architecture, art history, urbanism, geography, media studies, environmental studies and sociology).<sup>7</sup> This *Companion*, however, does not clarify what such *critical approaches* may be and reads as a collection of essays with no instructions for use; that is, there is no attempt to ‘guide’ the reader through particular connections nor to suggest particular conclusions.

*The Routledge Handbook on Architecture, Urban Space and Politics: Volumes I and II* exceed these two limitations. Emerging and established contributors from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and practices (from art, fashion, environmental science, geography and international relations through to architecture and urbanism) present chapters that engage with an expanded geographical reach (from the so-called Global North to the alleged Global South) and utilize multidisciplinary methodologies (from ethnographic to theoretical). The chapters in this first volume of the handbook situate the question of architecture/urban and politics in various contexts, including Australia, Brazil, China, Columbia, East Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, India), Eastern Europe (Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia), Iran, Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland, the UK, the US and Western Europe (France, Sweden, Greece, Belgium). The significant geopolitical regions that are not covered in the first volume are Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Oceania; however, they are discussed in Volume II. The large scope of this project necessitates two volumes, something advocated and supported by the anonymous reviewers of the proposal for this project and welcomed by Routledge. As such, we invite readers to use the two volumes together for a more holistic global perspective. Nevertheless, and despite all efforts, the focus remains disproportionately on the so-called Global North. We identify ten themes through which the nexus between architecture, urban space and politics may be understood. In Volume I: *Violence and War Machines; Security and Borders; Race, Identity and Ideology; Spectacle and the Screen; Mapping Landscapes and Big Data*; and in Volume II: *Events and Dissidence; Biopolitics, Ethics and Desire; Climate and Ecology; Urban Commons and Social Participation; Marginalities and Postcolonialism*. Additionally, there is an introduction to each theme before a collection of chapters with a culminating conclusion to each volume.

This being said, our handbook is not the first to critically look at architecture or the urban and is not all-inclusive (from topics to geographical contexts). However, it is the first that spans across two volumes to investigate the complex spatial trajectories of *politics*. In Volumes I and II, we frame cutting-edge contemporary debates and present studies of actual projects that address spatial politics. For architecture and the urban to have relevance in the 21st Century, our position is that we cannot merely reignite the approaches of thought and design that were operative in the last century. Moreover, we can no longer afford to reduce them to a neutral backdrop of political realities. Architecture and urban space should be understood as political forces in and of themselves. There is explicit evidence of the inherent role that architecture and the urban play in numerous human-made crises. In Volume I, where each chapter was at least double-blind peer-reviewed, we first start by pointing out the need to investigate the complex politics of spatialization to make sense of the operational nature of spatial oppression in our contemporary times. To understand the nexus between politics and space, architecture and the urban have to be redefined. Without this reformulation, we argue, it is impossible to understand the political role of architecture and urban space, whether oppressive, affirming, neutral or liberational.

Our overall aim, across the two volumes, is to investigate how space can actively constitute political realities by offering real alternatives and fostering new forms of identification, while enabling the overturning of complicity and allowing difference to be expressed. To do so, however, we first need to better understand how architecture and the urban are used as tools for oppression. As such, the first volume of this handbook addresses the ways in which architecture and urban space are oppressed by, struggle against, operate within or are constructed by politics; the forthcoming second volume will specifically seek to foster more liberatory forms of architecture and the urban. Volume I examines modes of oppression through the five themes stated above. Each theme starts with an introduction on the topic written by established and emerging scholars, including William M. Taylor, Anoma Pieris, Stephen F. Gray and Anne Lin, Francesco Proto and Ate Poorthuis, respectively. These introductions provide a survey of key historical and current issues around each topic, through multiple case studies and theories, and are written in an accessible way particularly for undergraduate students while also briefly describing the relevance to each chapter. This volume is concluded by Stephen Walker.

### **Why do we need to rethink the politics of spatialization now?**

Our 21st Century contemporary situation is uniquely characterized by pervasive forms of neoliberalism, the declining role of nation-states, the rise of transnational corporations, new forms of surveillance, new aesthetics of extreme violence facilitated by techniques of media and broadcasting, the displacement of surplus humans produced by an economy of global violence and never-ending wars infiltrating every aspect of our societies – many of these characteristics were given a new visibility by the coronavirus global pandemic – and, at the time of writing this chapter, the erupting violence in Ukraine. Architecture and urban space are not only implicated within these forms of power, but more importantly are essential tools for the perpetuation of violence, segregation, inequity and surveillance. This is the focus of this handbook. By ‘contemporary,’ we draw upon the philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s definition of the term, that is, to sustain a particular relationship with our time while also keeping a distance from it in order not to get blinded by its lights, but to see the darkness of the present too.<sup>8</sup> However, such distance is not reserved for critical thinkers alone: it must be accessible to all who are willing to be political subjects.

Neoliberalism, as a new chapter of capitalism which generates its own new crises, is undoubtedly one of the key and ongoing characteristics of our times. As pointed out by the political theorist Wendy Brown, neoliberalism may not only be about “economizing everything”; it also tends to be a moral anti-democracy project.<sup>9</sup> Neoliberalism is not just about ending social regulation and wealth redistribution, or the removal of the obstacles that interfere with the market, nor a reaction to economic distress. In the name of the free market, neoliberalism eliminates democratic processes, marketizes politics and replaces legislated social justice with traditional morality.<sup>10</sup>

It is common knowledge that architecture and urban projects are highly tied to economies because of the way they are produced. For architect and critical theorist Nadir Lahiji, architecture is embedded in capitalism and has embraced the neoliberal economy and its ideologies since the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Architectural theorist Douglas Spencer expands on this idea by suggesting that although the architecture of the late 1990s and early 2000s claimed to be dynamic and counter to dominant hierarchies, it was indeed deeply intertwined with, and reinforced by, neoliberal capitalism. In fact, it was used as a tool for refashioning human subjects into compliant figures, such as student-entrepreneurs, citizen-consumers and team-workers – a prerequisite for the global implementation of neoliberalism.<sup>12</sup> Hence, our 21st Century world is marked by an economic

model which might be an anti-democratic moral project well-supported by architectural and urban productions. However, *neoliberalism is not the only evil to be put on the table* – although it is the most obvious one. We argue that war and violence, as well as perception and aesthetics may be oppressive regulators and, as such, politically affect access to space, resources and information.

Borders, for example, have the capacity for violence, because they divide and segregate certain classes and ethnicities of people and are deployed as tools to fabricate information. The state narratives claim that borders are a natural part of the human world that they have to be militarized in order to keep the insiders safe against an outside threat. However, borders perpetually produce the violence that surrounds them.<sup>13</sup> Borders may increase the chances of injury or death in the process of crossing; they deprive the poor of access to wealth, resources and various opportunities that are enclosed and guarded by the security infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> To feel secure has become more essential than being free, which is a contradiction of the neoliberal order. For the philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe, a society of security aims to “control and govern the modes of arrival” rather than to affirm freedom.<sup>15</sup> And borders – to be understood as processes, not just things – are clear manifestations of this contradiction. However, borders should not be reduced to a symbol or a symptom because they provide a space for racial segregation and annulling certain lives. Mbembe captures this idea well by defining the concept of ‘borderization’ as:

the process by which certain spaces are transformed into uncrossable places for certain classes of populations, who thereby undergo a process of racialization; places where speed must be disabled and the lives of a multitude of people judged to be undesirable are meant to be im-mobilized if not shattered.<sup>16</sup>

Our time is also marked by the rise of transnational corporations as a new form of governmentality that comes with the capacity to intensify inequality at a global scale and colonize every aspect of life with far-reaching and unprecedented surveillance technologies. One can see it clearly in the rapid change in information and surveillance technologies. For the Marxist sociologist Manuel Castells, the information age in the 21st Century is marked by a new mode of informational and global production. We are also dealing with *surveillance capitalism* that profits from the collecting and selling of our behavioral patterns, as theorized by social psychologist and philosopher Shoshana Zuboff. For Zuboff, surveillance capitalism is an unprecedented market form, a coup from above, that operates inside the digital milieu in which we are only raw material. To reemphasize, we are no longer products of the system, we are raw material *for* and *of* it. The system monetizes our every move online, commodifies human nature, and then sells the behavioral data to customers interested in “prediction products.”<sup>17</sup> Eventually, surveillance capitalism modifies our behavior toward profitable outcomes. The dark side of it would be, for example, when these “prediction products” are sold to health-insurance companies that use data to exclude certain people from accessing healthcare.

Violence imposed on certain groups of people, facilitated by surveillance capitalism is, according to the philosopher Slavoj Žižek, systematic. Žižek defines different types of violence based on their degree of visibility to us. For example, the catastrophic effects of economic and political systems is the least visible form of violence and one that goes unnoticed due to the eruptions and effects becoming normalized within economic and political systems.<sup>18</sup> While it is important to consider the oppressive side of control societies, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze reminds us to ask who benefits from these sociotechnological mechanisms of control.<sup>19</sup> For example, by suggesting that cities have always been smart and intelligently built, anthropologist Shannon Mattern frames the idea of the ‘smart city’ as a catchphrase that is used by property

developers, technology providers and civic authorities to sell us certain products or claims.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the excessive production of big data, made possible and supported by “algorithmic governmentality” (“big data” usually means anything that can be digitized and recorded), conceals who is making profit from it and hides the level of surveillance that it enables.<sup>21</sup> What we lose as a result of this algorithmic governmentality, Mattern argues, is the exposure to alterity, something that was easily accessible and possible when one wandered physically through a city.

It is possible to believe that the smart city agenda is indeed here to enable greater transparency of information, security and better access to infrastructure. Simon Marvin and Andres Luque-Ayala suggest that “companies such as IBM, Hitachi and Cisco are increasingly targeting the urban market”<sup>22</sup> through the rhetoric of smart urbanism by implementing the technologies of the corporate sector, and under the pretext that the smart software/hardware will “improve the quality of urban services while making the city more efficient and sustainable.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, the unspoken agenda is that these digital platforms are nothing other than a new city-scale system of operation imagined to establish new typologies and hierarchies of information as well as to map and predict their connections. For the urbanists Marvin and Luque-Ayala, the impetus for such interconnectivity is informed by the desire to establish a system of total control.<sup>24</sup> The smart city agenda is the new horizon of governing. It is there to establish the standards for the empirical cataloging and classifying of data to understand the relations between humans and nonhumans; however, such knowledge informs the imminent digital geographies of incarceration.

We are living in an era of “new visibility of extreme violence” facilitated by techniques of media and broadcasting.<sup>25</sup> According to the philosopher Étienne Balibar, the new technologies simultaneously cover and uncover extreme violence, and as such, they do not necessarily provide better access to reality, because they actively exclude certain events. The role of media – including how certain events are represented, framed or dismissed – is investigated by the philosopher Judith Butler who questions how images work, how they assault our senses, given that “the senses are the first target of war.”<sup>26</sup> Both Balibar and Butler go beyond a mere focus on the role of media in representing the various kinds of extreme violence; Balibar points out that violence circulates between economics and politics,<sup>27</sup> and what is produced as a result is “life zones” and “death zones” separated by a “superborder.”<sup>28</sup> As a result, there are surplus humans that can be, or should be, thrown away. Violence is not new. What makes our era different is that extreme violence has become more visible to us while creating an illusion that we have access to the whole story – which we do not. All images and narratives are strategically framed to serve hijacked political ideals.

Deciphering the ways through which violence operates, or the ways through which spatial tools are deployed for the perpetuation of violence, is not always simple or self-evident. The writings of the urbanist, cultural theorist and aesthetic philosopher Paul Virilio suggest as much. Virilio observes that the political landscape of cities is informed by war and militarization.<sup>29</sup> For the human geographer Stephen Graham, post-Cold War cities, from infrastructure networks to public spaces, are indeed fertile contexts where both military and terrorist violence are (re)produced.<sup>30</sup> The sociologist Paul Hirst affirms this by noting that space is not a neutral “container”; it shapes how human armed conflicts are fought. This becomes even clearer if we think of space (from temples to railway networks) as something to be conquered and deployed in war-making.<sup>31</sup> The city is deployed as a creator and regulator of violence.

Softer versions of violence were seen in the transformation of cities from the 17th Century onward. Cities were imagined as being able to respond to various problems through the perception of them as either efficient or inefficient machines or bodies that were healthy or ill.<sup>32</sup> Given the belief that all social issues could be addressed by redesigning cities and their infrastructure, the social became implicated with the civic and, as such, a sphere of politics. However, that such modes

of regulation were not exclusive to the city proper were seen with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which "turned utopia inside out," as the principles of regulation in the citywide transformation were implemented into architecture proper.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, for the architectural historian and critic Antony Vidler, modern architecture is inseparable from the conquests of modern urban planning. For Vidler, "[t]he great age of confinement" corresponded with using institutions such as prisons, schools and hospitals to protect "society against its own peculiarities."<sup>34</sup> Authority was placed at the center, and the transformation of cities and architecture was interconnected through regulation.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, architecture has historically been a nexus of space and oppression. We see this in the earliest theorization of architecture, the treatise of Vitruvius, where a relationship between the dwelling (the structure) and the inhabitant (the body) was established, alongside instructions on the design of war machines, such as *ballistae* (bolt-throwers) and catapults. The 'Vitruvian body' was under attack from its inception. Even if we neglect reading the chapters of Vitruvius dedicated to war machines, the much-repeated image of a man inscribed in Euclidean geometry that we have come to call 'Vitruvian man' was itself the imposition of a standard of measure thrust over all bodies and buildings to come. The normalization of a body whose geometry did not correlate to any existing human body continued with the modular body of Le Corbusier's Modulor. Here the body and the architecture were simultaneously deployed to promote the virtues of the machine in the name of efficiency, hygiene and standardization. At the level of the city, normalization has historically been implemented through a system of gathering, cataloging, organizing and publishing truths that perpetuate inequity.<sup>36</sup> Evidence of this is found in the social disadvantages documented in detail through field surveys and the science of statistics, or the ways in which the early 20th Century Chicago School of Urban Sociology empirically analyzed crime, urban poverty and social relations. Certainly, the urban was seen to have economic and political implications. Le Corbusier's utopian urban plans were social reformers, and the reformation was a scientific process that required standardization. Despite the focus of modernism on standardization and functionality, even furniture design was produced only through craftsmanship, with restricted access to products by the wider social fabric. Indeed, products of modernism were mass-produced after the style was modified and practiced at an international level in what became known as the International Style. Undeniably, governance is intimately connected with architecture and the urban.

More recently, the intimate relations of the urban and industry are manifested in Laleh Khalili's writings on international relations, where she points to maritime ports as "the clearest distillation of how global capitalism operates today."<sup>37</sup> She argues that our time is marked by contemporary global capitalism, with China as its factory fueled by oil derived primarily from the Arabian Peninsula. In total, 90% of the world's goods manufactured in this factory travel by ship, hence the significance of maritime trade, logistics and hydrocarbon transport. The resulting system of maritime transportation and trade is not, she writes, "an enabling adjunct of trade but is central to the very fabric of global capitalism."<sup>38</sup> The invisible borders at sea, maritime transportation and ports are sites where racial labor hierarchies are maintained to reinforce colonial regimes of profit, law and administration.<sup>39</sup> Violence also operates through mundane spaces we hardly notice. The architectural and urban designer and educator Michal Sorkin notes an increased insecurity manifested in barricades placed in front of buildings and public spaces such as airports, and by parents who track their children using GPS in constant fear of the 'other,' showing the reverse effect of demand for security in the aftermath of 9/11 and the war on terror.<sup>40</sup> Here, we should point out that although architecture can influence human behaviors, it is not always deterministic as Michel Foucault reminds us.<sup>41</sup> Architecture can support the exercise of power, as evident in the example of the panopticon, but there is nothing inherent in the form that guarantees liberation or oppression.<sup>42</sup>

The phenomenon of governance and borderization in our time has gone beyond border walls and is manifested in urbanization. Spatial regulatory frameworks at an urban scale can be instruments that reinforce social, class, race and gender divisions, as evident in the zoning of Los Angeles,<sup>43</sup> or an instrument of warfare, as evident in urban development in Beirut in anticipation of a near-future armed conflict.<sup>44</sup> Borderization can also lead to the rise of ghettoization and slums, which, according to the Marxist historian Mike Davis, are conditions of neoliberalism and symptoms of economic and political inequality.<sup>45</sup> The 1990s saw urban dwellers become the majority of the world's population,<sup>46</sup> and nearly a billion were living in slums. The result of this is an ever "deepening polarization of cities, caused by neoliberal globalization, [which in turn] is providing many conditions that are ripe for extremes of civil and militarized violence."<sup>47</sup> From the automation of urban warfare to the ways in which the military operates in urban terrain and the ways in which military battlefield techniques find their way into popular video games, the line between war and peace is fuzzy. Creativity has merged with defense, and the Pentagon and Hollywood work side by side.<sup>48</sup> To a great extent, the world of culture has been hijacked. For example, much of the wealth of the Guggenheim Foundation is due to its violent ties with global mining and resource extraction in the Congo and Chile; its legacy of power and control is concealed under the global branding of buildings designed by star architects all around the world. The Guggenheim Museum has depoliticized the space of the museum by defining it solely as a zone for aesthetics.<sup>49</sup> We can no longer distinguish news from noise or trust museums when they are sponsored by arms manufacturers, as noted by the filmmaker and writer Hito Steyerl who questions the plausibility of making in this context.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as 'the masses,' we are given freedom of expression, yet we are not given the right to change the legitimized model.<sup>51</sup>

### **The importance of politics in relation to architecture and urban space**

Discussing politics is impossible without discussing its relation to space. Exclusion, colonization, division, warfare, denial of access to space or staging a politically constructed rhetoric are all inherently spatial. The literary critic, philosopher and Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson notes:

[E]verything about the discussion of architecture itself is now political; and also that political discussion somehow seems quite impossible without reference to architecture, that is, to space generally, to the way the urban is organized, to the way geopolitics is organized.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, organization of space has become an inevitable part of any political practice. In the complex unfolding of contemporary politics, architecture and the urban are tied to an entangled web of violence; image production; colonization; discrimination on the basis of gender, sex and ethnicity; and the already established evils of neoliberalism. To treat space and the spatial as empty or neutral seems to deny the lived experience of space as a contestation. Violence continues to be integral to the exercise of political systems and is most explicit when it reduces complexity. For the architect and architectural theorist Mark Wigley, there is "no space without violence and no violence that is not spatial."<sup>53</sup> We see this violence operating on a geopolitical level. The formation of nation-states in the seventeenth century was contingent on balkanization (decentralization/fragmentation) through the artificial construction of borders. While on the one hand, the invocation of liberty and humanity during the French Revolution coincided with mass killing, on the other hand, sovereign states were created by uniting citizens based on factors such as language or common descent; newly created states were largely ethnically homogeneous.

Evidence of decentralization is also seen on an urban level for purposes of creating enclaves, or as a spatial strategy to control racial diffusion, for example, the “browning of America.”<sup>54</sup> The desire for homogeneity results in a discriminatory regime that allows the state to label certain acts as violent on the pretext of promoting justice and peace. For example, post 9/11, placing anyone who looked Arabic under notable scrutiny at US borders was permissible, as it was done in the name of security. Likewise, the change in planning regulations post 9/11 was facilitated in the name of homeland security, morality and emergency preparedness. Values such as justice and freedom have been taken for granted, with their framework and social implementation often unquestioned.

For Deleuze and his psychoanalyst collaborator Félix Guattari, there is no empty, neutral or ‘background’ space in which violence and war is perpetrated. Indeed war results only when sedentary space “striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures” runs up against nomad space which is “smooth, marked only by ‘traits’ that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory.”<sup>55</sup> The point is that space cannot be differentiated from its occupations and expressions. In Northern Ireland during ‘the Troubles,’ the main prison in which republicans were held was called the ‘H-blocks’ by the Protestant population and ‘The Maze’ by the Catholics. It is not that the space was a singular thing named in two different ways. It was, in this context, two very different spaces, depending on which side of the war one found oneself. Overall, terms such as ‘terrorism’ and ‘state intervention’ are near meaningless and merely political assignations that seek to codify different spatialities associated with violence. The architect and spatial/visual theorist Eyal Weizman suggests that when morality is exercised in the name of justice, it is a little like a “criminal being able to solve a crime.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, it is not about justice but the immanence of law as its ability to announce and define the guilty from those who are not. Thus, power is contingent on reducing complexity and monopolizing the narrative whereby violence is used to justify actions for the justice-oriented purposes of those who hold power. Enacting violence is connected to the perpetuation of justice and morality, exercised in the name of peace.<sup>57</sup> Thus, for the smooth space to become codified, the government deploys the military to maintain peace, thus ensuring it is maintained only through violence and war.<sup>58</sup>

Although violence is not new, and even though space is never completely smooth and uncoded, what makes it unique in our times is the pivotal role of the media in any information war:<sup>59</sup> the recruitment of the audience is linked to a theater of spectacle. The critical theorist Samuel Weber likens the nexus of theater and violence to a stage on which violence is enacted and is never completely contained.<sup>60</sup> For the spectacle to operate, “images must appear to be clearly localizable [... and ...] appear to be intelligible in and of themselves, without requiring the spectator to look elsewhere.”<sup>61</sup> This was evident in the reporting of the Gulf War, whereby CNN provided the first live coverage of a conflict in the world – a war constructed as a spectacle for spectators of a consumer society. For the sociologist Jean Baudrillard, there was an absence of ‘real’ images of the Gulf War, meaning that what *actually* took place is not known given the construction of distant images and loose narratives that accompanied it.<sup>62</sup> History was inscribed ‘live.’ The reporting of this war was mediated by digital technologies that were later deployed in schools of architecture with direct impact on architectural representations.<sup>63</sup>

We live in an age of myth, with mainstream broadcast media being the most powerful medium in this fabrication. Virilio likens the media screen to Alzheimer’s disease, in that it “collapses memory’s close-ups and cancels the coherence of our fleeting impressions.”<sup>64</sup> It projects a frictionless, slippery and flat world that stretches “from shipping ports to airports, from banking software GUIs (graphical user interfaces) to web browser layout engines and data security protocols,”<sup>65</sup> enacted in the name of info terror, where fabricated information is used to justify the military/policy response to terrorism.<sup>66</sup> In this frictionless and tenuous vacuum

of information, an obedient culture is established through a crisis of meaning. Yet, meaning can be rediscovered through humanitarian interventions undertaken in response to the crisis.<sup>67</sup> For Virilio, both the Kosovo and Iraq wars were waged with electronic counter-measures,<sup>68</sup> this was multimedia warfare from a distance that enabled a twisted narration of what actually took place. For example, during the Kosovo humanitarian intervention,

[t]he U.S. Airforce destroyed the countryside, bridges, electric power plants, etc., but according to these figures provided by NATO, they destroyed only thirteen tanks, twenty tank transporters, and some fifty or so vehicles – all that for a bombardment that lasted seventy-eight days with one thousand sorties – four hundred in the beginning and one thousand in the end.<sup>69</sup>

On home turf, the screen is used to create support for such *humanitarian* responses, through a combination of fear and entertainment.<sup>70</sup> While there are more channels, the news sources are not only reduced in complexity but also homogenized. This age of myth dominated by global broadcasting media has created its spectators, the consumer society. As famously theorized by the philosopher and filmmaker Guy Debord, image is the final form of commodity. We are ideologically manipulated by the mass media to buy the appearances they produce. Being drawn into this spectacle means that images produced in this mass culture colonize our unconscious.<sup>71</sup>

The unceasing production of images, and the freedom to produce them, is reminiscent of Benjamin's philosophical critique of the mechanical reproduction of works of art. While he notes that the unique existence of a work of art disappears in a plurality of copies, he also maintains that the "growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process."<sup>72</sup> Benjamin likens this to fascism, which gives the masses freedom of expression but not the right to change property relations.<sup>73</sup> Consequently class relations cannot change – relations that reduce people to wage laborers and create a society in which the masses can wear a dress on which "Tax the Rich" is painted but they still cannot *tax* the rich. Here, we are referring to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's gown at the Met Gala 2021.

Architecture and urban space are intrinsically political not only because they are a mechanism for the organization of people in space or used as objects for a consumer society, but also because aesthetics plays a key role in the production of politics. It is philosopher Jacques Rancière who reveals the commonality between aesthetics and politics by arguing that both delimit "the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the thinkable and the unthinkable, the possible and the impossible."<sup>74</sup> Aesthetics are not about art theory or art;<sup>75</sup> aesthetics are what constitute a sensible experience that distinguishes those allowed or able to share this experience.<sup>76</sup> For example, similar to a kind of literacy, one requires a level of knowledge to understand, appreciate or enjoy an architectural monument – just as one needs to know what facilitates safety, wellbeing or participation in a neighborhood. If a person cannot make sense of what is a good city, what is a bad one, what is a good home, what is not, then that person is excluded from a life of informed decisions and participation in society. To be a political subject, a person must have access to equally distributed common knowledge. Without this experience, a person cannot be a political subject and thus remains voiceless and invisible. At a basic level, the aesthetic experience can also be understood through the lens of experiential access to space and sights. For example, the 35-kilometer-long highway in Paris – Boulevard Périphérique – which separates the city from the suburbs, has a very uneven logic of access to the Paris municipality. Those living in the wealthiest western suburbs have visual access when they enter the city because they can use the bridges that cross over the highway, while those citizens who live in the precarious and



marginalized northern suburbs use underground tunnels. This is an unconscious experience captured in Matthieu Kassovitz's 1995 film, *La Haine*, and dramatized in the Paris riots of 2005.

Those who are relegated to the margins, and are forced to participate in 'silence,' are those who have been colonized and discriminated against. Investigating the spatial contours of racism and sexism that create injustice in urban life and urban space, and juxtaposing this with the way in which architecture contributes to the formation of national identity, produces an excellent example of politics at play. For bell hooks, our current period of postmodernity and its rhetoric of openness, difference and rejection of one size fits all veils the presence and continuation of injustice and power relations.<sup>77</sup> Architecture, for example, maintains an "inherently patriarchal" value system.<sup>78</sup> It operates within the intersection of oppressive systems of gender, class, race and sexual domination.<sup>79</sup> The marginalization of women in architectural practice is called a "tragedy" by the architectural historian Despina Stratigakos,<sup>80</sup> who traces the absence of women from architecture back to the 19th Century.<sup>81</sup> However, their lack of presence does not mean that women have not been fighting to achieve equality – quite the opposite. However, the ongoing gender discrimination in architecture is because the profession's gendered borders have remained near-invisible and impenetrable.<sup>82</sup> This absence has been enforced by various regimes, including but not limited to missing female role models, lack of representation of female architects in popular culture, the politics of prize-giving, erasure of women architects from historical records and lack of public awareness about the deep-rooted bias against women architects. Indeed, the politics of space is always sexual,<sup>83</sup> and architecture has a multifarious role in the construction of gendered identities or sexed subjectivities.

Architecture as a system of representation is particularly gendered. It can construct women as the object of the gaze of men. We have only to think about the architecture of Adolf Loos and his earlier work, such as Steiner House (1910) and Rufer House (1922), where the gaze is directed inward toward the interior, and a traditional everyday domestic life is framed by the architecture; to his later work, such as Müller House (1930) and the House for Josephine Barker (1928); and the staged photographs of Le Corbusier's works, such as Villa Garache (1927), Villa Savoye (1929) and Immeuble Clartè (1932). The gendered nature of architecture has been well examined by the architectural historian Beatriz Colomina, whose psychoanalytical analysis of space shows that the organizing geometry of architecture is not gender neutral.<sup>84</sup> Architecture is an active constitutive element that produces gendered subjects by creating spaces in which gendered identities perform and are made visible,<sup>85</sup> influencing our sense of gender.<sup>86</sup> As architectural theorist Hilde Heynen points out, while modernity located women in the domestic realm, men were placed in the public sphere.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, the development of skyscrapers has been accompanied by the deployment of phallic language such as shaft and tip to describe various parts of the structures.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the development of cities in the 19th and 20th Centuries had a direct impact on gender. Looking at the same period from a different perspective shows that despite factories being tied to the regulation and governance of the working class, they also offered the opportunity for women to enter the workforce and participate in paid labor, meaning that they attained a level of independence. However, such a move toward independence had an impact on the cleanliness of homes, and this was perceived as a gender-based domestic failure.<sup>89</sup>

While advocacy for equal rights has continued in various waves of feminism, it is now self-evident that not only do architecture and the urban have a role in the construction of gendered subjects, they also have an inherently discriminatory structure that remains a subject of contention. If architecture does not respond to gender diversity, it runs the risk of being a marginal profession.<sup>90</sup> During the 1990s, developing ways forward through changes in policies and standards in the US was a responsibility largely assigned to the American Institute of Architects, Equal Employment Opportunities Commission or the universities. However, even if equitable numbers were achieved,

spurred by the establishment of charters such as the Athena SWAN in 2005, we still run the risk of entering 'corporate feminism' territory, in which the glass ceiling has apparently been eliminated and women have attained the right to earn as much as men. However, this ultimately fosters only the universalization of gender and the structuring of power,<sup>91</sup> rather than challenging the very construct of gender.

That inequities in education are more than gender-deep is the investigative focus of architectural scholar Carla Jackson Bell. Bell shows that African American architects have been made invisible throughout architectural history, theory and practice.<sup>92</sup> One of the ongoing structural problems in architectural education is the limited and exclusionary scope of Eurocentrism, which consistently underrepresents different ethnicities, minorities and women.<sup>93</sup> By silencing certain cultural perspectives in the curriculum, specific groups of students are unable to identify with the content taught or find role models among the teaching staff. For architectural scholars Huda Tayob and Suzanne Hall, the architectural curriculum is built on the centrality of privileged and normalized knowledge. This curriculum is one "of racialized hierarchies endemic to capitalist systems and cultural life that extend from colonialism to coloniality, slavery to incarceration, liberalism to subordination, and sovereignty to populism."<sup>94</sup> The Eurocentrism of architectural education has shown little change over the last 50 years according to Carla Jackson Bell, who writes that architectural education has remained virtually unchanged since the Bauhaus.<sup>95</sup> In other words, the field of architecture has turned a blind eye to the necessity of transformation in education.<sup>96</sup> Whether architectural education is to provide training for a service profession or to teach architecture as cultural discourse,<sup>97</sup> it is subject to a political narrative whereby it ignores questions related to whose story is being told and whose voice is being silenced. Pedagogical approaches matter because they have a direct consequence in a "society that reproduces itself through its school systems."<sup>98</sup> Inequity is seen in degree classifications, with white students being four times more likely to obtain a first-class degree than minority ethnic students in England.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, only 26.5% of architecture students have been female.<sup>100</sup> The gender pay gap in higher education in the UK currently sits around 15.5%, and the race pay gap is 17%.<sup>101</sup>

At the class level, the architect and scholar Kevin Rhowbotham argues that access to British education is correlational to relative wealth, where "the rich get the best education." This is in stark contrast to the 1960s, when access was based on a meritocratic and mass-education model, and the "last time people moved significantly between classes."<sup>102</sup> Given the impact and spread of the ever-pervasive capitalist mode, and the embeddedness of architecture in this economic model, architecture is limited in its reach to make the city democratic or sustainable. Likewise, with the neoliberal and corporate model invested in profit and optimization on one hand, and standardization and complicity with various professional and statutory regulations on the other hand,<sup>103</sup> architectural education remains incapable of dealing with the current issues. Instead, architecture schools compete between themselves around identity and distinctiveness and overall rankings. Such preoccupations rob time and energy and hinder schools from addressing "grand problems of the moment" and cooperatively working through "issues beyond the fettered territories of commercial practice."<sup>104</sup> For Rhowbotham, architecture schools have lost a sense of direction.<sup>105</sup> Their operational systems are outdated, with the design 'crit' remaining one of the most unchallenged methods of presenting and reviewing design projects,<sup>106</sup> grounded in the legacies of the 19th Century examination model.<sup>107</sup>

One way of engaging with the grand challenges is to reimagine the thinking and structuring of pedagogy. The accepted thinking is that 'pedagogy' is reserved for, and synonymous with, educational environments. Likewise, it is often identified as an educational technique or practice. For the architectural scholar Thomas A. Dutton, however, such identifications undermine the potential of pedagogy, and pedagogy needs to be identified "with the social production of

meaning generally.”<sup>108</sup> Thinking pedagogy from this perspective creates an opening to challenge the normalized meaning of society and to create opportunities for the “voiceless and powerless to construct counterhegemonic processes for social advancement.”<sup>109</sup>

According to Mbembe, racial injustices preceded those associated with class.<sup>110</sup> Mbembe’s argument is that the concept of humanity in Euro-American thought has been framed by excluding blackness, given that this ‘other’ race is a degraded one and as such is there to be exploited.<sup>111</sup> This manufacturing of knowledge is traceable to the Atlantic slave trade and mercantile labor and is operational to this day. Ultimately, to engage in discussions around race is also to engage in questions around territoriality.<sup>112</sup> At the level of urban planning, race issues were obvious in the US from 1846, when ethnic, racial and gender segregation became a matter of planning policy. At the level of architecture proper, these issues were manifested with the 1956 construction of the Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis, where modernist progress not only regarded social welfare but also race as a concern to be managed through planning. Moreover, the nostalgic nod to the community life found in the writings of Jane Jacobs does not take into account the presence of discrimination against people of different gender, ethnicity and race.<sup>113</sup> Undeniably, this discrimination remains present today, with the recent deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor signifying the pernicious nature of ongoing racial violence, and discussions about the incidents confirming the long legacy of colonial conceptualizations of race. It is such conceptions that pedagogy must confront, and architectural education is not immune to colonial assumptions and bias. Dutton was likely right in noting that a political vision is correlational to proposing a pedagogy.<sup>114</sup> Put simply, pedagogy is inseparable from politics.

The need to maintain Western European and Anglophone contexts as the ‘center’ is driven by the compulsion to establish a periphery, defined by its lack of the values and knowledge found in, prescribed and controlled by the center. We see this very clearly in essentialist stereotypes about the Orient – for example, where the Arab is aesthetically constructed as a deficient, unchanging social and political entity.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the Orient is always set against an ideal West and framed within a position of lack; Orientalism is about asserting oppositions, and is directly connected to western colonization.<sup>116</sup> Likewise, we see this with the semicolonial historical construct of the Balkans as the abnormal and monstrous peripheral zone of Europe.<sup>117</sup> Colonization did not end in the 19th Century; instead, it was simply altered through the production of knowledge aided by aesthetic depiction.

For Virilio, colonization through aesthetic means is manufactured through technology. He argues that the West and Anglo-Saxons “have derived a sense of superiority from their technical superiority, a determination to treat the rest of the world as nothing more than an object predestined for their machination.”<sup>118</sup> This is inclusive of the ways in which spaces are colonized through war, from the use of digital technology and robotics to the ways in which technology is used to defend the accused during trials. In the Nuremberg Trials, for example, the Nazi architect Albert Speer used technology and its developments “[t]o prove that he was only an instrument, certainly guilty, but that technological advances, in particular in the field of communications, had issued in the catastrophe.”<sup>119</sup> Since WWII, the visibility of such paradoxes is harder to place on trial given that war is “buried in respectable laboratories and well-funded research agencies.”<sup>120</sup> With this in mind, the question that arises concerns the relevance of architecture as we know it, and the role of the urban.

### **Defining and redefining architecture and the urban**

For architecture and the urban to have relevance in the 21st Century, we cannot maintain the approaches of thought and design that were operative in the previous century. Likewise, to

understand the nexus between politics and space, architecture and the urban must be redefined. Without this reformulation, we argue, it is impossible to understand the political role of architecture and urban space, whether oppressive or liberational. Traditional definitions reduce architecture to the passive background of political action and regard it as an object devoid of any agency, in addition to treating the city and the urban as interrelated and bounded. Such reduction means that architectural discourse and the profession are unable to face contemporary challenges. As such, we argue that architecture should be understood as a political force with agency.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, the city and the urban should be understood as processes and relations on a planetary scale. Thus, when focusing on architecture and the city, solutions cannot be sought in nostalgic replicas of times gone by or found in supposedly apolitical technology and the technological fabrication of buildings.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, if architecture and the urban are to contribute to everyday life and the various processes of living, then experience and knowledge need to be positioned in a way that leads to “more transformative notions about how life might be lived, both theoretically and practically.”<sup>123</sup> Likewise, from form to program, answers need to be sought beyond mere theorizations or pragmatic solutions.<sup>124</sup> Dutton argues that there is a need for architects to “link organically with politically transformative movements, which, in turn, necessitates developing professional practices that ensure a mutual interaction between publics and architects.”<sup>125</sup> For Vidler, who remains an admirer of socialist utopian ambitions, and utopia in general, change – via Jameson – should be based on “resistance to present conditions, the potential for critical assessment and the reimagination that is essential for any future action.”<sup>126</sup>

To reach a more affirmative definition of architecture, the architectural theorist Andrew Ballantyne draws upon its difference from mere buildings. He questions the architectural history that has documented and displayed the most remarkable monuments such as palaces, cathedrals, castles and pyramids, while failing to consider that these extravagant buildings are irrelevant to the majority of architects whose job is to design comfortable, economic everyday spaces.<sup>127</sup> What architecture is, Ballantyne suggests, is contact with the solid object of a building, when a building induces an unknown feeling, an unpredictable epiphany in the observer or the user of different cultural backgrounds.<sup>128</sup> His broadening of the definition of architecture to include the multiplicity of affects on different people is a political matter on which Rancière has elaborated. For Rancière, aesthetics are intrinsically linked to politics, because aesthetics represent a sensible distribution system:

I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts.<sup>129</sup>

Consequently, architecture is intrinsically a matter of politics not only because it is a mechanism for the organization of people in space,<sup>130</sup> or an object of spectacle shaped for a consumer society,<sup>131</sup> but also because aesthetics are an inherent part of architectural discourse, which is in itself a political matter.

Another lens through which architecture is defined beyond an autonomous object is found in Marxist and neo-Marxist critical writings, many of which are informed by the works of architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri. These studies have extensively examined the relationship between our discipline and its productions (buildings and cities) and capitalism and its ideology. Mainly concerned with modern architecture, Tafuri writes that “the entire cycle of modern architecture” emerged and developed to resolve the contradictions of the “capitalist

reorganization of the world market and productive development.”<sup>132</sup> He portrays a tragic destiny for architecture in *Architecture and Utopia* because the ideology of design has been essential to the “integration of modern capitalism in all structures and superstructures of human existence.”<sup>133</sup> Design is used to sustain capitalism: it is not extraneous to it. It is not necessarily the connection between architecture and the economy that constrains architecture, but rather that architecture is produced through the ideology of capitalism; it is integrated into the logic of capitalism.<sup>134</sup>

However, despite architecture (and invariably the city) being implicated in capitalism, the philosophers and political economists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels drew our attention to the significance of cities as creators of public life that they associated with action and change given that the modern city and industrial capitalism are entangled with each other.<sup>135</sup> More recently, the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre reminds us that the overthrow of capitalism must be urban given that that is where space is produced.<sup>136</sup> Likewise, the geographer David Harvey reaffirms that the overthrow of capitalism will indeed begin on the urban street, not in factories.<sup>137</sup>

The implication of defining architecture as more than a building, with aesthetic qualities produced within the capitalist mode of production, is also to acknowledge architecture’s relationship with contingency. For Jeremy Till, “architecture has avoided engagement with the uncertainties of the world through a retreat into an autonomous realm,”<sup>138</sup> and he calls for an understanding of architecture as a “complex social and institutional mess.”<sup>139</sup> The uncertainty and contingency upon and through which architecture operates means that architecture as a profession and a product cannot be detached from the economy, society, politics and culture.

What all these approaches have in common is the emphasis on defining architecture as a static, defined, determined and fixed object without agency. This point is partially picked up by Albena Yaneva, who examines the agency of spatial practices by discussing buildings in terms of what they *do* rather than what they *are*, via actor network theory (ANT). For Yaneva, “space is not a neutral, passive and inert backstage of political actions; rather, it has an impact on political efficacy by virtue of physically preventing or mandating certain actions.”<sup>140</sup> Yaneva argues that buildings are not solely representations of ideas but artifacts that are connected to other objects and peoples, and have an impact on them. Yaneva’s argument is therefore different from studies that limit the relation between architecture and politics to ideology, states or activism. For her, the nexus between politics and architecture has been historically understood in six ways: architecture reflects politics and can produce political effect; architects are agents of power, and architectural styles mirror political shifts; politics is imprinted on cities; architecture helps the construction of identities; and, building types embody politics. Politics and architecture in all these frames are understood as dichotomous and from two different worlds. However, their nexus is more complex than a simple binary: it is not unidirectional, it is always causal and mediated. Buildings are not static – far from it, they are dynamic and coproduced. Architecture is enmeshed in a complex process-based building-making people network.<sup>141</sup> Although Yaneva expands the definition of architecture by analyzing the transformation of buildings to-be, buildings in-use, buildings in-renovation and buildings in-becoming, all the examples she uses are single buildings, and none are linked, not even remotely, to the challenges of our 21st Century, such as the refugee crises, climate change, racism, inequality, colonization and surveillance.

Unlike Yaneva’s use of ANT, the sociologist Harvey Molotch uses this method to understand the processes of making various gadgets, appliances for buildings, in order to reveal the ways in which contemporary society operates between humans and objects; the operation and experience are largely – he argues – commodity-driven.<sup>142</sup> The links between capitalism and space are also resonant in the thinking of David Harvey, for whom urban planning emerged as a tool of economic governance. Harvey argues that through the infrastructural reengineering

of mid-19th Century Paris, Haussmann “helped resolve the capital-surplus disposal problem by setting up a proto-Keynesian system of debt-financed infrastructural urban improvements” by situating the *Crédit Mobilier* and *Crédit Immobilier* banks on Saint-Simonian lines.<sup>143</sup> Undeniably, the urban can be designed by restructuring social relations and influencing the behavior of its citizens.

Since the fall of Keynesian welfare and the establishment of neoliberalism, the sole connection of finance, banking and capital with *specific* buildings or *specific* cities has subsided. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of planetary urbanization, urban theorist, geographer and sociologist Neil Brenner maintains that capitalism has stretched beyond the city. Brenner argues that the urban needs to be reconceptualized beyond the physical confines of cities because

[m]ore than ever before, it can be said that the Earth’s entire surface is urbanized to some degree, from the Siberian tundra to the Brazilian rainforest to the icecap of Antarctica, perhaps even to the world’s oceans and the atmosphere we breathe.<sup>144</sup>

Indeed, the association of this urbanization with densification and population increase is outdated; to understand the urban, one needs to seek answers in the hinterland, given that the planetary stretch is correlational to the neoliberal forms of urban governing.

The significance of the global city has been magnified in studies focusing on neoliberalism’s ties with globalization. As Marvin and Graham suggest, the emergence of neoliberalism coincided with Anglo-American countries experiencing intense infrastructural privatization, which continued with the fall of the Eastern Bloc, where various networks became unevenly incorporated into the global capitalist divisions of labor and flows of capital, information and technology.<sup>145</sup> For the sociologist Saskia Sassen, the global city is not bounded; it is a complex network of production from financial innovation to small investment, including the export of raw money.<sup>146</sup> Brenner moves beyond Sassen’s belief that global cities are a series of globally connected nodes eclipsing the significance of place, where the “highly digitized economic sectors turned out to be the first step towards conceptualizing the Global City function.”<sup>147</sup> Brenner sees global cities not as nodes, but as “sites of both socioeconomic and institutional restructuring in and through which a broader, multi-scalar transformation in the geography of capitalism is unfolding.”<sup>148</sup> His thinking is driven by the impetus to reconceptualize the urban beyond an expansive city, because the globe has been urbanized, and there is no outside in a world dominated by global capitalism. Within the urban, we simply have variations of implosions (concentrations) and explosions.<sup>149</sup> His spatial thinking is reminiscent of Foucault’s writing on heterotopias, which he considers to be spaces essential to the city,<sup>150</sup> even as counter sites that operate “in such a way to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them.”<sup>151</sup> Despite some heterotopias proving resistant to disciplinary regulations, given that they are still a part of the system and structure, there is, for Foucault, no ‘outside.’

Another body of work that deploys the urban beyond something bounded includes writings that address how the expansion of urbanization is driven by infrastructure. The period from the 1850s to the 1960s was one of intense centralization and the standardization of urban networks and the creation of the invisible city of pipes and conduits. Thus, infrastructure networks became not only sets of connections within the city, but embedded symbols of hidden territorial scale and space.<sup>152</sup> The factors that have enabled the intense spread and development of urban infrastructure include the sheer scale and reliance on technology, including the speed at which infrastructure is connected and optimized.<sup>153</sup> Infrastructures are not only underground pipes or cables, but also regulatory conditions, tariffs, arrangements and rules that structure the spaces around us. These infrastructures remain invisible yet they control and regulate our lives, and extend beyond the

reach of governments in the global market. The architect and urbanist Keller Easterling brings the discussion of infrastructure (free trade zones, the expansion of broadband wireless networks, and the International Organization for Standards) into architectural discourse, first by suggesting that these seemingly apolitical, technical concepts intersect and maintain a disposition that impacts global economies and governance; and second by questioning the role, agency and autonomy of architects in a time when most urban plans and buildings are all administered without the aid of architects.<sup>154</sup> For Molotch, designing infrastructure, from airports to streetscapes, in the name of security is suggestive of spatializing systems of power – at all levels of their design, consumption, implementation and experience.<sup>155</sup> Seemingly, security is a way of governing and suggestive of militarization.

For Graham, militarization is tightly interconnected with colonialism, given that the imposition of neoliberalism becomes the means to ‘de-modernize,’ disconnect, immobilize and destroy the physical, social and cultural matrix of a city in an attempt to control environments that do not conform to a neoliberal and colonialist ideal.<sup>156</sup> The deployment of these colonially tested strategies of walls and forts, together with the law, is what Graham calls ‘Foucault’s Boomerang.’<sup>157</sup> Here, Graham is using Foucault’s thinking on disciplinary spaces to argue that disciplining is not just exercised in colonial zones but is also like a boomerang that returns and is implemented on home turf. The relationship between a colony and colonizing the ‘homeland’ is not a new one, remembering that the ‘Haussmannization’ of Paris was influenced by the text *The War of Streets and Houses (La Guerre des Rues et des Maisons)* authored by the French General Thomas Robert Bugeaud who served in Algeria in the 1840s.<sup>158</sup> We also see this in the concept of the concentration camp, which was invented during the colonial wars between the English and Dutch over the control of Southern Africa at the beginning of the 20th Century, and then later imported into Europe as German National Socialist policy. Foucault’s relational disciplining was evident in Nazi Germany and has since been implemented in the Israel-Palestine conflict, as seen through the use of language. Effi Eitam, a retired Israeli Defence Force (IDF) brigadier, described Palestinian settlements as “‘cancerous tumours’ within the ‘ordered host’ of (greater) Israel,”<sup>159</sup> the metaphorical narrative replicating Hitler’s descriptions of Jewish enclaves in his autobiographical manifesto *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*.<sup>160</sup> Here, language is used to construct an image of an elusive Palestinian cancer within the healthy body of Israel; the construct is used as a justification for the deployment of the IDF to clean up and sanitize the decaying body of the nation.<sup>161</sup> This linguistic construct is a common tactic in any nationalist discourse, with clear polarization whereby a threat can only be resolved through a military response.<sup>162</sup> Today, the colonially tested tactics, seen in barriers and checkpoints in places such as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are significantly altered and deployed in the West, and according to Graham, they are particularly evident during political summits or sports events. For example, in 2014, during the NATO summit, parts of Cardiff and Newport were surrounded by a ‘ring of steel’ fence that criss-crossed roads, parks and public spaces to keep the world leaders safe, while severely affecting the public’s movement and access to space.

In the outlined hyperreal and planetary spread of the urban, the understanding and relevance of the contemporary city through the much-referenced lenses of the historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford and the urban planner Kevin Lynch appear to be prodigious. For Mumford, the city is first a social institution, with the “the physical organization of a city, its industries and its markets, its lines of communication and traffic” being subservient to the social.<sup>163</sup> He writes that the city “is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity.”<sup>164</sup> For Lynch, a city extends beyond its physical form to include human experience, perception and social life. The city is not a machine that wears out over time due to mechanical repetition, and nor is it a biological cohesive

organism or a cosmic order with eternal form; rather, the city is unified by signals.<sup>165</sup> Similar to a settlement, the city is a continuously changing arrangement, whose overlapping systems are tied to different parts, each with a history and a context.<sup>166</sup> Each part of the city “contains information about its local context, and thus, by extension, about the whole.”<sup>167</sup> The ability to understand the whole clearly started fracturing in the 1960s.

Even at the level of the city proper, we can observe that invisible power relations and class struggles are problematizing the belief that a city is bounded. For example, ghettos are not only a lower-class district, but as sociologist Loic Wacquant shows in his works on urban marginalities, they are also a constructed symbol to advance marginality and territorial stigmatization. In fact, the reorganization of the city through such symbols is driven by deep-seated power that governs the ways in which certain cities or parts of cities evoke symbolic struggles of class and ethnicity. For Wacquant, such symbols mark territorial stigmas which not only signify the lived experience of those living in adversely affected areas, but also can play a determinist role in their identification and perception.<sup>168</sup> In other words, Wacquant suggests that these zones are a symbolic expression of deep-seated and wider socioeconomic problems.

From a different perspective, the sociologist Sharon Zukin examines ghettos in terms of the formation of retail zones and the tailoring of consumer aesthetics, which are connected to a whole network of exploitation found in factories from India and China to Bangladesh. For Zukin, engaging with questions concerning the politics and economics of ghettos is intimately and equally connected with concerns of culture.<sup>169</sup> That is, the formation of the new middle class is correlational to the development of an aesthetic associated with retail culture, immigration and deindustrialization.<sup>170</sup>

At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, we also have a culture of ghettos called ‘gated communities.’ Their presence was prominent in the writings of the 1980s LA School of Urbanism (an academic movement centered on the urban analysis of Los Angeles) which provided a new lexicon to map the city – from gated communities and corporate citadels to zones of consumption opportunities and spectacle.<sup>171</sup> Later authors drew on Octavia Butler’s futuristic 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* and the concept of balkanization to describe a divided population in terms of those who live in gated communities and those who did not, with the repercussions leading to various forms of inequity and strife. In the LA lexicon of the city, this condition was driven by global restructuring and market economics, the outcome of which is a series of balkanized enclaves distinguished from each other socially and culturally, yet also politically and economically polarized. In other words, the divisions have become polymorphous and aspects such as gender, skill and ethnicity are amplified. For the urbanist and environmental planner Daphne Spain, the rise of gated communities is correlational to “the increase in women’s labor participation,” and invariably “their inability to provide informal security,” as they are no longer at home.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, the ‘new’ middle class puts into question the role of gender, given that for the urban historian Dolores Hayden, domesticity is now tainted with the privatization of labor, products and designs.<sup>173</sup>

Even at the level of architecture proper, architectural design can no longer tell us what is happening inside a corporate building, unlike in the 1960s when glass towers were synonymous with office work.<sup>174</sup> Previously, the significance of this was seen with the rise of ‘star architects’ and the spread of shopping centers and gated communities. Architecture was a way to brand cities, as seen in Frank Gehry’s Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, whereby the iconic building transformed the city’s identity.<sup>175</sup> Dubbed the ‘Bilbao effect,’ it is an example of what Ballantyne sees as the “index of the value-system of the society” in that the authorities invest more in the brand than in the needs of those living in that city.<sup>176</sup> Even when architecture is sustainably regenerated, it is used as a tool to spike-up prices and foster gentrification. Moreover, this is a



likely outcome of regarding architecture and the city as separate; however, for Vidler, to think of them as separate not only leaves questions regarding “the form of the public realm unanswered,” but also treats a single building as a “designer accessory” and a symbol of progress amid “a sea of urban blight.”<sup>177</sup> In this context, the city is indeed a museum, and the urban pervasively stretches across the planet. Indeed, the 21st Century requires a reconceptualization of both the city and the urban. For this reason, this handbook brings together the city and the urban using the term ‘urban space,’ which will be further addressed in Volume II. Analyzing architecture and urban space together is critical, given Deleuze’s warning that “we are taught that corporations have a soul, which is the most terrifying news in the world.”<sup>178</sup> This is seen in the 2018 proposal by Apple/Foster and Partners to create an Apple Store in Stockholm. The proposal represented Apple’s general attempt to blur the “boundaries between public and private space” given that Apple stores are usually identified with a town square, a gathering space, “where everyone is welcome.”<sup>179</sup> Although the proposal was revoked, it signifies the role of corporations in further privatizing urban public spaces.

It is not that Foucault’s disciplinary societies have been abolished, but that the conditioning of governance has become more carefully and surreptitiously regimented in control societies. Control extends beyond institutions and specific object(s) of technology to encompass a whole territory: legal, economic, geopolitical, historical, public and private. The control has become continuous and extreme. By way of relating this to a geopolitical context, it is clear that it is not that the ideologies of the Cold War are over, as we see with the Russia–Ukraine crisis, but that their implementation and spatialization have become more complex and subversive; violence and the justification for violence can be (dis)guised through a digital interface, made operational from the air alone despite the deployment of ground forces, hijacked through economic means, where the human body becomes a tool through which the various technologies and territories addressed by Deleuze can operate. The transformed Cold War appears to be enmeshed in the emergence of a new political spatial order, the contours of which remain foggy as we prepare this volume.

To conclude, the nexus between architecture, urban space and politics is far from simple, binary or singular. There are multiplicities of politics involved that architecture fosters, neglects, enacts or evades. With the complex and invasive roles of information technology, neoliberalism, media and globalization, it is becoming more and more difficult to identify where and how spatial practices – including architecture and the urban – inform, retain or sustain agency. This handbook is seeking to do this by mapping the constitutive elements of our contemporary world, as well as spotlighting the role of architecture and the urban in ever-expanding centrifugal and centripetal regimes.

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## PART II

# Violence and war machines





## 2

# INTRODUCTION TO VIOLENCE AND WAR MACHINES

*William M. Taylor*

The following collection of chapters address current and historical concerns as well as issues of specialist interest for philosophers, humanities and design scholars, architects, urbanists and activists. Broadly speaking, the specter of violence and war threatens the values and aspirations for civil society, diminishing our common humanity and restricting opportunities for progressive action. Philosophers and public intellectuals have expressed similar views. Contributing to his political philosophy, John Locke believed that certain circumstances made some acts of aggression – like a nation’s declaration of war following an attack – appear reasonable and necessary, although (paradoxically) the commencement of warfare made “reasonable” action impossible, rendering the combatants less-than-human.<sup>1</sup> Giorgio Agamben elaborated on the concept of “bare life” to describe the violent circumstances and setting of the concentration camp, where its victims are reduced to beast-like existence.<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt distinguished between power and violence. Observing what she believed to be the diminished capacity for political action in her **day, Arendt** noted there followed:

**space**

an open invitation to violence – if only because those who hold power and feel it slipping from their hands, be they the government or be they the governed, have always found it difficult to resist the temptation to substitute violence for it.<sup>3</sup>

Relations between the forms and sources of aggression – including relations between *violence and war*, as the title of this collection proposes – are multiple and call upon wide-ranging sources of scholarship to critically appraise them. Humanities scholars including Laura Westra, Victoria Collins, Dawn Rohe and Douglas Spencer seek to explain violence in the contexts of globalization and neoliberalism.<sup>4</sup> Ann Stoler, Greg Grandin, Gilbert Joseph and Anoma Pieris, among others, have advanced understanding of violence in colonial and postcolonial contexts.<sup>5</sup> Rob Nixon writes about the “slow violence” inflicted on impoverished communities worldwide by environmental degradation and global climate change.<sup>6</sup> Over the past two decades, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath have encouraged much research.<sup>7</sup> Seeking to establish a distinctive method of theoretical and historical inquiry, contributors to the edited book *Spatial Violence* aspire to position their subject as intrinsic to architectural knowledge and practice.<sup>8</sup>

A number of scholars have cultivated belief in the so-called revolution in military affairs (RMA) to explain manifold strategic, technological and organizational changes in the conduct

of warfare, including the War on Terror that followed 9/11. Early proponents of this theory, Eliot Cohen and Martin Libicki, were mostly interested in developments that have come together and accelerated since the end of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup> John Robb, Gregory Rattray and Michael O’Hanlon have further elaborated upon the impacts of these, including developments in new surveillance and information technologies, laser-guided ‘smart bombs’ and the prospect of warfare in cyberspace.<sup>10</sup> Given that many of these technologies, particularly in the data harvesting and processing sectors, raise concerns for individual privacy and civil peace, the history of wars and warfare has implications for understanding violence in broader society and the sociopolitical realm.<sup>11</sup> Likewise history tells us there were earlier upheavals in military matters, like the 16th Century gunpowder revolution and 19th Century industrialization of warfare that were each socially transformative in their own way and impacted on urban space and modes of its occupation, assault and defense.<sup>12</sup>

### Philosophical issues

The scope for scholarship on violence and war includes philosophical and methodological issues that have a bearing on research in the field. One can understand these to frame a set of problematics or realms of possibility concerning: (1) the responsible actors or agency of violence, (2) the relationship of built environs or spaces to violence and (3) the distinctions in language and theory between violence and war as historical forms of aggression, each with attributable (though perhaps imprecise) origins and causes. Consider these, briefly, in turn.

Firstly, concerning the sources of violence, one may believe that aggression originates with established authority, for instance, with the nation-state, as conventionally understood by political theorists to be an entity formed of an established and governed territory whose citizens are believed to share a common history and identity. Max Weber was referring to such an authority when he described the state’s historic “monopoly” on violence, a power clearly, but not exclusively, exercised during the conduct of war.<sup>13</sup> Weber observed that “the modern state is a compulsory association which organizes domination. It has been successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of physical forces as a means of domination within a territory.”<sup>14</sup> Though the aforementioned scholars (Westra et al) may not frame their subject matter and analyses as critiques of the nation-state *per se* (itself), theories of globalization and neoliberalism pose challenges to Weber’s view of the state’s domineering hegemony in that these theories typically credit extra-territorial sources of agency (such as global corporations, international regulatory and development agencies, like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)) and belief systems (such as belief in market-led capitalism and free-trade ideology) whose powers extend beyond national borders.<sup>15</sup>

Shadowing the domination of the nation-state, another source of overarching or top-down authority and potential source of violence is believed to arise from networks of agents like the “military-industrial complex” US Army General and President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned his compatriots about.<sup>16</sup> This entity has since been enlarged given the growth of 21st Century media and entertainment industries with their global reach and mass audiences, data- and image-saturated worlds so that one is purportedly faced with the coordinated actions of today’s “military-entertainment complex” or “military-industrial-media-entertainment” (MIME) network.<sup>17</sup> Arguably, one can relate current anxieties over our so-called ‘post-truth’ age to the impacts of such complexes of knowledge–power-producing agents, as scholars Steve Fuller and David Block have done.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, considering the relationship of built environs to violence, one can question whether and how urban planning and architecture may operate to assault, disempower or oppress certain

individuals and sectors of society. Bechir Kenzari provides a compilation of such operations, although the range of contributions to his edited book and collection of essays *Architecture and Violence* confirms there are different understandings of violence and its settings. In Kenzari's book, these range from the slow-burn estrangement pervading suburban residential districts to the horrors and "bare life" (Agamben) of the concentration camp imposed upon its internees.<sup>19</sup> The variability of these understandings and settings suggests that what counts as violence depends to a large degree on the obviousness and character of evidence for aggressive acts. Eyal Weizman and his research collaborators appear to understand this. They establish the provenance and character of relations between architecture and violence on the basis of a set of research case studies they call *Forensic Architecture*, the short title of their book.<sup>20</sup> Their methodological intervention can be likened to the approach of police detectives whose concern to ascertain the perpetrators of violent acts leads them along a critical itinerary composing a series of crime scenes. Paul Jaskot's book *The Architecture of Oppression* asserts the violent criminality made possible by the built environment by means of his historical examination of the forced (slave) labor underpinning Nazi Germany's monumental building economy.<sup>21</sup>

The possibility that there is *some* kind of connection between violence and built environs, urban planning and architecture leads one to examine whether there is a necessary link between violence and space generally, an area of research in urban studies and cultural geography.<sup>22</sup> Belief in the spatiality of violence allows for multiple theoretical perspectives and historical interests. These include Colin Flint's so-called *Geographies of War and Peace* counterpoising death camps and diplomatic spaces, Derek Gregory's and Allan Pred's *Violent Geographies* of fear and terror and Reece Jones' *Violent Borders* concerning immigration and refugees – to highlight a few recent book titles.<sup>23</sup>

While featuring in these geographical distributions of violence, urban space is also subject to temporal transformations – to continual, sometimes rapid change and development involving a range of demographic, economic, technological and social drivers. Foundational scholarship engaging the dynamism of urban space includes the broad, multidisciplinary perspective on the city pioneered by philosopher and urban historian Lewis Mumford.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, the varied circumstances whereby cities evolve, expand and diminish suggest critical possibilities for research into the impacts of violence on urban space and communities that are not only synchronic (evident for a specific period or historical era), but also diachronic (that occur over time). Hostilities arising within the urban realm can highlight circumstances of demolition and new construction imposed on communities without their consent or interests served. Jane Jacobs's landmark book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was published in the same year as Mumford's *The City in History* in 1961, though the former is more closely attuned to these possibilities and circumstances. Jacobs expressed concern that then current 'urban renewal' and 'slum clearance' demolition programs ignored the needs of city-dwellers and destroyed communities, a perspective that underscores studies of gentrification pioneered by German-born British sociologist Ruth Glass.<sup>25</sup> Steve Graham and Simon Marvin have coined the phrase "splintering urbanism" to account for contemporary drivers resulting in "urban and infrastructural change" including globalization and the post-communist geopolitics. They cite the work and influence of Mumford and Jacobs, particularly the former's adoption of a "transdisciplinary" approach to urban and infrastructural change.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars have enlarged the study of urban dynamics and violence to include catastrophic transformations involving ruination and environmental disaster accompanying development. Ruinous settings were a favored subject of 18th Century aesthetic philosophy and picturesque theory; recent scholarship has come to understand these predilections as means for "appropriating" ruins and their landscapes by property-holding elites keen to redevelop their country estates and

enrich themselves.<sup>27</sup> Ann Stoler and contributors to her edited book *Imperial Debris* shift the critical focus from ruins as aesthetic appropriations to ruination as “the toxic corrosions and violent accruals of colonial aftermaths” manifest in changeful urban environs.<sup>28</sup> Contributors to *Imperial Debris* include Ariella Azoulay, who describes how Palestinian children are taught to imagine ancestral homes destroyed by the Israeli military during their occupation and redevelopment of Palestinian territories.<sup>29</sup> Vyjayanthi Rao writes about villages submerged by dam construction in India, a chapter and topic that draws on Rao’s expertise on the South Asian city and globalization.<sup>30</sup> Sharad Chari examines communities obliged to live alongside the toxic wastelands of oil refineries in apartheid-scarred Durban, South Africa, providing further insight into the environmental impacts of development in the Global South.<sup>31</sup> Cities that have been wholly or partially abandoned for a variety of reasons, including environmental despoliation, de-industrialization and de-population have also inspired research.<sup>32</sup>

Possibilities for research into violence and space are multiplied by considering whether and how the impacts of urban dynamics and transformations may be symbolic or programmatic, or a mixture of both the aesthetic and functionally coercive, along with the juridical or socio-legal contexts for aggressive urban interventions. Timothy Gibson describes the socio-legal dimensions of urban development and dispossession.<sup>33</sup> He writes about the aggressive use of statutory planning powers, compulsory purchase orders or “eminent domain” laws in nations like the US in the 1940s and 1960s and the UK in the 1980s and 1990s to replace inner-urban public housing estates (derogatorily called slums in America) with private-sector construction. Recent memory takes us to New Orleans in 2005, following Hurricane Katrina, when such laws enabled the controversial destruction of much of the city’s public housing stock and its replacement with mostly privatized residential developments, enraging displaced residents and stirring up housing activists nationwide.<sup>34</sup>

Thirdly, regarding distinctions in language and theory between forms of aggression, war and warfare describe the most extreme form of violence inflicted on communities, although the terms can also denote nonmilitary actions targeting forces operating within society. Hence, the history of violence includes circumstances and language that have precipitated the much publicized and costly ‘wars’ on poverty, crime, drugs and terror.<sup>35</sup> In these cases, the spaces of intervention and resistance are not battlefields *per se*. Rather, these wars are fought in communities of the unemployed; they target overseas factories and other sites of outsourced labor. Defensive measures connect such widely distant locations as schoolyards and other venues, where drugs are feared to be sold, and remote Colombian and Bolivian coca plantations, where the illicit substances originate. The offensive is taken to airport security zones and via drone missions to places like Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>36</sup> John Head describes international development agendas and agencies, like the World Bank and IMF, as engaged in a type of “development war” in which otherwise laudable goals of common economic enrichment, social stability and peace in much of the Global South are being lost owing to the mismanagement of international aid as well as the regressive forces of bilateralism and regionalism.<sup>37</sup> A different perspective comes from seeing this particular form of warfare as a series of attacks on much of the world’s population by forces aligned with global economic powers, neoliberalism and globalized capital.<sup>38</sup>

Just as the language and metaphors of *war* and *warfare* are freely, sometimes questionably used, likewise, as many of the scholarly publications and titles cited in this introduction suggest, the term “violence” is widely applied to a range of aggressive forces and oppressive circumstances.<sup>39</sup> For Daniel Silva and contributors to his edited collection *Language and Violence*, the semantics of violence operate in distinctive ways, particularly when it “tends to obliterate precisely the contexts that undergird meaning-making, mutual intelligibility and engagement [...] Violence thus tends to affect contextual orientation, one of the basic resources for living in a world with

others.”<sup>40</sup> By this Silva seems to mean that violence in language fundamentally undermines shared understanding and breaks social bonds.

Violence, war and language informs scholarship in this collection. In his chapter contribution, John Hanna writes that the discourse of terrorism has created new urban experiences and spaces of violence by means of “activating particular geographical imaginaries, at different scales.” He directs our attention to Paris and the terrorist attacks of November 2015, when gunmen and suicide bombers targeted the Bataclan concert hall, a major stadium, restaurants and bars simultaneously, leaving 130 people dead and hundreds wounded. Hanna describes how language and spatial metaphors derived from conventional representations of the nation-state – of sovereign territory attacked and national identity threatened – deployed by French President François Hollande and his government served to falsely portray culturally and geographically heterogeneous Paris as unified and therefore integral to the French homeland. Thus, the terrorist attacks were represented by Hollande’s government as an act of war against the nation and its citizens, while the language of official pronouncements on the attack served to distance the attack’s perpetrators from French civil society as hostile agents – as enemy *others*.

### **Violence and military affairs**

The Prussian army general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) once famously described war as “the continuation of policy by other means,” and scholars commonly cite his claim and landmark essay *On War* when writing about the mutually formative relations arising between the exercise of governance and military matters.<sup>41</sup> His essay also provides an opportunity to historicize evolving relations between violence and war as forms of systemic aggression. Clausewitz coined several terms and ideas about modern warfare that are worth considering, particularly when thinking about parallel sources of hostility that arise in social contexts. He described the condition of total or “absolute” war when the effort of combat increases to an extent that it subsumes all other sectors of a combatant nation’s political, social and economic activities.<sup>42</sup> An abstraction, more or less, similar circumstances may nonetheless require all able-bodied citizens to be enlisted as soldiers, civil servants or factory-workers; industry to be re-directed to produce armaments and essential supplies; and nonessential government activities and social programs to be suspended. With the idea of total war, in other words, the wages of warfare include significant costs for civilian populations and their way of life, particularly for urbanized populations for whom much war-related industry is required and sacrifice demanded. A parallel condition of escalating aggression and social forfeiture is conveyed by the moral caution from the Gospel of Matthew that “violence begets violence.”<sup>43</sup> Martin Luther King Jr was inspired by the warning in his speeches that encouraged nonviolent protest as the only true path to civil peace.<sup>44</sup> The idea of total war reappears, in altered form, as *Pure War* in Paul Virilio’s and Sylvère Lotringer’s book of that title.<sup>45</sup> The authors propose that modern society’s reliance on technology and technology’s propensity for regular and systematic failure make for a kind of warfare that is unceasing and renders cities and urban populations indefensible. This far-reaching proposition calls to mind the philosophical pretensions of Lebbeus Woods, whose provocative drawings dramatize – arguably aestheticize – urban vistas devastated by war-related technology.<sup>46</sup>

Clausewitz also wrote about “friction” being the idea that distinguishes the oftentimes “petty circumstances” that influence the course of “real War” from the abstractions of “War on paper.”<sup>47</sup> The former includes the multiple sources of contingency, uncertainty and risk that arise over time, which invariably impede the strategic deployment of combative forces, like territory and terrain that prove to be unassailable or a battle plan that goes wrong.<sup>48</sup> Thinking about friction and aggression in the social context of policy-making, sources of purposeful obstruction include

historic examples of riot and insurrection like America's Whiskey Rebellion (1791–94), when protestors resorted to violence and intimidation to prevent government officials from collecting tax on the spirit and England's Luddite riots (1811–16), when protesting textile laborers destroyed mechanical equipment rather than accept the loss of their jobs to industrialization.<sup>49</sup> In modern times, friction includes acts such as Mohandas Gandhi's Salt March (1930) to protest the British Crown monopoly on the essential commodity, King's and Nelson Mandela's (initial) respective nonviolent protests and the latter's subsequent active rebellion against South Africa's apartheid regime, rent strikes, school strikes for climate and the myriad recalcitrant acts of inmates that habitually occur in institutional settings such as prisons and detention centers.<sup>50</sup> The idea of friction alerts us to opportunities for activism made possible by critical theory and conveyed by the following chapters and their case studies.

Paul Hirst described Clausewitz's essay as "still the most profound reflection on war," while emphasizing that its subject concerns more than simply the historical or technical performances of combat.<sup>51</sup> Rather, for Clausewitz, warfare was about statecraft, and so the essay's scope is relevant for understanding the rise of European nation-states, nationalism and international political systems in which states maneuver to secure strategic advantages.<sup>52</sup> Hirst found much in Clausewitz's treatise that speaks to our times, though this required the study of history to understand the evolving scope, modes of performance and spatialization of violence and war. Surveying the relevant literature and historiography, he identified two major "revolutions" in military affairs that preceded the one of current fashion. These former disturbances had significant geo-spatial, urban and architectural aspects and assisted the rise of the nation-state and its monopoly on power as the foremost authority governing relations of empowerment and oppression in the modern era.

The first revolution began at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the French King Charles VIII invaded Italy, setting off a decisive period of military innovation responsible for the increased mobility and firepower of gunpowder weaponry and resulting in the widespread destruction of antiquated walls surrounding Italian cities and fortresses by canonry. There followed the rapid 'adaptational response' of cities, first in Italy, then across Europe and, later, to European colonial cities as the notoriety of French military successes spread, resulting in new ideas about cities and how to fortify them. One thinks of cities like Lucca, in Tuscany, with its comprehensive encirclement by wide bastioned masonry walls, ditches and earthen embankments (*glacis*) to resist bombardment. Palmanova also comes to mind, a comprehensively planned and fortified town built to protect Venice from mainland enemies. The design suggests how far innovation could go and complement utopian thinking about *the city* as a comprehensively planned and governed entity with advances in projectile geometry and military engineering sciences extending to the town's interior arrangement, its street layout and administration. In either case, considerations of military affairs from this era provide background and an underlying rationale for thinking about the spaces and spatialization of aggression.

By the 19th Century, the second revolution in military affairs coincided with urbanization, industrialization and the exponential growth of the European metropolis and cities globally modeled on them, including European colonial contexts, their strengths and weaknesses no longer mostly the consequences of walls, offensive weaponry and a community's capacity to resist siege warfare waged by extramural enemies. Rather, a growing matrix of technologies evolved to defend urban populations and the powers that relied on them against multiple threats from within. Technological innovation, however, in areas such as sanitation, manufacturing industry and transport, introduced additional vulnerabilities into the urban fabric. The failure of infrastructure and services in any one of these sectors could result in the collapse of the others with remarkable speed. The study of the history and theory of technology and infrastructure

thus introduces additional opportunity to counterpoise research into the violence of war and *everyday* hostilities characterizing the social milieu.

Clausewitz's essay provides a convenient reference and starting point to consider matters relating to war and additional sources and settings of violence. The essay was mostly written during the period of Europe's Napoleonic wars, at the time of this second revolution and an era of rapidly changing warfare. It was a period when cutting-edge military hardware amounted to new artillery with vastly increased firepower and extended ranges, the acquisition and control of ever greater national armies and widening industrialization that allowed weaponry to be produced in ever greater quantities by competing states and their armies to be readily supplied and deployed around the world. It was also the period in which Jeremy Bentham's panopticon was conceived.<sup>53</sup> The model prison and its architecture of surveillance contributed to transformations in a range of European institutions, including hospitals, asylums and schools, whereby Western governments sought to monitor, control and reform their subject populations.<sup>54</sup> Clausewitz did not write about these transformations or the panopticon, though clearly the evolution of modern warfare must be viewed in concert with other sociopolitical developments that enlarge the field of study into war and violence to include broader patterns of hostility, control and compliance. Scholars have observed how the nation-state and – what Michael Foucault called – “disciplinary society” evolved alongside military organizations and organizational models inspired by martial disciplines.<sup>55</sup> The army, Foucault wrote:

[...] guaranteed civil peace no doubt because it was a real force, an ever-threatening sword, but also because it was a technique and a body of knowledge that could project its schema over the social body. ... There was a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility.<sup>56</sup>

Clearly, there are important *spatial* or *geo-spatial* conditions supporting surveillance and control that connect Clausewitz and Jeremy Bentham, the field of battle and house of inspection and incarceration. Arguably, in view of these connections, one could turn Clausewitz's claim around. One could see policy-making and urban planning policies, in particular, as the continuation of war “by other means” as nation-state and municipal governments at times have focused considerable resources on eradicating risks to security from ill-defined agents and socioeconomic dynamics arising within territorial borders and city limits. One could also call upon the familiar ‘swords to plowshares’ formula to describe this inverse dynamic, although the outcomes are not necessarily civil peace and prosperity, but rather the assertion of authority and imposition of normalizing regimes. In their book *5 Codes: Architecture, Paranoia and Risk in Times of Terror*, Gerd de Buyn and his collaborating editors and coauthors appear to acknowledge such regimes though authority is not imposed with panoptical walls and military organization *per se*. Rather, the scholars take as their starting point the five-stage, color-coded warning system adopted by the US Government's Department of Homeland Security in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks – a seemingly commonsensical bureaucratic move that nonetheless could be interpreted as an assertion of power, having contributed to the normalization of terrorist risk and its incorporation into everyday life and government control.<sup>57</sup> Also writing about 9/11 and its aftermath, David Simpson describes the “culture of commemoration” that worked to exploit the events to forge political consensus around narratives of national grief and mourning and promote further violence and war.<sup>58</sup>



Moreover, the title “Violence and war machines” adopted to head the following collection of chapters is fitting, for there is a common thread running through them to do with the means and technology – including the architecture, building plans and urban planning – arising from or contributing to violence and war. *War machines* call to mind the historic, operational and aesthetic aspects of these means and technologies. One thinks of the Renaissance period and the popularity of novel engineering and weaponry, particularly siege machines, to conduct historic forms of warfare. Bentham famously described the panopticon as a machine or “mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious.”<sup>59</sup> Today, the language of information technology, of software and hardware, digital platforms and precision-guided weaponry or smart bombs may have displaced more overtly mechanistic images and metaphors to describe the technology of violence and war. However, the commanding functional and systemic effects of this variety of *architecture* (another common metaphor) remain obvious.

### **The biopolitical dimensions of power**

Whichever way one looks at it, Clausewitz’s theory of war can be read as an essay on power, its exercise during the conduct of war and peacetime and its far-reaching consequences. Thus, the essay *On War* contributes to a tradition of political writing that counts in its foundational literature figures and texts like Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and Benedict (de) Spinoza’s *Tractatus*. Machiavelli wrote about war in relation to autocratic governance, famously observing: “There are two kinds of combat: one with laws, the other with force. The first is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first is often not enough, one must have recourse to the second.”<sup>60</sup> Machiavelli adopts an Aristotelian view of human nature, so that leaders and their subjects are in parts: beast, man and something akin to a divine or godly essence.<sup>61</sup> Humans are thus uniquely political animals. They may not always do the right thing or behave humanely, though in striving to constrain animal passions and direct their powers for the prudent governance of society, princely rulers aspire to higher virtues.<sup>62</sup>

Hobbes is known for his work on sovereign government, an early exponent of social-contract theory that asserts the absolute authority of the state over individuals.<sup>63</sup> The frontispiece of his book carries the celebrated illustration of the “Leviathan” by French artist Abraham Bosse.<sup>64</sup> The image depicts an immense crowned figure, scepter-in-hand, composed of countless human bodies. The illustration was intended as a dual emblem of society and sovereignty, but it also says something about control and compliance. Hobbes believed there could be no humanity outside this ordered arrangement, famously writing that life outside of society would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>65</sup> It was a violent world although one can ask whether and how the alternative was better. Nigel Warburton observed that:

[...] Hobbes, like Machiavelli, had a low view of human beings. We are all basically selfish, driven by fear of death and the hope of personal gain, he believed. All of us seek power over others, whether we realize this or not.<sup>66</sup>

Hobbes defined peace narrowly as the “absence of war,” an understanding that Spinoza rejected, calling it instead “a virtue which comes from strength of mind” or a “union of harmony of minds.”<sup>67</sup> As Justin Steinberg observes: “It is one thing for a state to persist or to avoid the ravages of war, it is quite another for the state to flourish.”<sup>68</sup> Spinoza appears to be saying that violence and war may seem to summarize the natural state of things, but there are reasoned grounds that human beings can rise above them. He argues this point by making an organic metaphor:

So when we say that the best state is one where men pass their lives in harmony, I am speaking of human life, which is characterized not just by the circulation of the blood and other features common to animals, but especially by reason, the true virtue and life of the mind.<sup>69</sup>

The following chapters could likewise be read as essays on power, illustrating, each in their own way, how authority works strategically and functionally but also with undisclosed or ambiguous intentions and oppressive outcomes. The chapters enlarge foundational literature with critical theory, but they also engage a broadened domain of inquiry into politics, violence and war that speaks to the modern era and distinctly modern discourses – including, for instance, interests (like Hanna’s) in language and meaning. Consider, for instance, that when Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, sociology and biology were only a distant horizon of possibility. As “domains of being” the age-old dichotomy of nature and culture was not yet reinvigorated by the rise of these empirical sciences so that certain questions concerning violence were off the table.<sup>70</sup> Was aggression, for instance, an attribute of an essentialized human nature or outcome of social relations and environment? While Machiavelli in his day might ask whether war was *proper* to *man* or *beast*, the contemporary scholar is unlikely to use such terms. Rather, they seek to establish context and to ascertain the range of dynamic factors that explain why violence and war occur and why they matter. Moreover, while Hobbes may have contributed ideas to pseudo-sociological reasoning – his figure of the Leviathan composing a kind of social formation though largely an emblematic one – subsequent advances in biology and allied fields, like demography, epidemiology and statistics, cast “society” as subject to multiple disciplines and novel lines of investigation. Sociology and biology were given an immense filip with urbanization, industrialization and the ensemble of related demographic, technological and cultural developments that background Handbook section chapters and their views on the spaces of power, violence and war.

Chapter authors Daniel Grincer and Lieven De Caeter acknowledge the biological perspective on violence and war by way of elaborating architectural and urban contexts for understanding the spatial dimensions of power. They take their cue from Agamben’s and Foucault’s respective writings on *biopolitics* and the aforementioned concept of “bare life.”<sup>71</sup> The writings account for how the nation-state evolved in the modern era with the essential aim of caring for the life of the population, most clearly urban populations. Biopolitical rationality is concerned with the health of citizen-subjects, their corporal and productive capacities and sentiments – even their fitness for war. To care is to control so that state efforts to mitigate disease and infirmity results in a normalizing architecture of confinement and exclusion. Quarantine stations, surveilled and securitized workplaces, territorial border barriers and refugee camps are all biopolitical settings – potential flash points for aggressive government intervention and transgressive behavior.

Grincer enlists Agamben’s concept of “bare life” to convey the architecture and brutality of Australia’s detention camps on Nauru and Manus islands where that nation’s offshore transfer of its human rights obligations denies asylum seekers access to legal representation, medical and mental health care and imposes indefinite confinement – stripping inmates of personhood in a manner of speaking. De Caeter enlarges the theory and vocabulary of biopolitics, introducing the additional term and concept of *zoöpolitics* to describe a particular characterization of humanity evident at the intersection of urbanism and warfare. Whereas biopolitics operates to control populations by *giving* life (by urban planning that promotes sanitation and impedes pandemics, for example), *zoöpolitics* is concerned neither with giving nor taking life, but with reducing human beings to numbers that can be counted, recorded and controlled.

## Infrastructures of violence and war

Scholars have come to view the material culture of urban planning and infrastructure as a crucial setting for the exercise of power, either the target *or* means of aggression, control and compliance.<sup>72</sup> Keller Easterling clearly develops this view, writing about “organization space” and the “power of infrastructure space” that challenges conventional sources of authority, revealing new sources of agency and alternatives to the nation-state’s monopoly on violence.<sup>73</sup> She writes about cities like Dubai and the growth of free trading zones worldwide, whose *raison-d’être* (reason for existence) appears to be the unbridled exploitation of global networks and flows of investment capital, communication and transportation. Consequently, Easterling writes, “the zone harbors not the violence of nations but the violence camouflaged by nations, and while some zones advertise their presence, others remain hidden.”<sup>74</sup>

Scholarship on infrastructure and power varies in critical focus, though two complementary trends stand out. On the one hand, research is directed to sites of violence and war, particularly urban sites and architecture, but also critical infrastructure such as transport networks and industrial complexes that deliver energy, water and other essential supplies to cities – their targeting serving belligerent purposes including the destruction of public morale during wartime.<sup>75</sup> A useful term and theory to introduce here is “urbicide” whereby elements of the built environment are directly targeted during periods of conflict as means of destroying traces of the past along with the cultural- and place-identity of a people. Contributing to research on the subject in his book *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, Robert Bevan writes how “there has always been another war against architecture going on – the destruction of the cultural artefacts of an enemy people or nation as a means of dominating, terrorizing, dividing or eradicating it altogether.”<sup>76</sup> The theory of urbicide acquired particular currency following the series of military and ethnic conflicts, wars of independence and insurgencies precipitated by the breakup of Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001. Bevan’s views were informed by notorious incidents like the systematic destruction of mosques in former Yugoslavian territory by Christian nationalist forces, the 1992 shelling and burning of Bosnia’s National Library in Sarajevo and the 1993 blowing up of the historic Mostar bridge in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He paraphrases Bogdan Bogdanović, the architect and former mayor of Belgrade who fled Serbia during the Bosnian war, who argued that urbicide is “the intentional attack on the human and inert fabric of the city with the intent of destroying the civic values embodied within it – the very spaces for interaction where cultures are generated and shared.”<sup>77</sup> However, providing further evidence of the fluidity of war and violence as imaginative and critical categories, the term “urbicide” was first coined by science fiction and fantasy writer Michael Moorcock in 1963, and it was taken on by critics of 1960s urban renewal schemes in the US, particularly architecture critic Ada Louis Huxtable in the 1970s.<sup>78</sup> Sociologist Marshall Berman also adopted the term, describing urbicide as “the murder of a city.”<sup>79</sup> Scholars who have extended this or provided further understandings of urbicide include Martin Coward and a number of contributors (including Coward) to Stephen Graham’s edited book *Cities, War and Terrorism*.<sup>80</sup> Graham’s opening chapter contribution to the book shows how urbicide can be considered, broadly, as an ingredient in modernism and modern urban development generally, while subsequent chapters engage with the contexts of war specifically, including place and identity annihilation owing to acts of terrorism. In his chapter contribution to the following collection, De Cauter develops his thinking around the concept of urbicide.

On the other hand, scholarship on infrastructure and power examines how urban planning and infrastructure appears to work at times, aggressively, to sow or perpetuate divisions within society such as the disunities driven between socioeconomic classes, ethnic communities and

gendered identities.<sup>81</sup> In this case, the aforementioned wars on poverty, drugs and terror resonate with “combat” that appears to be waged variously by urban planners, municipal authorities and private developers worldwide on the underprivileged, the alien and vulnerable. This line of attack entails restrictions on citizens’ “right to the city” – a rallying cry and subject for research – by means of limiting their access to participation in planning processes, to public spaces, transportation, communication and cultural resources.<sup>82</sup>

Gavin Shatkin writes about constrained opportunities for participatory planning and urban citizenship in South Asian cities owing to ubiquitous development of large-scale “Urban Integrated Mega-Projects” following models in Singapore and Shanghai that result in “displacement and disruption of existing economies and social relations.”<sup>83</sup> In a similar vein, in the following collection of chapters, Redento Recio and coauthors reflect upon what amounts to the authoritarianism of urban planning policies in the Asian region, specifically in the cities of Dhaka, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Quezon City. Their research interprets violence to entail “the politics of unseeing” whereby the civic participation, needs and aspirations of residents in poorer urban districts and “informal” industries are sidelined or misinterpreted by municipal governments and planning officials in order to facilitate private-sector, large-scale development aligned with neoliberal ideology and practices. The authors initiate their study by citing Johan Galtung’s concept of “structural violence” whereby “violence is built into the sociopolitical structures and manifested in unequal power and uneven distribution of resources” in these case study cities.<sup>84</sup>

Scholarship on infrastructure and power can be positioned relative to the broader field of research interests in urban geography, urban vulnerability and social collapse.<sup>85</sup> Geographer Stephen Graham observes how:

It is one of the great paradoxes of urban life in the Global North that it often requires the collapse of the great, stretched-out infrastructures that sustain the city – the power grids, transport networks, water systems, and digital circuits – for their critical importance to become manifest.<sup>86</sup>

Communities of scholars approach this field in different ways. Researchers from the adjacent disciplines of disaster studies, disaster preparedness and the science of risk management are commonly concerned to elaborate the ideas of urban vulnerability and designing for urban resilience.<sup>87</sup> Historian Jeffry Diefendorf adopts a complimentary approach in his research, proposing we can better design urban futures by understanding wartime destruction and reconstruction in times past, especially the rebuilding of European cities following WWII.<sup>88</sup> Humanities and design scholars are commonly attuned to questions of social justice arising from the intersection of urban destruction and rebuilding. Circumstances of capitalist exploitation and geopolitical upheaval, terrorism and environmental catastrophe are provocative and conducive to their research.<sup>89</sup>

Chapter authors H  l  ne Frichot and Sepideh Karami write about the spaces and technology of infrastructure in their chapter contribution. They further enlarge the scope for research into violence and war to include the extra-urban settings of extractive industry that make modern cities and urbanism possible – but also vulnerable to systemic and sudden assault posed by risks to industrial communities and global supply chains. The authors compare recent events at the Sari Gunay gold mine in Kurdistan, Iran and Juukan Gorge in the iron-mining Pilbara region of Western Australia (WA). The former was the site of an unfolding environmental disaster when toxic mining wastes were discovered in 2020 to have polluted underground water supplies of local communities. The latter was the scene of cultural catastrophe when, in the same year, mining operations by corporate giant Rio Tinto resulted in the destruction

of ancient cave shelters that contained evidence of human habitation for tens of thousands of years. Frichot and Karami propose that “technical failure” can be construed as “social and political” failure, an equation that calls to mind Arendt’s belief that it was the “failure” of political systems that results in violence.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the pattern of negligence responsible for Sari Gunay’s contaminated aquifer bears comparison to the self-serving neglect of Pilbara mining company authorities and WA’s failure to strengthen its Aboriginal cultural heritage protections.

In conclusion, the following chapters highlight themes and case studies that establish research into violence and war as a rich, multidisciplinary and topical field of inquiry. Violence of different kinds and sources arise from the operations of technology – including material cultures and technology of architecture and urban infrastructure – but also from evolving patterns of agency, urban space and language. Above all, research into the field frames realms of conceptual possibility that push boundaries of thinking in the humanities and design-related disciplines to include multiple, complex and dynamic relations between knowledge and power.

## Notes

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# 3

## THE RISE OF ZOÖPOLITICS

### On urbanism and warfare 🗡️

Lieven De Cauter

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#### Introducing zoöpolitics

Biopolitics is the opposite of thanatopolitics. The old sovereign of the ancient regime takes life; the new sovereignty, the governance of the modern state, gives life. That is the well-known, lapidary formula which Michel Foucault employs and repeats in the fundamental passages where he introduces the term “biopolitics.” These passages are in a sense few and rather short: at the end of *Lectures on the Will to Know*, in a sort of extraterritorial last chapter “Right of death and power over life,” in which Foucault introduces the term for the first time.<sup>2</sup> In his courses at the *Collège de France*, he then sets out to further develop it (even if it is not implausible that it is his research for his courses that motivated him to smuggle this last extraterritorial chapter into his first volume of the *History of Sexuality*). In *Society Must Be Defended*, the course of the same year his first volume of the *History of Sexuality* was published, he opposes the mechanisms of biopolitics sharply to his former key concept, discipline: “So, we have two series: the series body – organism – discipline – institution; and the series population – biological process – regulatory mechanism – State.”<sup>3</sup> He calls discipline the “anatomy-politics of the human body,” as opposed to a “‘biopolitics’ of the human species.”<sup>4</sup>

In his next year’s course, *Security, Territory, Population*, he undertakes an attempt to pinpoint the technologies of biopolitics and first focuses on apparatuses of security (“*dispositifs de sécurité*”) to then rather abruptly turn to governance (“*gouvernementalité*”), which is a logical switch, for the modern state is not only about (repressive) security but also about controlling and organizing economy and society and the life of the population in a well-functioning, almost self-regulating way.<sup>5</sup>

The term “biopolitics” is strangely scarce in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, the subsequent course which, as the title suggests, should have been entirely devoted to the concept, but then got stuck, so to speak, in a genealogy of neoliberalism.<sup>6</sup> With Margaret Thatcher coming to power in May 1979, Foucault maybe felt intuitively the need to make a most timely genealogy of this ideological movement at the moment it started conquering the world. In the meantime, it has become so totally hegemonic and omnipresent as to be almost invisible (as ideology), it is naturalized in the way the world functions and should function, with the management jargon as its lubricant.<sup>7</sup> Even if he somehow never got to a complete theoretical excavation of his neologism,<sup>8</sup> many of his examples make it very clear what biopolitics is: the rise of statistics on nativity and mortality,

medical care, hygiene and public health and the sanitation of cities form the kernel of the new sovereignty that gives life, that caters, regulates and *assures* life, the word Foucault uses in the manuscript of *Society Must Be Defended*,<sup>9</sup> as opposed to the old sovereignty that takes life.

Of course, what Foucault sketched as a historical shift from the ancient regime (the power that takes life) to the early modern state (the power that gives life), is in fact a dialectics (as he was also well aware of, but did not use the word): both biopolitics and thanatopolitics are at work in our society. It is too obvious for words – warfare is and remains the manifestation of the sovereignty that takes life. In fact, we have seen a very overt return of thanatopolitics, with the many wars in the Middle East. More specifically, the old top-down sovereignty of taking life took on two new forms recently: the massive ‘shock and awe’ of the Iraq invasion,<sup>10</sup> and the almost surgical drone warfare. Both have something of divine violence: omnipresent and invisible lethal force striking from above.

Foucault suggests an inherent link between biopolitics and thanatopolitics in his first reflections on biopolitics. It is biopolitics leading to racist politics to genocide. In his own words:

If genocide is the dream of modern state, this is not a return to the old right to kill; it is because power situates itself and is exercised on the level of life, of the species, of race and massive phenomena of the population.<sup>11</sup>

Although it is indisputable that this link has existed, to reduce the politics of modernity and of the modern state to this, seems somewhat a sort of *reductio at Hitlerum* (playing the Nazi card). The fact that fascism has used biopolitics as an alibi for thanatopolitics is maybe not sufficient to discard all biopolitics. With the rise of urbanism, in the sense of urban planning and the sanitation of the city, and culminating in the rising welfare of the ‘caring’ state, biopolitics have proved largely be beneficial. Foucault’s own examples of politics to save populations from famine and epidemics, prove that a positive or ‘affirmative biopolitics’ should be safeguarded against totalizing reductions to extremes.<sup>12</sup> In fact, after his refocusing on the apparatuses of security and governance, this inherent link with fascism and state racism seems to disappear in his work (something that seems to have escaped many of his commentators).

Biopolitics is, as Foucault stresses in all of the three courses, directed at a new entity: the population. Whereas discipline, Foucault’s first cycle of research, is directed toward the individual, biopolitics is directed toward the population as such, in its entirety, and it ‘caters for’ or ‘assures’ life. This has important consequences. It means that fingerprints, airport checks, iris scans, the entire security routine we have to undergo under the state of emergency due to the War on Terror, is not to be captured, as the great Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (and beloved mentor) does, under the term of biopolitics. It might be called biometrics, but it is not biopolitical in the strict sense of the word. However inspiring and paradigmatic the work of Agamben, in general, and the *Homo Sacer* cycle, in particular, his use of the term “biopower” constitutes a serious shift away from Foucault<sup>13</sup> precisely because, in Agamben, the sovereign is always the old, Schmittian sovereign who decides on the exception, declares the state of exception and relies on the power to take life or to put it under a ban.<sup>14</sup> In a sense, Agamben dismisses the entire history of the modern state, with its division of powers, checks and balances and, above all, dismisses the welfare state, with its gigantic machinery of ‘catering for’ and ‘assuring’ life, as if nonexistent – or at least negligible and deeply despicable.

Hence my proposal to add a logical third concept: besides thanato- and biopolitics, zoöpolitics.<sup>15</sup> That is completely in line with Agamben’s very own and rather influential, if not crucial, distinction between *bios* and *zoè*, cultured life (clad with language, culture, rights) and bare life (animal life, natural life, the body minus language, culture, rights).<sup>16</sup>

Biometric security technology checks us on the level of our bare life – and in doing so, in a sense, reduces us to bare life. This reduction, which is omnipresent in the politics of security and control, we could call zoöpolitics. By introducing this new term of zoöpolitics, I try to show that biopolitics in the sense of Agamben is not biopolitics in the Foucauldian sense, for it is not directed toward the catering and assuring of life but toward the control of suspected or rejected subjects and it is not, or not always, not essentially, directed to a population, but mostly toward the individual. Zoöpolitics is a treacherous in-between: in between thanatopolitics, the right of sovereignty to take life, and biopolitics, sovereignty that gives life, zoöpolitics neither takes nor gives life but controls it by the reduction of the human life form (*bios*) to mere body (*zoè*). It can also be a transition point, the point where biopolitics can and, sooner or later will, turn into thanatopolitics.

The concentration camp is the place where biopolitics turns into zoöpolitics, the extermination camp is the place where zoöpolitics shifts into thanatopolitics.<sup>17</sup> Of course, any concentration camp can always be turned into a thanatopolitical apparatus. The same can be said of refugee camps, unfortunately: they should be apparatuses to protect and save lives, and therefore are in essence biopolitical devices, but they can be easily attacked from the outside, or terrorized from the inside. The massacre of the refugee camp of Shabra and Shatilla in Lebanon, is emblematic for this reversal from safe haven into mass slaughter.

In short, there is a continuum of these three politics, and yet they are very different and should be seen as ideal-typical distinctions. Now we can start to look at our topic: urbanism and war. These three terms, biopolitics, thanatopolitics and zoöpolitics, will enable us to highlight three ideal-typical politics toward the city: urbanism in the sense of urban design as biopolitical discipline, urbicide as radical thanatopolitics toward the city and finally security and control, with its strongest paradigmatic version, colonial occupation, as a zoöpolitical approach toward the urban environment.

### **Urbanism as biopolitics**

Urban planning and design, in short urbanism, is a paradigm of biopolitics, if not *the* paradigm. The rise of medical care, hygiene and public health – Foucault gives the examples of measure against famine and epidemics – and the sanitation of cities formed the kernel of the new sovereignty that gives life, that caters and assures life of this new entity called the population, as opposed to the old sovereignty that takes life. In *Security, Territory, Population*, he explicitly takes the early urbanism of the late 18th Century with the case of Nantes, as an example, and aptly perceives that it is not sovereignty, discipline, order, symmetry that is at stake (which is done in cities like Richelieu), but circulation in the largest sense: circulation of goods, circulation of air, circulation of people.<sup>18</sup>

Besides military and economic aims, the sanitation of the city, healthcare and care for the (biological) well-being of the population<sup>19</sup> (by the building of sewer systems and other infrastructure) is an essential drive of urbanism. In fact, one could say that one of the basic drives of the birth of urban planning or *urbanism* in the 19th Century was the fight against epidemics. In Brussels for instance the river Seine was covered – a major urbanistic intervention – because the heavily polluted open sewer constituted a health risk and caused a cholera pandemic. I do believe that it is important to stress this: urbanism is one of the most paradigmatic forms of biopolitics, of assurance, control of and care for the population, of the democratization of wellbeing, the rise of the welfare state, of progress, of modernity in general. That is an important lesson we can learn from Foucault's genealogy of *governance* and biopolitics in his courses at the *Collège de France*, even if he himself tends to stress the control in these “apparatuses of security.”<sup>20</sup>

## Urbicide as thanatopolitics

If urbanism, as essentially the sanitation and organization of the city, is a basic paradigm of biopolitics, what would then be the ‘urbanism’ of thanatopolitics? Urbicide in all its various degrees and forms could well be the one term that encapsulates it.<sup>21</sup> Indeed urbicide supplies the exact opposite of urbanism as a paradigmatic form of biopolitics as the assuring the life of the population, as it forms radical thanatopolitics directed toward the city. It is somehow the urban counterpart to ethnic cleansing. Urbicide is a recent term, invented by Michael Moorcock and derived from genocide, and means literally “the killing of a city.”<sup>22</sup> Although it was introduced to a wider audience by Marshall Berman to describe the transformation planned by Robert Moses in New York,<sup>23</sup> it is an age-old phenomenon.

It is an antediluvian, mythical form of power. The arch-model of sovereignty, God, destroyed several cities: Sodom and Gomorra were wiped from the earth, and Nineveh escaped his wrath only to teach the prophet Yonah a lesson. This divine *tabula rasa*, this erasure can be conceived of as the archetype for later sovereign erasure, the archetype of total war on the city. In a similar vein, the epic of epics, Homer’s *Iliad*, is the story of urbicide: the destruction of Troy. This sort of total destruction was not only happening in a mythological past but also in real history. A legendary but very real urbicide was the destruction of Carthage by its arch enemy Rome. It was not only leveled to the ground, but even the soil was poisoned with salt so it would be infertile for ages to come. In these examples urbicide is also politicicide: the erasure of a political community, of an identity, of a culture. So, destroying the urban fabric is often a way, if not the best way, to destroy the identity of a people, to wipe out the enemy, not only physically but metaphysically, so to speak: not only psychologically, but sociologically, even anthropologically, by wiping out the culture itself.

Given this fact of politics as the fight over life and death of collective entities, based on the concept of the enemy, according to the definition of *The Concept of the Political* by Carl Schmitt, the city has been a stronghold, a military defense base since its beginnings, as classical authors from Thucydides to Mumford and McLuhan testify.<sup>24</sup> The medieval fortress city was built to protect its population, the bourgeois within the *bourg* (town), the *bürger* (resident) within the *burcht* (fortress). But this has to be seen in a dialectical way: the castle in the city was not only a safe haven in case of siege by enemies, it was also the dungeon or prison for criminals and enemies of the king and was a stronghold against popular uprisings of the citizens. This ambiguity is crucial to all sovereignty. Sieges and sacking were part of subjugation.<sup>25</sup>

Yet there was a period during which warfare did not affect cities so much. Even if the famous Vauban fortifications testify to the city as stronghold, especially along the borders of France, warfare was often a matter of armies confronting each other in the open. Waterloo is an allegorical name for this sort of deadly war tournament in the middle of nowhere, far from the city. Historians could study this possible correlation between Napoleon’s urbanism – I think particularly of Antwerp – and his attempt to spare cities from siege. The epic novel *War and Peace* of Tolstoy attests to this warfare in the open, the movement of armies confronting each other outside, and sometime far away from, the big cities. The plane and hills near Austerlitz are not exactly a central major city.<sup>26</sup>

It is in fact again in the 20th Century that the city becomes heart and target of warfare, with the total destruction of Ypres as a classical example from WWI and the bombings of London, Berlin or Dresden and Hiroshima as the painful paradigmatic examples of the second. This place annihilation by total destruction via area bombing is the extreme form of urbicide.<sup>27</sup> The urbicide of cities continued during the 20th Century, with the siege and destruction of Sarajevo during the Yugoslavian civil war as an almost iconic example. It is at this moment in fact that

the term “urbicide” takes center stage in the meaning of “the killing of cities.”<sup>28</sup> In the words of Lebbeus Woods:

(...) Sarajevo (...) turned out to be only the beginning of a new trend resulting from globalization, a proliferation of regional, often insurgent-driven wars that have resulted in the piece-by-piece destruction of cities and the killing of their inhabitants (...).<sup>29</sup>

Due to urbanization, Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT), have come to the fore in recent decades as a most important branch of military affairs.<sup>30</sup> The city, like in ancient times, is again the target, albeit often not necessarily in an urbicidal logic, but more in a logic of control, subjugation and colonization. Especially the transformation from linear, symmetrical warfare, of state against state, army against army, to nonlinear, asymmetrical warfare, states or coalitions of states against terrorist or insurgent networks, has contributed to this ‘urbanization of war.’

### **Zoöpolitical urban security regimes**

This brings us to our third angle. What is the urbanism of zoöpolitics? It is our hunch that this is the most basic form of urban politics today, even if it has many faces. It is a combination of the smart city, the security routines and cameras everywhere and, of course, the closed detention centers and (concentration) camps for ‘illegal migrants’ and refugees, that are so topical today. If urbanism is biopolitical and uricide is thanatopolitical, then militarized control and occupation could be called zoöpolitical.

We take Israel’s *architecture of occupation*, as Eyal Weizman has called and described it in *Hollow Land*, as a paradigm.<sup>31</sup> Our point is that this occupation increasingly supplies the model of our securitized urban spaces. The devices of this control, like checkpoints or biometrical security routines, are based on zoöpolitical screening and isolating the individual as mere body, as bare life, often reducing a person to his/her frail animality (*zōē*) and stripping him/her from his/her citizenship or cultural being, her/his being human (*bios*). One can highlight the essential process of this apparatus of occupation by stressing its zoöpolitical character. It is precisely because of the reduction to *zōē* that it can be so oppressive: a way of humiliating the colonized.

In this repressive urbanism of occupation, zoöpolitics and thanatopolitics form poles in a continuum, like in the camp.<sup>32</sup> The refugee camp can at any time transform from a detention center, like an army camp can easily be turned into an extralegal prison, like Guantanamo, and even turn into an outright ghetto under siege. Dheisheh Camp in Bethlehem was totally locked during the second intifada, as it was one of the epicenters of the Palestinian uprising:

The Israeli security forces (ISF) fenced in the entire camp during the first intifada, leaving a small turnstile as the only entrance and isolating the camp from the main road between Bethlehem and Hebron. The fence has since been removed, and the turnstile is no longer in use, though it is still visible at the camp entrance. During the second intifada, Israeli forces conducted incursions, house and arrest campaigns, and put the camp under prolonged curfews. Many of Dheisheh’s older male residents were arrested during the first and second intifadas. Despite being under full Palestinian control (Area A), the ISF still conducts frequent incursions and arrests inside the camp.<sup>33</sup>

Of course, this logic of incursion and lockdown can be extended to all occupied territories: the sieges on Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin during the second intifada are eminent cases of these shifts. This shift is also visible on a larger scale.

By retreating from Gaza, Israel clearly shifted from the zoöpolitics of occupation to the thanatopolitics of outright siege and destruction – calling Gaza a ghetto is not, alas, a metaphor. Operation Cast Lead<sup>34</sup> and Operation Protective Edge were ‘shock and awe’ attacks with the aim to massively destroy infrastructure and massively kill people. The ratio of Cast Lead was 1400 Palestinian casualties to 14 Israeli.<sup>35</sup> Protective Edge in 2014 was even more deadly with well over 2000 deaths and massive destruction. Israel’s retreat and subsequent ruthless bombing supply a typical example of a shift from zoöpolitics to thanatopolitics. It fits into an ongoing politics of expanding territory, land grabs, moving populations of colonists toward settlements and trying to enclose the Palestinians in an archipelago of enclaves and, if possible, chase them away by constant harassment, the bulldozing of houses, the uprooting of olive yards, raids, random arrests, also of children, or by refusing entrance to people holding double nationality, sabotaging Palestinian academic life, etcetera, etcetera – in short, a process of ethnic cleansing that started in 1948.<sup>36</sup> Even if the basic mode of its occupation we would call zoöpolitical, Israel is using the total set of domination techniques. In the words of Mbembe:

As the case of Palestine illustrates, late modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical. The combination of the three grants the colonial power absolute domination over the inhabitants of the occupied territory.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile (and not unrelated), war and civil war are ravaging the Middle East. In Africa, at least in the region of the big lakes, it is the disintegration of failed states, the state of lawlessness, indeed at times the state of nature, overt civil war, ethnic cleansing and alas, outright genocide, like in Rwanda. Again, Mbembe asserts:

In Latin America and elsewhere in Africa and Asia it is the economic cleansing by new enclosures and land grabs by the agro- and biofuel industry of the multinationals ... These massive and ongoing, if not very well covered events – crimes against humanity that seem to largely escape the mainstream press – are not to be captured under the term of biopolitics: It is not biopolitics as the giving and catering for and assuring life of the population as such, but on the contrary, it is zoöpolitics and thanatopolitics, or necropolitics.<sup>38</sup>

### Smooth space versus striated space

In order to understand the dialectics of war and cities in general and MOUT in particular, in a philosophical frame we should also learn from Deleuze and Guattari’s *nomadology* in *Milles Plateaux*: the war machine of the nomads operating in *smooth space* and the sedentary state operating in *striated space*.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the state captured and learned from the nomadic war machine – in a sense, the army is in essence a nomadic war machine. In any case, the opposition of ‘*espace lisse*’ (smooth space) and ‘*espace strié*’ (striated space) is most useful to understand urban warfare. The city, especially older cities, with their dense urban tissues, represent a blocked space, a space full of resistance, as opposed to the smooth space without hindrances of the open field. Here it is inevitable to see haussmannization also as a response to the urban barricade battles: on the large, straight boulevards it was easy for the army to move around the city and almost impossible to make barricades. In that vein, mostly to subjugate an uprising, the colonizer or occupier will destroy part of the urban fabric and make easy entrances for the troops. This way of drastic haussmannization was famously

introduced by the British colonizers, cutting a big anchor-shaped form in the urban fabric of Jaffa, by Operation Anchor in 1936.<sup>40</sup>

The 'walking through walls' is a more recent way to invade the dense city fabric of old cities and camps. This form of MOUT of the Israeli army in Jenin and Nablus has become paradigmatic, almost iconic. By penetrating via *wormholes* cut through interiors, the Israeli army inverted the logic of space: the build fabric as smooth space for the war machine of the Israeli, the street as striated space for the Palestinian resistance. Inspired by Deleuze, the Israeli army inverted the street (smooth space) and the build fabric (striated space) by cutting and moving through walls, moving like worms through the flesh of the cities, moving invisibly through private space, surprising and encircling the resistance from within, so to speak, and forcing the resistance fighters into the streets.<sup>41</sup> The fact that this form of MOUT is expressly referring to Deleuze's concepts of smooth space and striated space, as documented by Weizman, is particularly painful for philosophical minds.

In a more general frame, Israel has put an apparatus in place that creates smooth space for the colonizers, an archipelago of well-connected cities and settlements for the Israeli, and a set of disconnected enclaves for the Palestinians. Israeli colonists can drive the same distance in minutes, a distance, which for the occupied Palestinians costs hours, if not an entire day. The matrix of areas (A, B and C), the wall, the checkpoints make of the territories a set of isolated enclaves, that at any moment can be sealed off. That is the spatial essence of Israeli apartheid. Alessandro Petti pointed out that this double geography of Israel might be paradigmatic for our future spatial order.<sup>42</sup> Weizman has mapped in *Hollow Land* all the three-dimensional strategies to put this matrix into place.<sup>43</sup>

In this matrix of control, the population is reduced to bare life: the revolving doors at the checkpoints encapsulate this reduction to being just a body. The recent habit of arresting children at night is a way to not only traumatize the children, but the entire community, and to turn them into helpless people at mercy of the occupier.<sup>44</sup> The zoöpolitical logic of control can be reverted to thanatopolitics and urbicidal warfare, as soon as it serves the overall political agenda – as said, the 'decolonization' of Gaza was the prelude to total ghettoization (starvation included) and 'shock and awe' attacks.

This zoöpolitical phase of 'disurbanism,' with its thanatopolitical extremes, is becoming generalized. The opposition of striated space and smooth space points also to one of the big paradoxes of our time, the paradox of globalization: free traffic of commodities and insiders, the haves, in the space of flows and the return of hard borders to stop the outsiders, the have-nots. Neither the contemporary state nor the so-called superstates, or contemporary capitalism, are able to come to grips with this dilemma. Hence the return of hard borders in an attempt to turn the smooth space of globalization, the *space of flows* of Castells, into the immobilizing hindrance of striated space. Castells' famous distinction between *the space of flows* and *the space of place* can be helpful,<sup>45</sup> the first indicating the localized place of belonging and the globalized mobility of international travel and business. Interestingly, undocumented people ('illegal migrants') are excluded from both. The slogan "Nobody is illegal" in fact points to this injustice. The aim of Western migration politics is, when all is said and done, to stop the flows of migrants in space and keep them out of 'our' space of place. Therefore, the dealings with 'illegal migration' will become more and more militarized and based on deterrence by the politics of the worst kind, like the horrors of Moira camp on Lesbos attest. Frontex is the name of the shadowy paramilitary organization that is supposed to take care of 'protecting' European borders.

Zygmunt Bauman might help us to understand this condition as one of the results of globalization. The second chapter "Humanity on the move" in his book *Liquid Times* is a chilling account of the fact that modernity and globalization have produced a tremendous amount



of “human waste”: a surplus humanity.<sup>46</sup> But while in early modern times, say the times of colonization, they could be disposed of in faraway territories (America, Australia), there is no blank spaces left on the map to send them to or let them migrate to. The combination of population growth, neoliberal capitalism – with its by now universally accepted dualization and increasing inequality and war politics – has produced all sorts of people without place, perspective or means of survival: illegal migrants, unemployed youth, also often of migrant background. We find this ‘human waste’ in ghettos, in no man’s lands, in failed states, as refugees of wars, of civil wars, as ecological refugees and of course also as economic refugees, impoverished people seeking a better future. Like so many emigrants to America from the poorest regions of Europe, like Ireland and Sicily, did before them to escape hunger, evoked in *Angela’s Ashes*, the gabbing novel of Frank McCourt.<sup>47</sup> We have a short collective memory when it comes to both empathy with the predicament of the poor or for seeing their huge contribution to our economies (as cheap labor, often informal, based on ruthless exploitation, bordering on slavery).

The most concrete, if not obscene form of this human waste is the mass of people drowned in the Mediterranean while trying to reach Europe. According to UNHCR in 2015 there were 3771 deaths, in 2016 some 4000. As a UNHCR official said, “[f]rom one death for every 269 arrivals last year, in 2016 the likelihood of dying has spiraled to one in 88.”<sup>48</sup> In 2019, the count is some 1200 deaths.<sup>49</sup> But over the last five years (2014–2019), according to UN sources, 18,000 people drowned.<sup>50</sup> This sort of unbearable calculus gives an idea of zoöpolitics as a counterpart to thanatopolitics. Another concrete image of ‘surplus humanity’ is the 20 million people chronically facing starvation (since 2017) in Nigeria, South Soudan, Somalia and Yemen. It is in the news for a day or two and then disappears. So, to make a long and sad story short, this ‘surplus humanity’ has to be controlled and processed in a zoöpolitical way, at best. Moira camp as a hot spot has, in the meantime, replaced the fences in Ceuta and Melilla and Lampedusa, but this logic of hard borders, confinement for outsiders and security urbanism and gating for insiders, seems the inevitable path of our societies. I have called this new sort of society *the capsular civilization* that emerged at the turn of the millennium.<sup>51</sup>

Israel is the extreme, the ultimate paradigm, the *model state* (or *state-model*) so to speak, of this zoöpolitical security urbanism, this multidimensional spatial colonization and apartheid. Moreover, Israel is often involved in supplying know-how and supplying the devices to make this apparatus or matrix of military subjugation work all around the world: from the pacification of Bagdad after the invasion of Iraq, the infrastructure and technology of controlling borders against illegal migrants, to the security routines at airports. It supplies the model *and* the business-model of “disaster capitalism,” as Naomi Klein has aptly termed it. Even if it uses all forms of domination and control, the basic political mode of neoliberal disaster capitalism is zoöpolitics.

## The end of biopolitics

The rise of neoliberalism, which Foucault treated in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, might in fact mark the beginning of the end of biopolitics. The catering for life of the new sovereignty which culminated in the welfare state (as a redistribution system) shifted toward privatization, deregulation and flexibilization, and to responsabilization: you are responsible to cater and assure your own life. The end of biopolitics is very concrete, in a sense. Under neoliberalism, *care* becomes your own problem: that is one way to understand the whole idea of *responsibilization* of the citizen, as individual, as consumer. The end result is widespread dualization of society and precarization of ever larger parts of the population. We see the rise of a new (post)disciplinary society in a sense: the *psychopolitical* interiorization of the rules of universal competition and the

omnipresence of the management jargon and ideology spread by all sorts of institutions.<sup>52</sup> But it is at the same time a society of control, as Deleuze called it:<sup>53</sup> the exteriorization of (para) military apparatus of security. With terrorism, the state of exception has become the rule – almost five years after the terrorist attacks of 2016, the army is still patrolling in the streets and stations of Belgian cities – so Agamben was right.<sup>54</sup> “The militarization of urban space” that Mike Davis was warning us about in his *City of Quartz*, has come true, in a more literal sense than even he could have ever thought.<sup>55</sup> The craze of SUV vehicles that now have become the standard form of car, testifies to this militarization, as they are really armored vehicles of sorts, forbidding power symbols, profoundly anti-urban and anti-urbane by their sheer size. SUVs are in fact unsafe, as they are less easy to steer and are responsible for causing more mortal victims in accidents with pedestrians. Last but not least they are irresponsible in ecological terms as these cars are a lot heavier and less aerodynamic; therefore, they pollute more.<sup>56</sup>

With the demise and willful destruction of the welfare state, the biopolitical sovereignty comes to an end, like urban planning in a sense has come to an end. State-organized public health care, social security, public education and accessible culture are also under threat or being abolished by subsequent waves of austerity policies. The rise of the security industry and the disintegration of social security are two faces of the same coin. The demise of the welfare state is correlated to the rise of “armed government.”<sup>57</sup> This new form of governance cannot be simply captured in Foucault’s very localized, historical transition from the old sovereignty of the ancient regime to the biopolitics of the modern state, culminating in the welfare state. The zoöpolitical control will increase as information technology and cyberspace encloses us.

For Foucault, biopolitics is directed toward the population, and the population is limited to the territory, that is the biopolitical inscription of the newborn (*natus*) into the nation–state. In the age of *deterritorializations* and *reterritorializations*, the age of migration and mobility, biopolitics is literally losing ground. The ecological crisis is aggravating all this. Migration frays the biopolitics of the welfare state in Europe to the breaking point, so walls and camps and mobile border controls, security routines, become a matrix of surveillance that has to defend this biopolitical inside space from the dangerous outsiders, with Frontex as a dark (para)military complex. They make an apparatus of zoöpolitics, of the retention and detention of bodies that have lost or are refused the status of citizen (*bios*) and are reduced to bare life (*zoë*). This zoöpolitical control of ‘illegal migrants’ is always on the verge of shifting to thanatopolitics.

According to Alliez and Lazzarato, in their devastating book *Guerres et Capital (Wars and Capital)*, war is the essence of capitalism. Capitalism feeds a multiplicity of wars: civil wars, race wars, economic wars, colonial wars, wars against women, from the witch hunt to dispossessions.<sup>58</sup> In any case, urban warfare and urbicide are on the rise, from Sarajevo to Fallujah and Gaza. The war on terror as asymmetrical and nonlinear warfare has only enhanced this urbanization of warfare and this militarization of urban space.

The conclusion could be that we live through *the end of biopolitics*, we witness *the rise of zoöpolitics* and, alas, also an unseen proliferation, if not *metastasis of thanatopolitics*.

## Notes

- 1 \* Based on a lecture for the colloquium “Architecture and Wars,” ETH Zürich 2–3 June 2017. Curated by Samia Henni, this lecture served as a general introduction to the theme. Hence the very broad, introductory approach of this text.
- 2 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la Sexualité 1. La Volonté de Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).
- 3 Michel Foucault, *Il Faut Défendre la Société. Cours au Collège de France 1976* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1997), 223 (my translation).
- 4 Foucault, *Il Faut Défendre la Société*, 216.

- 5 Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population. Cours au Collège de France 1977–1978* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004).
- 6 Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la Biopolitique, Cours au Collège de France 1978–1979* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004).
- 7 We made a modest contribution to fight this propagation of neoliberalism by the management jargon. See Rudi Laermans, Lieven De Caeter and Karel Vanhaesebrouck, *Klein Lexicon van het Managementjargon. Een Kritiek van de Nieuwe Newspeak* (Antwerpen: Epo, 2018). Unfortunately, it is not translated.
- 8 For a very thorough reading of Foucault’s meandering, see Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
- 9 Foucault, *Il Faut Défendre la Société*, 223. Footnote is in respect to the main text quoted sequence on the two series: ‘Manuscript: instead of ‘regulatory,’ assuring [assurantiel]’ (my translation).
- 10 For more background on the neocon military doctrine of ‘shock and awe,’ ‘full spectrum dominance’ and ‘preemptive strike,’ see my text “Welcome to the New Imperial World Order” in *The Capsular Civilization. On the City in the Age of Fear* (Rotterdam: Nai010 publishers, 2004).
- 11 Michel Foucault, *La Volonté de Savoir*, 180. This focus on fascism is also strong in Agamben and Esposito, while biopolitics stretches over three centuries, and the social struggles for health insurance, unemployment fee, and pension, is much longer and deeper. In fact, this social security, the core of the welfare state, was – based on mutuality – invented by the industrial proletariat of the 19th and early 20th Centuries (my translation).
- 12 The expression ‘affirmative biopolitics’ I borrow from Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Timothy Campbell articulates in his introduction to Esposito’s book the opposing negative and positive readings of biopolitics in an exemplary way, in which Agamben on the one hand is cast against Negri and Hardt, and Esposito on the other. See Timothy Campbell, “Bios, Immunity, Life: The Thought of Roberto Esposito,” translator’s introduction (in: Roberto Esposito, *Bios*, vii–xiii).
- 13 I am of course not the first one to state this: see, for instance, Negri and Hardt, who criticize at the beginning of *Commonwealth* Agamben’s totalizing conception of sovereignty, leading to this reduction to fascism, and the concentration camp as universal paradigm of modernity based on the negative conception of biopolitics. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 4–5). See also Timothy Campbell, op. cit. Another, more random, example is Saïd Chebili, “Corps et Politique : Foucault et Agamben,” *L’information Psychiatrique*, 2009/1 (Volume 85), 63–68.
- 14 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). The entire cycle has been published in one volume in the meantime in French.
- 15 For a lengthier argument on biopolitics and the introduction of the term zoöpolitics, see my text “The Negation of the State of Nature” in *Entropic Empire. On the City of Man in the Age of Disaster* (Rotterdam: Nai010 publishers, 2012). I propose to write the word zoöpolitics with the unusual diæresis in order to avoid “zoo” – zoöpolitics is not the politics of the zoo, even if the human zoo of colonial exhibitions would make one of the paradigmatic, original, and, in any case, allegorical examples of reduction to bare life; there, zoo-politics would coincide with zoöpolitics. A Dutch sociologist, Willem Schinkel, has proposed something similar, but he called it ‘zoöpolitics.’ Willem Schinkel, “From Zoepolitics to Biopolitics: Citizenship and the Construction of Society,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 13 (2010): 155–72.
- 16 Giorgio Agamben introduced this very influential distinction, based on Arendt’s reading of Aristotle, in *Means Without End*, a sort of prologue to the *Homo Sacer* cycle containing many of the crucial concepts, like the camp and forme-de-vie (form-of-life). The small book opens with this distinction between *zōē* and *bios*. Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End. Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000), 3–22. For an early, premature reconstruction of the construction of the *Homo Sacer* cycle, see “The Bloody Mystifications of the New World Order. On *Homo Sacer* by Giorgio Agamben” in my book *The Capsular Civilization, On the City in the Age of Fear*, 154–73.
- 17 The most famous catchphrase of the entire *Homo Sacer* cycle, probably, should, in a sense be rewritten: the camp is not the biopolitical but the zoöpolitical (and-at-times-thanatopolitical) paradigm of the planet. See, Agamben, *Means Without End*, 45; Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 176.
- 18 Foucault, *Territoire, Population, Sécurité*, 19–25.
- 19 For the connection between modernism and healthcare see Beatriz Colomina, *X-ray Architecture* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2019).
- 20 Foucault, *Territoire, Population, Sécurité*, 46–47.

- 21 The work of Stephen Graham, who introduced me to the term, deserves to be mentioned here. I recommend Stephen Graham (ed.), *Cities, War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), and his monograph, *Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London & New York: Verso, 2010). See also: David Campbell, Daniel Bertrand Monk and Stephen Graham, “Introduction to Urbicide: The Killing of Cities?” *Theory & Event* 10, no. 2 (2007), doi: 10.1353/tae.2007.0055. Furthermore, there is the seminal work of Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2008). Coward’s framing of urbicide as “denying the possibility of ‘being-in-the-world’ for the purpose of territorial and social homogenization” fits well with the term thanatopolitics. When it comes to the historic overview of urban destruction, one can recommend Robert Bevan’s *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011; 2nd edition, 2016); Pamela Karimi and Nasser Rabbat’s *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage: From Napoléon to ISIS* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Architecture, 2016); and the “Introduction” in Lawrence Vale and Thomas Campanella’s *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 22 Michael Moorcock, “Dead God’s Homecoming,” in *Science Fantasy* #59, Nova Publishing (June 1963).
- 23 Marshall Berman, “Falling Towers: City Life After Urbicide,” in Dennis Crow, ed., *Geography and Identity*. (Washington, DC: Maisonneuve, 1996), 172–92. Besides the urban onslaught of the 1960s, like the urbicidal ‘Manhattan plan’ that destroyed the Brussels North Quarter, the modernist *tabula rasa* (clean slate) comes also to mind, Corbusier’s ‘*Plan Voisin*’ in Paris was and remains paradigmatic for this sort of ruthless flattening for high-rises and infrastructure. If it had been executed, the entire Rive Gauche (the left bank) would have been erased. Paris would no longer exist, in a sense.
- 24 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Penguin, 1964), 56.
- 25 Charles the Fifth subjugated Ghent and let the population walk about in ropes as if to be hanged, in an ultimate form of symbolic humiliation of the stubborn and proud population of the city where he himself was born. This strange political ritual gave the popular name till the present day to the inhabitants of Ghent, the *stroopkes* in Dutch – literally, the “nooses.” But the *sacco di Roma*, the plunder of Rome, is a more famous incident of ruthless subjugation by the armies of this same Charles V.
- 26 Slavkov, as it is called now, lies some 20 kilometers east from Brno, in Czechia.
- 27 It is what Kenneth Hewitt calls “place annihilation.” Kenneth Hewitt, “Place Annihilation: Area Bombing and the Fate of Urban Places,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 73, no. 2 (June 1983): 257–84.
- 28 The exhibition that famously shifted the discussion on urbicide from “aggressive urban development” (Berman) to “wartime urban destruction” (Graham, Coward) is “Warchitecture: Urbicide Sarajevo,” (SABIH, 1992).
- 29 Lebbeus Woods, “War and Architecture: Three Principles” (blog), accessed May 1, 2021, <https://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2011/12/15/war-and-architecture-three-principles/>.
- 30 See the cited works of Stephen Graham.
- 31 Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land. Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).
- 32 The original and literal meaning of a concentration camp: where you isolate or concentrate internal ‘enemies’ of all sorts: besides Jews and Roma people, also gays and communists, going back to another often forgotten origin: the colonial camps where forced laborers were concentrated.
- 33 United Nations Relief and Works Agency, “Dheisheh Camp,” accessed May 1, 2021, [www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/dheisheh-camp](http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/dheisheh-camp).
- 34 Statistics of the casualties by the Israeli Peace Organisation B’Tselem, See B’Tselem report “Fatalities During Operation Cast Lead,” accessed April 22, 2021, [www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event](http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event).
- A report by Human Rights Watch, “White Flag Deaths: Killing of Palestinian Civilians during Operation Cast Lead,” August 13, 2009, accessed March 21, 2021, [www.hrw.org/report/2009/08/13/white-flag-deaths/killings-palestinian-civilians-during-operation-cast-lead](http://www.hrw.org/report/2009/08/13/white-flag-deaths/killings-palestinian-civilians-during-operation-cast-lead). A report of an Israeli counterterrorist organization ICT claims that most casualties were actually combatants, see Avi Mor et al., “Casualties in Operation Cast Lead: A Closer Look,” *International Institute for Counter Terrorism*, accessed April 21, 2022, [www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Articles/ICT\\_Cast\\_Lead\\_Casualties-A\\_Closer\\_Look.pdf](http://www.ict.org.il/Portals/0/Articles/ICT_Cast_Lead_Casualties-A_Closer_Look.pdf).
- 35 See B’Tselem report “Fatalities during Operation Cast Lead,” accessed April 22, 2021, [www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event](http://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/during-cast-lead/by-date-of-event).
- 36 See on this, the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2007), and his very synthetic recent book *Ten Myths about Israel* (London: Verso, 2018).

- 37 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, translated by Steven Corcoran (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 82. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Mbembe calls thanatopolitics necropolitics. But what in the quote he calls biopolitics, should definitely better be called zoöpolitics, the fact that the entire Israeli population was vaccinated in world record time and the Palestinians not at all, is symptomatic: not biopolitical care or control, but zoopolitical reduction to bare life.
- 38 Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* is a long diatribe against this neocolonial violence.
- 39 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guatarri, *Milles Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980).
- 40 A picture of this iconic, brutal, grand scale incision in the urban tissue can be found in Stephen Graham, "Postmortem City, Towards an Urban Geopolitics," *City*, 8, no. 2 (2004): 165–96.
- 41 Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 185–220.
- 42 Alessandro Petti, *Arcipelaghi e Enclave. Architettura dell'Ordinamento Spaziale Contemporaneo (Archipelagos and Enclaves. The Architecture of the Contemporary Spatial Ordering)* (Milan: Bruno Mandadori, 2007).
- 43 He calls this also a "politics of verticality." Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 12. It is this three-dimensionality that explains the title of the book.
- 44 There are all sorts of international reports attesting this, see UNICEF, accessed April 22, 2021, [www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF\\_oPt\\_Children\\_in\\_Israeli\\_Military\\_Detention\\_Observations\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_-\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf). See also, Defense for Children International, accessed April 12, 2021, [www.dci-palestine.org/issues\\_military\\_detention](http://www.dci-palestine.org/issues_military_detention).
- I had the pleasure to meet a Palestinian-French legal activist, Salah Hamouri, being himself a former youngster prisoner, helping these traumatized children. He himself has been in and out of prison since 2018.
- 45 The distinction between the *space of place* and the *space of flows* introduced by Manuel Castells in his classic *The Rise of the Network Society* (New York: Palgrave 1995).
- 46 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
- 47 Frank McCourt, *Angela's Ashes* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1997).
- 48 UNHCR, "Mediterranean Death Toll Soars, 2016 is Deadliest Year Yet," October 25, 2016, [www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2016/10/580f3e684/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-2016-deadliest-year.html](http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2016/10/580f3e684/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-2016-deadliest-year.html).
- 49 Missing Migrants Project, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.
- 50 Reuters, "UN: Migrant, Refugee Death Toll in Mediterranean Tops 1,000 for 6th Year," October 01, 2019, [www.voanews.com/europe/un-migrant-refugee-death-toll-mediterranean-tops-1000-6th-year](http://www.voanews.com/europe/un-migrant-refugee-death-toll-mediterranean-tops-1000-6th-year).
- 51 Lieven De Cauter, *The Capsular Civilization. On the City in the Age of Fear* (Rotterdam: Nai010 Publishers, 2004).
- 52 This neoliberal discipline by self-exploitation has been analyzed many times, but in the most succinct and brilliant way maybe by Byung-Shul Han, in *Psychopolitics, Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (London: Verso, 2017).
- 53 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October*, 59 (Winter, 1992): 3–7.
- 54 This thesis of Agamben, a recurrent theme in the *Homo Sacer* cycle, and particularly in the book *State of Exception*, goes back to Walter Benjamin. For an early reconstruction of the issues and stakes of the *Homo Sacer* cycle, see my text "The Bloody Mystifications of the New World Order," in *The Capsular Civilization*.
- 55 Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990).
- 56 On the poor ecological performance of SUVs, see: *Wired*, "SUVs Are Worse for the Climate Than You Ever Imagined," Nov. 29, 2019, [www.wired.com/story/suvs-are-worse-for-the-climate-than-you-ever-imagined/](http://www.wired.com/story/suvs-are-worse-for-the-climate-than-you-ever-imagined/); on the same poor ecological performance and their poor safety, see Rob Hull, "Five Reasons Why You SHOULDN'T Buy an SUV - from Being too Big for Width Restrictions to Poor Fuel Economy," *This is Money*, 11 January 2020, [www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/cars/article-7870199/Five-reasons-SHOULDNT-buy-SUV.html](http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/cars/article-7870199/Five-reasons-SHOULDNT-buy-SUV.html); on their being more lethal than usual cars, see IIHS, "New Study Suggests Today's SUVs are More Lethal to Pedestrians than Cars," June 16, 2020, [www.iihs.org/news/detail/new-study-suggests-todays-suvs-are-more-lethal-to-pedestrians-than-cars](http://www.iihs.org/news/detail/new-study-suggests-todays-suvs-are-more-lethal-to-pedestrians-than-cars).
- 57 This is the term proposed by Bart De Wever, the most powerful politician in Belgium, who in the same breath proposed to inscribe the state of exception into the constitution.
- 58 Eric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Guerres et Capital* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam, 2016). In the meantime, translated into English.

# 4

## THE 2015 PARIS TERRORIST ATTACK

### A threat to urban life and territorial integrity

*John Hanna*

#### **Introduction**

On Friday, 13 November 2015, Paris witnessed a series of coordinated terrorist attacks carried by at least three militant groups affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS),<sup>1</sup> on five different spots around the 10th and 11th arrondissements located in the North and East of Paris, as well as spots in the vicinity of Stade de France in Saint-Denis, just outside the administrative border of the city of Paris (Figure 4.1).<sup>2</sup> Inside Paris, the terrorists attacked numerous targets that form a range of public places varying from concert halls to restaurants, coffee shops, terraces, streets and sidewalks.<sup>3</sup> The variety and seeming randomness of the targets rendered the urban space as a network of unlimited potential targets, where anything can be attacked.<sup>4</sup> While the attacks were still taking place in the streets of Paris, then French President François Hollande appeared on French television from his residence, the Élysée Palace, to inform the public that two decisions had been taken: the first was the declaration of a state of emergency across the whole territory, and the second decision entailed the closure of borders.<sup>5</sup>

The two decisions – in the exact articulation used by the French president – can be interpreted as both: a reemphasis of the geographical limits of the French state through proposing a heightened control over the external borders of France; and a rearticulation of the practice of the political power over the space bounded by such limits, through declaring the geographical range of the state of emergency as one that is active across the whole territory. From a geopolitical perspective, and at the national scale, what is highlighted is the concept of territoriality, which is central to the practice of ruling in the modern nation-state.<sup>6</sup> Here, power relations become organized when the members of a certain group, sharing a given geographical space, consent to the ruling power exercised by a political entity over the range of this space.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, what Hollande did in the few hours following the first attacks was to highlight the need to maintain the territoriality of the French state. The words which Hollande chose and used carried the meaning that particular measures will be taken to reassure and underscore the integrality of the French territory. This can be seen as a form of rigid territorialization, a term this chapter borrows from the British geographer, Derek Gregory, who investigated a similar practice in the US following the attacks of the September 11th, through the closure of borders and airspace.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 4.1 Republic Square at the border between the 10th and 11th districts of Paris. Photograph by John Hanna, 2018.

Political discourses around territorialization play an important role in producing imaginative geographies. These geographies are charged with political and ideological meanings. These meanings often intersect with questions of identity, belonging, inclusion and/or exclusion.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, imaginative geographies incorporate particular power relations. This process is neither static nor limited to the fictional and mental level in that these geographies “combine something fictionalized with something real.”<sup>10</sup> They are performative, and through their performativity, imaginative geographies produce new spatial orders and realities. Through the means of labeling and partitioning, imaginative geographies are used by various political actors to facilitate and promote the exercise of power and performance of violence over different spaces. From Algeria to Afghanistan and Iraq, the previous decades brought strong examples of how imaginative geographies have been utilized by major political powers to promote the deployment of military forces and the expansion of landscapes of violence.<sup>11</sup> The concept “imaginative geographies” itself has been coined by Edward Said in his works,<sup>12</sup> with a focus on the colonial and post-colonial practices along the Occident–Orient nexus. However, it remains applicable for the investigation of how identities become formulated around spatial features, such as, but not limited to, geographic boundaries or distance, where proximity plays a central role in understanding the self, the similar and the different.<sup>13</sup> Since the introduction of this term by Said, the concept has appeared in the works of other geographers making a life of its own.<sup>14</sup> In addition to its employment as an analytical frame for studying foreign policies, ‘imaginative geographies’ has been utilized by various scholars to address issues of geographical framings, discourse and representations in various western contexts, often in relation to the development of national policies and the performance of security in marginalized spaces in countries like the United States and France.<sup>15</sup>

Building on the work of Said and its reinterpretations, this chapter analyzes the spatial references and geographical frames that a selection of elite French state officials such as the president, ministers and mayors used in their public statements and declarations following the attacks of November 2015. This selection of declarations addresses a range of scales varying from the nation-state to the city and the neighborhood, based on the political mandate or executive role of each of the featured officials. The analysis investigates how the utilization of distinct metaphors and framings has promoted specific forms of spatial organization in relation to each of the discussed scales. The main objects (and scales) of analysis are the 10th and 11th arrondissements which were the center of the November attacks, Paris as metropolitan capital and France as a sovereign nation-state. The chapter examines the different ways through which the terrorist attacks and terrorist threat have been spatially conceptualized and situated against conceptualizations of Parisian and French spaces in order to ask: how did the French politicians and administration (spatially) refer to the events of November 2015? How did these spatial references contribute to the production of particular geographical imaginaries? To what extent did these imaginaries promote a distinct form for the reorganization of these spaces in response to the attacks?

The argument is that the discourse of the French administration following the terrorist attacks of November 2015 both followed particular spatial logics and produced new spatial realities. In doing this, the chapter advances the discussion on the relevance of spatial analytical categories and offers a novel approach to understanding the spatiality of terrorist violence. It is noteworthy to underscore that the aim is not to critically assess the authenticity of this discourse and whether the utilized metaphors are proportionate to the nature of the attacks. What is central to the analysis here is to demonstrate how post-terrorism discourse reacts to, enforces and develops spatial conceptualizations of various spaces and scales, triggering certain spatial consequences, such as stricter border control, intensified securitization of the urban space or, in some cases, the endorsement of exclusive sets of socio-spatial activities in the public space at the expense of others. Thus, the first section of this chapter sets forth the theoretical and analytical framework for investigating the spatiality of terrorist violence through the lens of political discourse and imaginative geographies. The second and third sections look at the specific case of the attacks of November 2015 in Paris to provide an analysis of the dominant spatial imaginaries that circulated in the official and public discourse in the wake of these attacks.

### **Discourse and imaginative geographies**

Discourse is a system of language and ideas which structures how societies understand their own worlds. For Michel Foucault, the circulation of particular ideal representations by given actors and discourses produce social meanings.<sup>16</sup> The process of meaning production through discourse is central for the formation of identities and social relations.<sup>17</sup> In other words, discourse is the means through which language is used to create certain ideas about the world and the way it is lived and experienced. In politics, ideas about national identities and political order often circulate through the discourse of major political actors, who are constantly required to justify their actions to their publics.<sup>18</sup> These discourses enable particular conceptualizations of possible modes of governance. The promotion of certain national ideas in comparison to others is often related to the “power resources of political actors.”<sup>19</sup> Several factors can contribute to these power resources, such as the legitimacy of actors, resonance with older concepts of political order or the historical moment and context surrounding the circulation of the discourse.<sup>20</sup>

From a geographical perspective, ideas about national identities, governance and international relations develop through an interplay between discourse and space.<sup>21</sup> This can occur at different



levels. On one level, it is through discourse that our ideas become conceptualized regarding national and local spaces, their historical continuities, their political nature with the implication of how inclusive or exclusive they could be and the socially accepted spatial practices within these spaces.<sup>22</sup> On another level, political discourse does not emerge in a spatial void. It emerges from sites that represent certain regimes of political power or knowledge. These sites and places from which a discourse emerge play an important role in the legitimization of a discourse among its public.<sup>23</sup> For instance, a discourse about the national identity of France emerging from a side talk by a group of friends sitting on the banks of Canal Saint-Martin in the 10th arrondissement of Paris on a summer night could hardly be legitimized equally to one that emerges in a session of the French National Assembly in Palais Bourbon in the 7th arrondissement, following a major political event.

Building on this understanding of discourse, geographers largely agree that spatial imaginaries are the systems of language through which representations of places and spaces are developed and disseminated.<sup>24</sup> Through these systems, the human awareness and comprehension of surrounding and distant geographies is developed in relation to notions of collective identity, the self and the other. The way a group of people collectively talk about or represent a particular place or a spatial formation, shapes their imagination of this place, regardless of how truthful this representation is to the nature of this place and how it is spatially perceived and practiced by different groups.<sup>25</sup> These imaginaries provide particular narratives of the past, the present and promote select futures over others. The articulation of such spatial narratives is often structured by what brings a group of people together, such as proclaimed common interests or social constructs of celebrated pasts and historical continuities.<sup>26</sup>

As such imaginaries develop, a simultaneous process of othering takes place. A spatial imagination and conception of a place do not only define what it is, but also what it is not.<sup>27</sup> In her work on the relational nature of political and collective identities, Chantal Mouffe elaborates that the formation of collective identities is defined by the construction of difference, where the “self/we” is outlined through the demarcation of an “other/they.”<sup>28</sup> This remains relevant for spatial and geographic identities. For instance, to imagine a given geography as French is simultaneously to imagine it as a geography that is necessarily not English, American or Egyptian. What makes it French is that it is nothing else, even if it resembles, adjoins or has direct links to any other geographies. Indeed, different geographies share many similarities, but they are not the same. These perceived differences are central for the socio-spatial conceptualization of home geography. Here, the utilization of references to boundaries and proximity facilitates the development of these imaginaries along axes of similarity: how similar is a particular geographical setting to ours. Spatial imaginaries are fundamentally political.<sup>29</sup> They are developed through systems of knowledge that engage deeply with questions of power, identity, inclusion and exclusion. Not all actors involved have an equal level of agency, nor do they contribute similarly to prevalent discourses and spatial imaginaries. These imaginaries are developed in respect to particular hierarchies which both directly and indirectly influence their levels of reception, dissemination and naturalization. As the political agency of one group of actors facilitates the naturalization of one imaginary, it simultaneously mutes, downgrades and discredits other imaginaries. A naturalized spatial imaginary is one that becomes accepted by a major part of a social group as an honest representation of a particular geography.<sup>30</sup>

Places and various spatial constellations enjoy different imaginaries among different groups.<sup>31</sup> Circulated spatial imaginaries of Paris among non-Parisians might highlight completely different elements than those present in the imaginaries of many of the city’s residents and workforce.<sup>32</sup> The imaginaries of the first group could include elements such as terrace breakfasts with the Eiffel Tower in the background, a walk in the rain in the

Champs-Élysées, or a summer's day picnic in Montmartre,<sup>33</sup> while completely excluding a large number of the city's 20 arrondissements. On the other hand, the imaginaries of the second group could hold references to traffic jams, busy metro stations, the underpasses of the Périphérique (Paris ring road) or the social housing towers around the suburbs of the city.<sup>34</sup> This becomes particularly relevant in contested geographies and spaces, where different groups hold different claims to their history, present and preferred futures. Every different group might maintain a different representation of the same geography through the utilization of metaphors and references that reflect a given group's identity and interests. The multiplicity of representations is not limited to spoken or written language. They often become manifested in the space they represent, producing various spatial and power dynamics that constantly reshape these contested geographies.

The Haussmannian planning in the mid-19th Century, the demolition and the post-war replanning of the Parisian Les Halles market in the 1960s, and the new interventions of the 2000s bring relevant examples. In each of these phases the spatial imaginaries of one particular group of what the center of Paris represents, and what futures it may have, have been promoted over the imaginaries of other groups. The power resources of each of these particular powerful groups at a particular moment in history enabled them to materialize their imaginaries – that contest and exclude many other imaginaries – into reconstruction plans and other forms of spatial organizations. First, the market was seen to represent the centrality of the French state and its ability to organize the provision of service under its sponsorship. This has been translated in the construction of the historical pavilions in a strong architectural form, under which the market activities took place. During the post-war years, the site of the market was seen to play a different role in the new vision for the French capital. The spatial representation of this new vision necessitated a reorganization of space where transportation infrastructures become central. The imaginaries of the governing political class were translated into the demolition of the old market pavilions, the relocation of the market to the outer borders of Paris, and the introduction of a new underground central railway station on its grounds. Finally, a new imagination was promoted to render the site as a metropolitan public space. Such imagination was manifested in new architectural interventions, such as the controversial 2016 canopy project by Patrick Berger and Jacques Anziutti, which brings a massive roof structure of curved form over the open space of Les Halles in what was once the living heart of Paris.<sup>35</sup>

All these material manifestations of the different imaginaries of Les Halles (often in relation to other broader imaginaries of Paris as a whole), can be seen as a form of performativity. This means that the geographical imaginations produced through the utilization of language<sup>36</sup> are performative and can themselves produce new material realities.<sup>37</sup> While the works of the first generations of geographers and philosophers who addressed imaginative geographies (also in their preceding forms), such as the 1950s writings of Gaston Bachelard and 1970s thinking of Edward Said,<sup>38</sup> were mainly concerned with linguistic and ideological representations, the following generations advanced these approaches to look at the reciprocal relation between language and the material world.<sup>39</sup> This has been mostly achieved through looking at the performativity of spatial imaginaries. Performativity entails that the border between the linguistic and the ideological from the one side and the physical and the material from the other is rather vague. Representations are not limited to language. Rather, representations produce the same effects that they themselves refer to. An imagination of a particular geography may facilitate and promote a certain set of political actions that produce a material spatial transformation.<sup>40</sup> In his reading of Said's works, Gregory explains how the performativities of language were mostly productive of physical violence in colonized geographies under the imperialist projects of the western powers, where one group's "textual violence bleeds into physical violence."<sup>41</sup>

The past couple of decades have witnessed a significant amount of scholarly engagement with spatial imaginaries in contexts of conflict and violence.<sup>42</sup> For Gregory, the attacks of 9/11 in the United States, and its consequent war on terror, provided a strong case for underscoring how spatial imaginaries of the self/the other or the near/the far enable various sets of interventions and practices.<sup>43</sup> For Stuart Elden, this is not limited to spatial practices at home, but extends to allow and promote different forms of militarized spatial practices in distant geographies.<sup>44</sup> Virginie Mamadouh and Luiza Bialasiewicz explain how the European migrant crisis and the ascension of right-wing populism bring a more recent case of how the imaginations of Europe can be employed by certain actors to promote particular visions of order and future regional interrelations.<sup>45</sup> The development of spatial theory as social production of space and its propagation across different disciplines and fields call for an expansion of research approaches to spatial imaginaries and their circulation, particularly in relation to violence and other contemporary conflicts that face our world and its urban centers.<sup>46</sup> Annika Björkdahl and Susanne Buckley-Zistel call for widening the employment of the “analytical concepts of spatial theory,” such as “space, scale and sites” to generate new insights into the relation between space and violence.<sup>47</sup> An analysis of imaginative geographies, the way they are produced, shaped and performed could largely benefit from this proposal, as it offers a genuinely spatial perspective that extends beyond the linguistic classifications, largely utilized in discourse analysis. In other words, this analysis has the capacity to explain imaginative geographies, through spatial terms, in a way that fully explores their implications on the production of space. The following section applies the abovementioned analytical categories proposed by Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel, to the political discourse of the French administration following the terrorist attacks of November 2015. It uses these categories of space, scale, and sites to explain how this discourse produced a set of spatial imaginaries and promoted certain forms of spatial organization.

### **Terrorist violence: A threat to territorial integrity**

Even though the terrorist threat, the attacks and their influence were tangible by many residents and visitors of Paris,<sup>48</sup> discursive practices as observed in public statements and declarations of many French political actors contributed to the definition and interpretation of such threats. Through language and the utilization of particular frames and rhetoric, such as those of war and sovereignty, particular representations of the terrorist threat were produced in a way that created new social and spatial realities. This has often included references to spatial categories and notions such as magnitude, scale, proximity, boundaries, territoriality and locations. In most cases, the spatiality of the threat and the violence were not addressed independently but rather as a part of larger discourse. Moreover, the spatial references which have been used by these actors did not follow a clear thematic categorization. On the contrary, the state discourse engaged with these features as interdependent, overlapping and entangled with one another.

The declarations of the French officials following the attacks highlighted the magnitude of the attack as one “of unprecedented proportions,”<sup>49</sup> “a new kind of adversary”<sup>50</sup> and a “new context of war.”<sup>51</sup> In many of these declarations there was a tendency to describe it as “an act of war,”<sup>52</sup> committed by a “Jihadist army,”<sup>53</sup> as the statements made by the François Hollande on the 13th, 14th, 16th and the 27th of November 2015 show. This war discourse has been also highlighted by other state individuals, such as prime minister Manuel Valls in his interview with TF1 television channel on the 14th of November. Valls utilized the word “war” at least nine times during the ten-minute interview.<sup>54</sup> The rhetoric is reminiscent of, and reinforces the perception of, terrorism as “an act of war,” which emerged strongly in the wake of the attacks of September 11. This rhetoric has its strong spatial implications, and it enables certain

sets of actions: securitization at home and military intervention in distant geographies.<sup>55</sup> From an international relations perspective, an act of war contests existing boundaries, nation-state sovereignty and redefines territory.<sup>56</sup> Political scientists have been debating whether such contestation necessarily exists in terrorist attacks carried out in western countries.<sup>57</sup> While the criterial evaluation of whether terrorist attacks should be addressed as an act of war or as a criminal act falls beyond the scope of this chapter; the relevant argument here is how equating terrorism with an act of war highlights and produces certain spatial conceptualizations of home.

In France, the ‘act of war’ rhetoric entailed, on the one hand, emphasizing the territorial boundaries of the nation-state against the free-movement geography of the EU/Schengen area, which has been seen by a number of proponents of this rhetoric to have facilitated the mobility of terrorist groups.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the rhetoric simultaneously – addressed the ‘act of war’ as one that has been carried by enemies from within,<sup>59</sup> who would need to be confronted through a special reorganization of the domestic (national) space. The focus on the unprecedented magnitude and proportions of the attacks facilitated the dissemination of this war discourse. In a rearticulation of the words of French state officials, these terrorist attacks were larger in scale and different from any other previous terrorist attacks in Paris. For these reasons, the attacks of November 2015 required new definition and description, according to this discourse. From the perspective of French officials, defining the attacks as an ‘act of war’ seemed to be a choice of an appropriate relevance to the scale of the attacks. These attacks might have not followed a typical classical definition of war, particularly with regards to the existing legal codes, political nature of actors and hierarchies.<sup>60</sup> However, their proportions and magnitude have been rendered by this discourse as equal to that of a war. The relation between the magnitude of the attacks, proportions of the threat, and the circulated *war* definition enabled highlighting and addressing the territorial scale. The attacks and violence were moved from the urban setting of Paris and relocated against a much larger scale (that of France as a whole) which activates different spatial conceptualization. However, it was also repeatedly enforced through the utilization of a group of notions and metaphors.

Statements like “an act of aggression against our country,”<sup>61</sup> “the terrorists’ target was France as a whole,”<sup>62</sup> “Friday’s acts of war were – carried out on our soil with French complicity”<sup>63</sup> and “those who fell on November 13th were France, all of France”<sup>64</sup> were used by Hollande in his various declarations. Similarly, the then French minister of interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, used an even more direct reference to the territorial aspect as he spoke of France, which is “confronted in its territory with a terrorist attack.”<sup>65</sup> Utilizing all these territorial metaphors feeds into the activation of the geographical imagination of the nation-state; France, as the geographical territory with its known borders and boundaries, and the state with its political institutions and an ‘imagined’ collective identity, was foregrounded as a threatened space.<sup>66</sup> Such imaginary is fundamentally political, as it promotes a “collective form of identification” that is bounded to such space.<sup>67</sup> It has been circulated through the discourses of state officials who maintain a certain degree of power and agency, and it elaborates a certain exclusivity of the imagined space. The imaginary fixated social constructions of historical continuities, shared experiences and identity on a named geography and rendered it different than any other geography. This imaginary has been developed through a production of scale – the territorial scale in this case.

Many of these imaginaries were promoted and foregrounded by architectures of historical and political relevance. The public statements of the French president were made at the Élysée Palace, Versailles and the Invalides. The first is an 18th Century mini palace of a French noble which changed its function in the 19th Century to become the official residence of the President. The second is a 17th Century royal palace built for Louis XIII and expanded by his son Louis XIV. Besides being a main tourist attraction, it is currently the seat of the French parliament joint

sessions for constitutional revisions. The third was established in the 17th Century as a hospital for the disabled soldiers. It currently hosts the French national military museum and chapel as well as the tomb of Napoleon. The utilization of these French classicist architectures<sup>68</sup> afforded additional layers to the geographical imagination. It highlighted a historical continuity of the French state and facilitated the representation of ‘official’ France. Together with the dominant rhetoric, architecture enabled a degree of public consensus, at least at the official level. In this reading, the discourse becomes inseparable from the specific spaces within which it is publicized. These sites provided a necessary authorization for the discourse. The discourse became itself a product of these sites, and the sites became the discourse’s own “context.”<sup>69</sup>

To summarize the above discussion, the French state, represented by a number of its senior officials, circulated a spatial imaginary of France (a nation) that is facing an act of war. This imaginary was publicized from within architectures that symbolize the power of the French state, providing the imaginary with additional layers of legitimacy. The imaginary which has been developed through the production of the territorial scale in relation to the nation-state and its practice of sovereignty over its geography is performative. In its performativity, it involves the production of further spatial dimensions. To elaborate, by reemphasizing the conceptualization of France as a geographical territory and a sovereign state, the dimension of borders becomes simultaneously reinforced. The so-called ‘closure of borders’ emerges as a ‘natural’ practice for underscoring a rigid territorialization of France, which becomes materialized through specific spatial performances: the mobilization of the mandated authorities around the border areas, the introduction of random checkpoints and roadblocks and the resulting controlled movement of travelers inside and outside France under the new conditions of tightened security.<sup>70</sup>

Here, it becomes clear how various spatial elements and categories, such as scale, location, territory and borders intersect and interdepend on one another to play a central role in the production of spatial imaginaries. This process is dynamic, bidirectional and of high fluidity. The produced imaginary, through its performativity, gives new definitions to the very elements and categories that produced it. While these definitions are socially constructed in relation to given context and conditions, they become materialized through various repertoires, creating new spatial realities that are always developing and changing.

The French political discourse following the attacks of November was not limited to the territorial scale. It also addressed different scales interchangeably, in order to promote different conceptualizations for different contexts or occasions. For instance, a number of the references made in the political discourses still located the events within the city scale of Paris, others within the neighborhood scale of the 10th and 11th arrondissements, or the micro-geographical scale of the exact sites and architectures that had been attacked. The declarations made by Hollande referred mainly to Paris as the location of the attacks and were framed through the following rhetoric: “Attacks – are underway in the Paris area”;<sup>71</sup> “These women, these men, this Friday, November 13th, were in Paris”;<sup>72</sup> and “I do not forget the images from all over the world, celebrating in the same moment, the sacrifice of those who had fallen in Paris.”<sup>73</sup> On a few occasions, Hollande brought up the names of Saint-Denis and Stade de France football stadium, “[w]hat happened yesterday in Paris and Saint-Denis near Stade de France,”<sup>74</sup> and brought the immediate peripheral context of Paris into his speeches by saying that “we think about the innocent people who were cut down in Paris and in the outskirts of the city.”<sup>75</sup> On some occasions, Hollande was very specific about locating the attacks, down to the architectural scale of the Bataclan theater and its surroundings: “when time has come (for the terrorists) to launch their assault on the Bataclan”;<sup>76</sup> “They [the citizens] were on the terraces of cafes, these passageways that are open to meetings and ideas”;<sup>77</sup> “They were singing at the Bataclan”;<sup>78</sup> and “Many of the Bataclan victims had made music their job.”<sup>79</sup> The situation of the attacks in



Figure 4.2 À la Bonne Bière café terrace. The terrace is one of the attacked targets in the terrorist attacks of November 2015. Photograph by John Hanna, 2019.

locations that Parisians know of and the framing of selected spatial practices within these spaces, through the words of a major political actor, such as the head of the French state, both create an imaginary of these spaces and build a strong connection between the violence of the attacks and everyday spaces and practices. By bringing this very local scale, many residents and visitors of these districts and vicinities can directly relate to the terrorist event and its impact on their daily lives, even if they had not had a firsthand experience of the attacks.

Different forms of spatial conceptualizations were used and circulated in response to the same event. First, there is the conceptualization of France, the geographical territory, which is facing a threat of a great magnitude. Then, there is Paris, a global city which has been attacked for what it represents as the capital of the French state. There is also the 10th and 11th arrondissements which have been conceptualized through a particular framing of certain elements such as the terraces, cafes, public meeting places and concert venues (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). These various conceptualizations can contest or compete with one another, or they can complement and help in reinforcing a stronger image at the three different scales. The utilization of these conceptualizations at the different scales both strengthens a particular narrative about the identity of the addressed spaces and at the same time tones down all the other conceptualizations that may challenge this so-called *identity*.

### **Framing Paris: A spectacular urban life**

Imaginative geographies incorporate framing. As a cognitive social process<sup>80</sup> and a mode of political communication,<sup>81</sup> framing – in the broader sense – applies particular semiotics and symbolism to draw the attention of a given public to certain issues. This public commonly shares

similar culture codes, through which it becomes able to decode what has been communicated to them. However, by highlighting particular elements, framing intentionally obscures other elements and thus determines what is normative and what is not.<sup>82</sup> Imaginative geographies work on providing representations of spaces and their nature in a way that aligns with or contrasts certain sets of codes and cultures which are shared by a given group of people.<sup>83</sup> In this sense, through promotion of partition and distinction, spaces can be apprehended through their conceptualization as those which are *near* and belong to *us* as opposed to those which are *distant* and belong to the *other*.<sup>84</sup>

The utilization of frames (or spatial frames in this case) is central to mass communication as it works on facilitating the representation of spaces, through focusing on shared sets of codes as reference points. However, framing simultaneously – for the sake of facilitation – neglects the other variations that fall outside the scope of the communicated message.<sup>85</sup> This becomes problematic when it addresses complex urban contexts, such as the metropolitan city of Paris, which has multiple faces and identities.<sup>86</sup> These faces can be related to the history, social fabric, functions or the architectural styles of its different parts that are also divided along many physical, visual and social boundaries.

The two arrondissements that are the focus of this section are no exception. The 10th arrondissement extends from Gare du Nord, to the North, to La Villette in the East and Rue du (street of) Faubourg du Temple, to the South. It is home to a number of significant landmarks, such as the Northern and Eastern Railway Stations, Place de La République, Canal Saint-Martin and Saint-Louis Hospital (Figure 4.3). Around each of these spots, different groups of users live, work, circulate and visit; these scenes change from day to night and in accordance with the events taking place.<sup>87</sup> The area between Porte Saint-Denis and Boulevard de Magenta is known as the Turkish quarter. Many migrants of Turkish and Kurdish origins came to reside there in the 1960s to work in the textile industry. After the closure of many of the workshops following the gentrification of the area in recent years, they moved to the gastronomy business, establishing a number of Turkish restaurants and supermarkets on this side of the arrondissement. The area is also home to other ethnic groups such as Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese and Africans.<sup>88</sup>

The opposite end of the arrondissement around Sainte-Marthe square was developed as worker housing during the second half of the 19th Century. During the 20th Century, different groups of North African, Chinese and Balkan origin relocated to the area, which became home to a number of clothing workshops. Recent decades have witnessed the arrival of a creative class with a number of art studios, galleries and workshops opening in the district. Clearly, this had a gentrifying effect on the area. Rental prices started to surge, bringing financial challenges to the former precarious groups of residents.<sup>89</sup> Between the two ends, Canal Saint-Martin extends from the North to the South dividing the 10th arrondissement into two sides. During the 1980s, the area around the canal witnessed a transformation of many of the workshops and industries into gastronomy and nightlife activities. This is not typical to the Turkish quarter. The publics and visitors of Canal Saint-Martin can be seen as younger trendy groups who represent a particular social profile of Paris residents, many of which are not residents of the area.<sup>90</sup>

The 11th arrondissement shares many similarities with the context of the 10th, where various spatial identities and imaginaries are shaped around physical and socioeconomic boundaries. The 11th arrondissement is bounded by Boulevard de Ménilmontant to the East and the Bastille-République access to the West, and Rue du Faubourg du Temple to the North and the Nation-Bastille axis to the South. It is home to a number of frequented theaters and playhouses, such as the Cirque d'Hiver, Bataclan and Théâtre de la Bastille. The area around Rue Oberkampf in the northern one-third of the 11th arrondissement brings another example of gentrification. The western part of the long street cutting through the arrondissement from



Figure 4.3 Map of Paris showing the sites of the November 2015 attacks within Saint-Denis and the 10th and 11th arrondissements. Developed by John Hanna, based on Google Maps, 2021.

West to East went through a process of transformation in the 1990s, where trendy bars and cafes started to replace traditional crafts workshops. The working-class residents were introduced to new clientele and visitors from the inner districts of Paris. The eastern part of the street carries a different character where ethnic and Halal shops and butchers occupy the ground floors of many buildings.<sup>91</sup> The center of the arrondissement is also home to a concentration of Chinese wholesale shops around Rue Popincourt.<sup>92</sup> Just around the corner from Popincourt, in Rue de la Roquette and Rue Sedaine, the former residences of vulnerable and marginal groups have been replaced by hotels.<sup>93</sup>

Each of these groups of users inhabit these spaces differently. They also hold various imaginaries to these spaces, related to their own experiences. While many of these imaginaries can coexist side by side, some of them contest one another. For example, a further transformation around a trendy/festive imaginary can be interpreted as threatening



to remaining craftsmen or older (and particularly, precarious) residents. When these spaces become framed by a political actor around one certain aspect or imaginary, all the remaining imaginaries become toned down.

In the political discourse after the attacks, Paris (both as a well-defined location and a social space) has commonly been represented as a vibrant and civilized space, with a particular spirit. In his talk at the Hotel des Invalides on the 27th of November, Hollande referred to this representation, mentioning: “these women, these men ... were in Paris, a city that is coated by enlightenment ideas, a city that vibrates during the day and shines at night.”<sup>94</sup> In the same statement, he also referred to the “the spirit of Pzaris.”<sup>95</sup>

The specificity of Paris – and particularly the attacked quarters – is also very strongly, and understandably given her role and mandate, present in the interventions of the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, with RTL and BFTMV French TV channels. Hidalgo made statements such as: “All the Parisians – all the quarters were young, cosmopolitan, and open to the cultures of the world”;<sup>96</sup> “It is the heart of what makes the spirit of Paris”;<sup>97</sup> and, “I want to tell the Parisians, that they will not reach our solidarity, freedom, or altruism”<sup>98</sup> to describe the nature and the characteristics of Paris as a social space. Similarly, François Vauglin, member of the socialist party and the mayor of the 11th district during this period, used similar representations to describe the attacks during his intervention in the special session of the Council of Paris on the 16th of November 2015. Vauglin mentioned:

By choosing these bars, these restaurants, these festive places of the 10th and 11th arrondissements, these targets were taken because they are alive, popular, festive. These are places and neighborhoods where diversity is a strength, not a problem, places where integration is going well, places where there is no identity crisis.<sup>99</sup>

In a different incident, he reasserted these representations in his interview with the French newspaper, *Libération*: “that’s why the 11th (arrondissement) has been targeted: we live together, it scares the fundamentalists. We are their antithesis. They say: everyone must be like me, and we say everyone is different and we are good together.”<sup>100</sup> In January 2016, on the first anniversary of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, Vauglin once more, shared his representation of the district:

I remain convinced that diversity and youth have been targeted, which is why we must not change ... What bothers me is that it changes who we are, we are a host country, we are a land of welcoming, that’s why this place has been targeted, it is because it makes the fundamentalists uncomfortable. If we change who we are, we give them a piece of victory and that is what bothers me, and I do not believe for a second in the effectiveness of this decision.<sup>101</sup>

A similar discourse has been used by Rémi Féraud, mayor of the 10th arrondissement and also member of the socialist party. During his intervention on the same special session of the Council of Paris following the attacks, Féraud made close references to those of Vauglin. He stressed on the open and joyful nature of his district, stating:

The terrorists attacked the very symbol of our Parisian and French identity: the joy of living, sport, party, music, terraces that are the little soul of Paris. Le Carillon, Le Petit Cambodge: simple, familiar places that I would not have thought I would mention one day at the Council of Paris, usually reassuring places, open to all, halfway down the slope which goes from Republic to Belleville.<sup>102</sup>

Such representations reinforce and reproduce an imagination of Paris as open, cosmopolitan, civilized, diverse, free and vibrant. These are many aspects that can be true to the spatial narratives of many residents and visitors of the city and the attacked districts. However, it remains a framed imaginary: one that highlights particular spatial qualities at the cost of others. This representation is surely challenged by multiple everyday experiences of various communities in Paris, who would see, based on their experiences of the city, these spaces as uninviting, largely exclusive and inaccessible. Through their framing of these imaginaries, Vauglin and Féraud fixated positive notions and qualities to the geographical boundaries of their districts and assigned these spaces as ‘theirs (or ‘ours’ in their words)’. These spaces become ‘us – the civilized’ who agree on a certain understanding of culture and openness.

But this (spatial) identity of ‘who we are’ can only be constructed in a political space in relation to a constitutive other.<sup>103</sup> The spatial conceptualization of the 10th and 11th districts is internally defined by a different space, or rather different spaces, which are not similar to that of ‘us.’ In this representation, Vauglin and Féraud limit the ‘us’ to the spatial boundaries of the 10th and 11th arrondissements: a given space that shares similar social codes. The constitutive other space, in that sense, can cover a wide spectrum of spaces, ranging from those which are slightly similar and share *some* common values to those which belong to the opposite end of the spectrum: the “antithesis” (in Vauglin’s own words),<sup>104</sup> the spaces that are entirely different and which are conceptualized as backward, uncivilized and fundamentalist.

While the different dominant framings followed a largely similar logic, they addressed different scales. For Hidalgo and Hollande, the framing is broadened to include all Paris as one single enclosure. However, such framing takes for granted many aspects of the Parisian space that largely lack any form of consensus or agreement. First, this framing promotes Paris as a homogeneous space, paying little attention to the different conceptualizations attached to the 20 arrondissements of the city. Furthermore, it highlights Paris as a concept or a symbolic space of certain characteristics, in a way that tones down the various contestations over the definition of Paris and its boundaries. The communication of these imaginaries through state actors, such as the president and the mayors, indeed can have (but does not guarantee) an influence on the consciousness of social groups, as framing theory suggests.<sup>105</sup> By elevating some aspects that are usually attributed to the stereotype of the Parisian space (though maybe, this was only history) and highlighting them as the only and single ‘reality’ of Parisian life, the discourses of these state actors promote an interpretation of the attacks as directly plotted against a (largely debatable but promoted as normative) certain Parisian lifestyle and its associated social qualities.

Here again, these framed imaginaries are performative. The focus on the vibrant side of the Parisian nightlife has been highlighted through a number of statements by Hidalgo on her Twitter account, where she encouraged Parisians to get back to their normal life, emphasizing that resuming economic and cultural practices is essential for the city at this point.<sup>106</sup> In line with the comments of Hidalgo, a popular campaign became trendy on French Twitter under the hashtag “Je suis en terrasse/Nous sommes en terrasse” (“I am/We are in terraces”). Participants of the campaign circulated images carrying these sentences and promoted visiting terraces as a form of celebration of the lives of those who have passed, in defiance of the terrorist violence.<sup>107</sup> Only three weeks after the attacks took place, one of the attacked restaurants, À La Bonne Bière, reopened its doors. A huge sign carrying the sentence “I am on Terrace” has been fixed at the top of the entrance, where a large number of guests and sympathizers showed up on the 4th of December 2015.<sup>108</sup> The produced imaginaries of the 10th and 11th arrondissements, which have been circulated through the discourse of the French officials, structured the attacked spaces (and the rest of Paris) through promoting distinct forms of spatial practice and organization. These

imaginaries became materialized in spatial repertoires and practices, such as those identifying with and returning to the terraces. Moreover, this framing also provides for a rather simplistic reading of the attacks. A group of people who are socially progressed and developed, and who are open, peaceful and accepting of differences, are attacked by a group of villains. Such reading, besides downplaying the significance of spatial, social and anthropological readings of the terrorist attacks, disregards a long history of state-sponsored violence and discrimination in Paris, its suburbs and French colonies.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, this rhetoric was not born of the moment. It emerged as a continuation of a long history of similar representations and systems of values which have been central to the Parisian practice of urban planning.<sup>110</sup> A practice that – in many cases – had been violent in its production of social and physical boundaries between the central districts and their suburban surroundings, triggering and facilitating the exercise of discriminatory policing of the ‘other’ spaces beyond such boundaries.<sup>111</sup>

An exception to these official imaginaries and conceptualizations appears in the talk of Emmanuel Macron, the French Minister of Economy and Industry at the time of the attacks, on the 27th of November in front of the French National Union of Liberal Professions (UNAPL). Although Macron did not make a direct reference to Paris, he brought other characteristics of the French (social) space in his talk: it is a space “where injustices are experienced everyday by some of the citizens and where walls have been set up.”<sup>112</sup> Within the most dominant official state discourses, perhaps only very few people pointed out loudly the social divisions in French society. This was seen by some state actors as giving a social excuse to the attackers. In one of his interviews, the French prime minister, criticized these attempts for providing a social excuse for terrorism.<sup>113</sup>

## Conclusion

Terrorist violence has many impacts on space, which extend beyond the terrorist ‘event’ and the physical destruction. In France, various spatial imaginaries were produced following the major attacks of November 2015. Through public declarations and political discourses, major French officials and politicians worked on promoting and circulating particular geographical imaginaries of the attacked districts, Paris and France as a national territory. This has been achieved through the utilization of certain spatial references and metaphors to define the magnitude of the terrorist violence and the nature of the referent spaces. A spatial analysis of these imaginaries reveals how they have been developed through addressing and reproducing different scales interchangeably and interdependently in relation to the given context. On a number of occasions, the public discourses highlighted the magnitude and proportions of the attacks as new and unprecedented. This has enabled the circulation of a spatial imaginary of a nation threatened by an *act of war* in its whole territory. This imaginary was supported by focusing on the notions of borders, sovereignty, exclusivity and an assumption of a collective identity. Through addressing this national scale, the geographical imagination has been materialized in a group of spatial arrangements, such as the introduction of checkpoints and control of movement around the borders. On other occasions, public discourses addressed the urban scale of Paris or its 10th and 11th arrondissements. These discourses reproduced imaginaries that have been based on a *claimed* uniqueness and exceptionalism of these spaces. They focused around spatial notions of openness, diversity, distinctive street and nightlife and ideal public and entertainment spaces. The circulation and naturalization of these imaginaries through the discourses of state officials suggests a system of values where ‘other’ Parisian spaces belong to a different position and are rendered as ‘antithetical’ to the special values of the attacked spaces. This has paved the way for the promotion of particular forms of spatial organization that are based around these notions of openness and nightlife over other forms of

organization. The performativity of these imaginaries extends beyond their capacity for legalizing certain actions. Through the bodily performances of the different users of space, these imaginaries become materialized, producing the same effects that they name.

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# 5

## WHOSE VISION, WHICH CITY?

### Planning and unseeing in urban Asia

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#### Introduction

Half of the world's population now lives in urban settlements. This will rise to 66% by 2050, with population growth mostly occurring in the Global South cities. In Asia, about 2.3 billion people live in cities.<sup>1</sup> The burgeoning urban population highlights the critical role that cities play in championing the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, SDG 11 seeks to attain inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. It has 11 key targets,<sup>2</sup> encompassing wide-ranging urban issues such as safe and affordable housing, slum upgrading, sustainable transport, settlement planning and inclusive public spaces, among others. This ambitious agenda places urbanization at the forefront of global development and poses an immense challenge for city governments, given that 75% of cities are more unequal now than in 1996.<sup>3</sup> The Covid-19 global pandemic is expected to exacerbate this deepening divide. Urban planning is seen as a tool for achieving the NUA and SDG targets and addressing the widening income inequality and uneven access to social services and economic opportunities. Planning assumes that it is feasible to shape a strategic agenda and facilitate processes that promote sustainable development and socio-spatial justice. Planners are expected to address three fundamental goals of planning:<sup>4</sup> economic development, environmental protection and social justice.<sup>5</sup> In attaining these goals, planning processes are expected to provide a space to exercise citizen participation, paving the way for meaningful inclusion and deepening democracy.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter is discursively situated within the field of urban planning and the broader urban studies discipline. Our framing of violence draws from Johan Galtung's structural violence<sup>7</sup> in which violence is built into the sociopolitical structures and manifested in unequal power and uneven distribution of resources. This prism links with Rob Nixon's more recent notion of slow violence,<sup>8</sup> which amplifies the elements of violence enacted slowly over time. Following this formulation, we argue that urban planning – a normative practice embedded in structural processes with explicit spatio-temporal dimensions – is a part of statecraft that entrenches the *politics of unseeing* in many Global South cities. The politics of *unseeing* is broadly defined here as a way of doing things in which certain issues and voices are prioritized while other legitimate concerns (particularly of the urban poor) are sidelined or ignored. This act results in administered invisibility of marginalized groups leading to what Nixon has called “spatial amnesia” where (unseen) communities are imaginatively

erased and uncoupled from the dominant national/urban future and memory.<sup>9</sup> Understanding how planning is implicated in the politics of unseeing is a crucial step to making an injury visible<sup>10</sup> and to addressing its underlying causes.

We examine the most recent planning documents in four Asian cities – Dhaka (Bangladesh), Kathmandu (Nepal), Mumbai (India) and Quezon City (Philippines) – to determine how and to what extent the strategic urban plans respond to the key goals of planning stated above. By putting these four cities with different sociopolitical histories in conversation, we aim to respond to a growing call from critical urban scholars to work with a “multi-sited individualizing comparison”<sup>11</sup> based on establishing commonalities across varied urban places without sacrificing the unique conditions of each case. Our goal is to undertake a cross-case analysis to identify common themes in examining the aspirational agenda and the techniques of implementation that shape the planning interventions involving urban informality. We link these patterns to the wider questions of spatial justice, social equity and citizen participation in these four cities. Unpacking the grand urban narratives and planning approaches sheds light on how urban citizenship and rights are framed, exercised and contested in the rapidly urbanizing Asian region.

Like many Asian urban centers, the four cities discussed in this chapter are homes to migrants and urban poor who mostly live in informal settlements and engage in precarious informal livelihoods like street vending, waste picking and informal transport operation. State officials often see these dwelling spaces and self-organized livelihoods as a form of *urban blight* needing serious government intervention. We, therefore, analyze how the broader aspirational urban agenda and the techniques of planning implementation frame self-organized strategies of the poor. To a large extent, this concern speaks to how the *consensus* of certain players gets reflected in urban plans, considering that the planning process is filled with “conflicting rationalities,”<sup>12</sup> and is prone to co-optation by narrow private and sectional interests.<sup>13</sup> This also reflects how planning traditions and trajectories in the four cities remain heavily influenced by “concepts and models imported from the global North, usually imposed on territories as part of a process of colonization and retained thereafter as a way of protecting land values and interests of a new elite.”<sup>14</sup> This interplay of conflicting interests in the planning process and the adoption of dominant planning ideologies raise two critical questions: from whose standpoint should one examine urban plans? And, how are plans crafted, by whom, for whom, with whom and against whom?

To address these two questions, we examine four interrelated analytical threads found in the planning documents of Dhaka, Kathmandu, Quezon City and Mumbai. These include (1) the dominant ideology guiding the desired urban vision, (2) spatial justice and social equity agenda, (3) participation of various stakeholders and (4) different approaches to urban informality. Unpacking these themes allows us to better understand the role of planning in the politics of unseeing – how certain issues and voices are prioritized while the legitimate concerns of the urban poor are sidelined or ignored. Here, socio-spatial planning imaginaries and approaches conveniently erase unsettling urban issues and inequalities to advance neoliberal inspired visions for the city. The next section situates our framing of planning and informality in the literature. We then clarify how we apply the *politics of unseeing* in the chapter and discuss our data collection and analytical techniques. This is followed by the analytical discussion, focusing on the key themes identified above. We conclude with key insights into how the politics of unseeing affects the nature and practice(s) of citizenship in the age of urban neoliberalism.

### **Planning, informality and ‘invisibility’**

Urban planning in many Global South cities has been heavily influenced by the vision of 18th Century Western philosophers of objective science, universal morality and law.<sup>15</sup> It

draws on the modernist “belief of linear progress, positivist, technocratic, rational planning of social and geographic space,”<sup>16</sup> with the assumption that Western concepts and techniques were universally applicable.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, many planners in the Global South often address complex socio-spatial problems through standardized framing of knowledge and ‘rational’ ordering of urban space. Planners in this tradition act as “priests of rationality”<sup>18</sup> who believe they are value-free experts who can rise above competing interests and provide logical, practical solutions for the common good. This modernist thinking continues to be assumed as globally applicable.

While the modernist tradition remains a formidable ideological force in urban planning (with all its variants and fusion with neoliberalism), it has been challenged by critical urban scholars who argue that Western conceptual models are unable to account for the complex realities and wicked problems in many parts of the globe.<sup>19</sup> A *Southern turn* in urban studies and planning theory thus calls for knowledge production that acknowledges the extensive global differences in cities and recognizes that ideas are shaped by specific contexts.<sup>20</sup> This Southern turn draws on and unpacks complex urban issues such as race, gender, governance, poverty and informality.

Existing research on informality in the Global South emphasizes the role of planning and other state processes in informal arrangements. Oren Yiftachel laments how planning contributes to the “stratification of informalities” by legitimizing certain activities (“whitening”) and criminalizing others (“blackening”).<sup>21</sup> This indicates that some forms of informality are not tolerated, whereas others are recognized as acceptable. As Libby Porter argues, “[i]nformality is not ‘outside’ formal systems but is instead produced by formal structures and always intimately related to them.”<sup>22</sup> If planning is inherently involved in inscribing, stratifying and intensifying informality, it then has a key role in addressing the phenomenon in a manner that does not kill the vitality, productivity and adaptability of informal practices.<sup>23</sup>

The reality on the ground, however, is very different. Informal settlements and informal workers are generally invisible to their governments. One expression is the lack of data and knowledge of the actual conditions. The ambiguity of definitions and their diverse epistemologies contribute to this data poverty.<sup>24</sup> The statistical invisibility also stems from the purposeful misrepresentation of numbers by officials. Similarly, the issue of spatial invisibility occurs when these spaces are not represented in maps and other official registers. The implication of formulating policies based on partial or erroneous data is that it leads to distorted policy outcomes. Similarly, being “off the map”<sup>25</sup> and sitting on a “zone absent of policies”<sup>26</sup> leave invisible residents unable to access essential services and subsidies meant for the poor and vulnerable.

The illegalization of informal settlements, criminalization of informal trading and other exclusionary tactics are forms of unseeing through which the state and the middle class exercise their power over the poor. In India, for instance, the government has deployed a ‘world-class aesthetics’ norm<sup>27</sup> – the use of juridical power that places more value on accepted physical characteristics than the social conditions and political realities on the ground – to evict ‘slum’ communities. This constitutes an epistemology of “unknowing”<sup>28</sup> in which an absence of numerical accuracy becomes the basis of limited governmental knowledge. Further, during elections, state actors are more tolerant of informality since it views the poor as its vote bank; however, in other times, the spaces occupied by the poor are seen as an urban blight that requires replacement through planning interventions. This selective seeing is also practiced by the members of civil society, who consider themselves the protectors of the “bourgeois city.”<sup>29</sup> They support the state’s clearance drives to make way for mega-events or under the pretext of beautification of the city.<sup>30</sup> Acts of unseeing are also undertaken through *unmapping* of the spaces occupied by the urban poor from the planning documents.<sup>31</sup> Through its act of unseeing,

the state decides who gets counted and excluded. Here, *invisibilization* serves the interests of the dominant and the powerful, revealing its highly political and relational character.<sup>32</sup>

While ‘invisibility’ is a form of structural suppression and elitist politics, scholars have also demonstrated the benefits of invisibility that are harnessed by the urban poor. Asef Bayat has argued that the silent mobilization tactic of the ordinary people, often driven by their survival instinct rather than an ideology, is primarily successful due to their invisibility.<sup>33</sup> Informal practices that obscure the many strategies and tactics of the poor also raise ethical dilemmas for scholars because many informal workers thrive on learned habits that evade the state’s watchful gaze.<sup>34,35</sup> Although this poses challenges to urban scholars who want to lend voice to marginalized groups, academic work can be a potent way to represent and articulate issues that are often muted in the government’s cost–benefit calculations. As scholars from Global South cities, our critical engagement with the planning documents of the four cities deploys Donna Haraway’s notion of “embodied objectivity,”<sup>36</sup> which entails ‘seeing’ from the standpoint of the ‘subjugated’ by drawing attention to the often ignored situated knowledges and unrecognized issues of marginalized groups.<sup>37</sup> Here, we aim to unsettle the partial and distorted understandings of everyday issues in relation to dominant urban imaginaries in many Global South metropolises.

## Methodology

Before discussing the analytical threads, we present some contextual information on our case cities. Since the establishment of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation, the population of Dhaka – the country’s capital city – has grown enormously (Figure 5.1) amid the uneven access to urban services and public infrastructures. Metropolitan Dhaka has 18 million residents,<sup>38</sup> 33% of whom are considered poor, and 80% of the city’s labor force works in the informal economy.<sup>39</sup> Over the last few decades, urban development in Dhaka has been characterized by partial successes and failures of the city government’s plans.<sup>40</sup> Similar to Dhaka, the Kathmandu Valley has the largest net inflow of migrants into Nepal, making it the country’s urbanization hub with nearly 24% of the national urban population. Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Nepal’s capital city, is the only million-plus city in the country.<sup>41</sup> The Valley has been unable to keep pace with rapid population growth resulting in haphazard development, inadequate infrastructure, pollution and increasing poverty. Due to the unaffordability of formal housing in areas close to employment opportunities, informal settlements on public lands and riverbanks in the Valley are growing fast. Around 70% of Kathmandu Valley’s population works in the informal sector.<sup>42</sup>

Mumbai, one of India’s major urban agglomerations, is a city of extreme differences. On the one hand, it is a thriving economic metropolis, and on the other, a site of acute poverty. Around 55% of Mumbai’s population lives in informal settlements.<sup>43</sup> Scholars have theorized this difference in various ways – as a city of ‘slumdogs’ and ‘millionaires’<sup>44</sup> and splintering urbanism.<sup>45</sup> Historically, Mumbai’s planning documents have followed the world-class city narrative, either by adopting a neo-Haussmannite agenda or aiming to Shanghainese Mumbai,<sup>46</sup> potentially leading to widening inequalities.<sup>47</sup> In all these visions, slum eradications and market-led slum-redevelopment projects got legitimized under the pretext of development and beautification.<sup>48</sup>

Quezon City, the Philippine capital city from 1948 until 1976, is one of the 17 component localities of Metropolitan Manila. It is the country’s most populous city with a population of 2.94 million, which was 23% of Metro Manila’s 12.88 million residents in 2015.<sup>49</sup> In 2014, 232,181 families in Quezon City lived in informal settlements, which was 40% of all informal settlers in Metro Manila.<sup>50</sup> The city’s planning framework has been inspired by the garden city model, which builds on the 1941 Frost and the 1949 Master Plan.

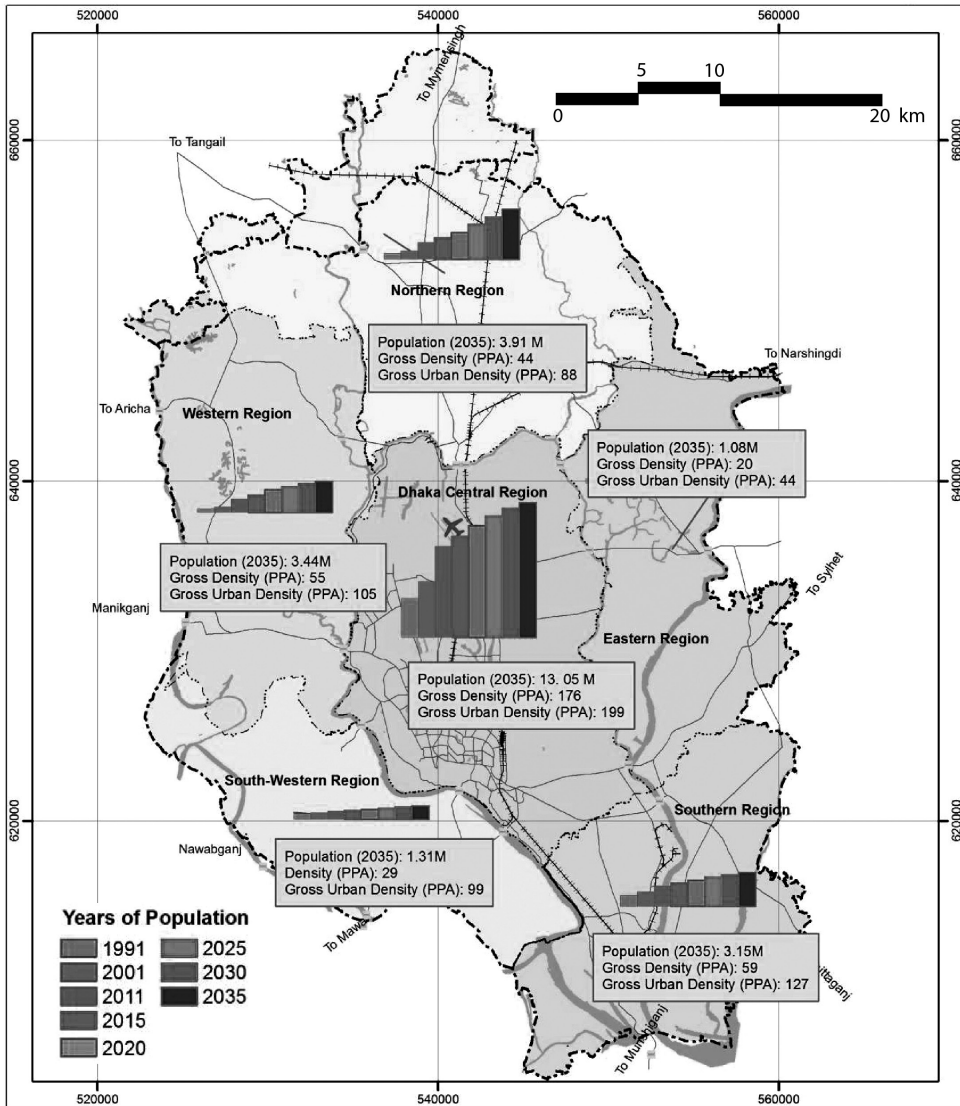


Figure 5.1 Metropolitan Dhaka is Bangladesh’s densest urban region. Source: RAJUK, “Dhaka,” 3–6.

In examining the planning documents of the cities discussed above, we have employed discourse analysis in which language is structured based on patterns and meanings that people follow when they take part in social life.<sup>51</sup> An example of discursive practice is spatial planning, which is realized by the production and reception of linguistic and semiotic texts as well as visual and spatial data. Governance institutions build new capacities (knowledge, networks, resources for action) through constructing discursive practices. It is through discourse that meanings associated with places are produced, negotiated, fixed and mobilized across different areas and practices.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, discourse analysis is a useful analytical method to find underlying principles in urban planning and decision-making processes.

By employing discourse analysis, we examine the planning documents and generate discursive chains on planning targets, objectives and procedures. We have reviewed the Dhaka Structure Plan (DSP 2016–2035), Kathmandu Strategic Development Master Plan (KSDMP) (2015–2035), Development Control Regulation for Mumbai Metropolitan Region (2016–2036) and Quezon City Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2011–2025). The Dhaka Plan discusses the past and present planning structures and outlines land use management to improve transport infrastructure, housing and employment opportunities. The plan also proposes an agenda to protect the natural environment and to preserve open space for recreation as well as disaster prevention and mitigation. The Kathmandu Plan focuses on plans and policies on urban growth trends, analyzing existing conditions, urban growth scenarios, strategies and actions and the implementation of SDMP. The Quezon City Plan consists of 11 chapters. The first five chapters touch on the development framework, land use and infrastructure development; the city's vision and the national planning goals; the spatial strategy; and growth and the non-growth centers. The last six chapters present the special development areas, the green land network, the proposed circulation network, the land use plan, land use policy and framework and implementing strategies for the land use plan. The Mumbai plan focuses on the development permission, land uses and manner of development permission, requirements of site and layout, floor space index and urban safety measures.

After examining public planning documents, we identified chapters on planning vision, housing and livelihood plans in all four cities. We then closely read these chapters and identified salient patterns, employing a cross-case analysis to determine how these strategic plans entrench the politics of unseeing in these unequal cities.

### **Planning the city: By whom and for whom?**

Debates on urban governance and planning emphasize how various players shape policies and political decisions. State agencies, civil society groups, community associations and the private sector are all entangled in collaborative and conflictive relations. The attention to conflict is particularly important because urban governance is filled with contrasting interests and hierarchical structures.<sup>53</sup> We explain below how the politics of unseeing shapes urban development plans of our case cities.

### ***Vision and ideology***

Existing literature suggests that planners constantly operate with an (unnamed and unrecognized) ideology in identifying strategies of action and in achieving practical aims.<sup>54</sup> Yet, planners generally consider themselves to be less ideological in the attempt to develop practical solutions for real-world problems. We, thus, begin our analytical discussion by unpacking the ideologies that animate the urban plans in our case cities. Here, we wish to highlight the inherently political dimension of planning by framing ideology as a tool that includes both the stated political-economic views as well as “the subconscious reproduction of what is taken to be ‘naturally’ desirable,”<sup>55</sup> which render some strategies more appealing and valuable than others.

Although the call for ‘environmental sustainability’ has recently gained attention due to the worsening global climate crisis and the increasingly appealing ‘resilience’ agenda, the ideological project behind urban ‘sustainability’ dates back to the ecological modernization campaign in the 1980s, which sought to detach economic growth from environmental degradation.<sup>56</sup> The vague presentation of ‘sustainability’ is needed, as it serves as an ‘empty signifier’ – a vision that all players agree on because it can mean almost anything. Here, the ‘green’ agenda and environmental goals

become depoliticized, whereby any space for cultivating (political) dissensus and disagreement is either foreclosed or enforced within the wider model of elite consensus.<sup>57</sup> The link between (environmental) sustainability and economic agenda (Dhaka as a global city, Kathmandu as a prosperous capital, Quezon City as a global service center and Mumbai as a global city and a financial hub of the world) is an example of ‘roll-out neoliberalism,’ which vaguely and selectively incorporates environmental goals<sup>58</sup> to pursue certain forms of urban development.

The planning documents in all our case study cities emphasize the importance of environmental sustainability in creating a livable city. The Dhaka Plan envisions Dhaka to be a “livable, functional & resilient metropolis respecting local sociocultural fabric & environmental sustainability.”<sup>59</sup> The Kathmandu Master Plan aspires to make Kathmandu Valley livable by enhancing the interdependence of nature, community and culture and making the valley “a safe, clean, organized, prosperous and elegant national capital.”<sup>60</sup> In Quezon City, the comprehensive land use plan (CLUP 2011–2025) situates the city as the Philippines’ knowledge industry capital, the center of health-wellness and Metro Manila’s green lung. This vision supports the country’s urban development framework’s target to increase Metro Manila’s attractiveness as a global service center and visitors’ destination. Mumbai development plan’s environmental approach primarily responds to the “objections raised by environmentalists and concerned citizens.”<sup>61</sup> While it outlines the need to deal with open defecation/urination and environmentally sensitive lands, such as mangroves, marshy areas, forests and high tide zones, the DP lacks a proposition or a discussion of strategies from the planning authority.

This relates to how the plans in Dhaka, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Quezon City follow a neoliberal urban governance model with strong private-sector involvement. Over three decades ago, David Harvey wrote about the paradigm shift in advanced capitalist societies from ‘managerial’ to ‘entrepreneurial’ urban governance.<sup>62</sup> The latter consists of strategies pursued by local governments to entice private and/or foreign investments and attain economic growth from below.<sup>63</sup> This growth-chasing governance model relies on a public-private partnership strategy in which local governmental powers are mobilized to attract external funding, new investments or new employment sources. The drive toward entrepreneurialism is enforced at various spatial scales – from local neighborhood and community, central city and suburb, metropolitan region, region, nation-state.<sup>64</sup>

The Dhaka Plan 2016–2035 repeatedly mentions that it is not possible for the national government to provide housing for all and relies on the private sector to build houses and infrastructure to make the city livable, functional and resilient. Similarly, the Kathmandu Plan 2015–2035 emphasizes the participation of the private sector in the development of infrastructure and services as well as beautifying the city through the conservation and maintenance of natural ecosystems and historical, religious, cultural and social assets. Quezon City’s vision is also inspired by an entrepreneurial urban governance model. This is seen in Quezon City’s move to designate key city locations as Special Urban Development Zones (SUDZ), which are “governed by certain conditions and regulations to preserve and protect their distinct or special character or to control physical development to prevent traffic congestion and deterioration of services, facilities and environment.”<sup>65</sup> These SUDZs are developed through public-private partnerships for a mixed-use development where commercial use can be dominant.

Mumbai’s 2016–2036 development plan (DP) appears an outlier with respect to its lack of vision, a criticism leveled by the public and experts.<sup>66</sup> Mumbai’s DPs had historically encouraged new developments where the construction cost was recovered from the new buyers. This increased unaffordability and inaccessibility of land, as projects depended on the market. The lack of a planning vision in the current DP will further lead to market-led land speculation, where the market will ultimately become the organizing principle; a practice that essentially echoes the

logic of entrepreneurial urban governance. In addition, the Mumbai DP has transformed from a planning document to a regulatory document. The current DP is a collection of rules and regulations that outlines land reservations, land use zoning, floor space indices (FSI) and building by-laws. This reflects a strong emphasis on spatial dimensions with limited discussion of health, education and environmental issues.

### ***Spatial justice and social equity***

In many Asian cities, urban development has been an inequitable process. Its outcome is seen in well-protected gated communities, highly regulated and sanitized commercial centers, neglected public spaces, poorly-maintained socialized housing and uneven access to urban services. Urban planning has historically been a tool to maintain the unequal distribution of material resources and preserve the power asymmetries in political and economic institutions.<sup>67</sup> Yet, some ideas from scholars such as Henri Lefebvre, Gordon McGranahan and Daniel Schensul underscore how planning can play a role in creating spatially just and socially equitable cities. Lefebvre's<sup>68</sup> *right to the city* is one of such ideas. It resonates with evolving approaches on human rights-centered development<sup>69</sup> and inclusive urbanization,<sup>70</sup> among others. But how do these ideas resonate with the plans of the cities in this chapter?

All cities' development plans acknowledge inequality as a key issue. But the planning documents have varying degrees of commitment to address it. In Dhaka, the plan does not provide any strategy to enhance sociocultural diversity or address entrenched inequality. In Quezon City, the spatial strategy for 'rational distribution of population and economic activities' is polycentric growth (Figure 5.2). Polycentric urban development adheres to the city's neoliberal entrepreneurial governance approach and is generally linked with more competitive urban economies where the multi-nodal system is seen as more than the sum of its parts.<sup>71</sup> This strategy has increased the areas devoted to private commercial activities, such as shopping mall development. The prominent role of the private sector is also a feature of Kathmandu's plan. The city introduces policies that encourage private-sector involvement in promoting social equity. While this scheme might be beneficial for registered city dwellers, it is unclear how poor informal dwellers can benefit from the broader social equity agenda since they are considered illegal by the government. The city's goal of promoting gender equity and social inclusion is equally lacking in implementation strategies.

In Mumbai, the plan acknowledges the need to provide spaces for women, elderly and children in the development control and promotion regulation (DCR). It commits to addressing the needs of the informal sector, the homeless and persons with disabilities. Highlighting the lack of space for social gathering and street vending, the DCR designated temporary markets during weekends and holidays on vehicular streets. While street vendors might gain from these measures, many urban villages and informal settlements are left unmapped, creating urban gray space<sup>72</sup> where market speculation reigns. Consequently, new road construction and road widening projects are going to be carried out on these unmapped zones. Unmapping persists due, in part, to how the planning process has been undertaken with limited participation of diverse stakeholders.

### ***Stakeholder participation through top-down and state-managed processes***

The 'communicative turn' in planning theory stresses the need to come up with participatory strategies and inclusive planning to encourage citizen involvement.<sup>73</sup> Yet, deliberative and agonistic



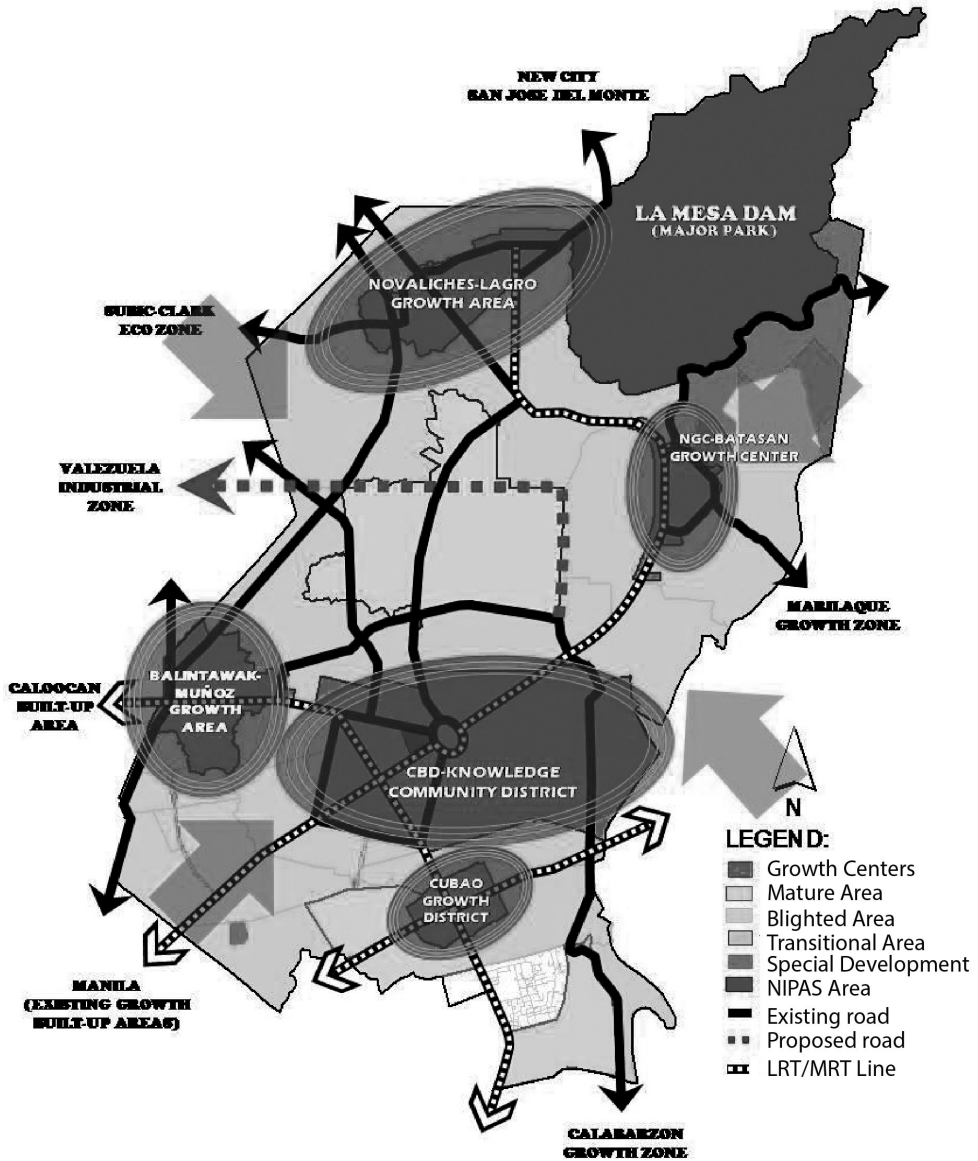


Figure 5.2 Quezon City's polycentric growth areas. Source: Quezon City, "Zoning Ordinance", 11.

planning theorists have shown the failings in existing democratic planning processes, stressing that political cultures of current liberal democracies are in a state of crisis.<sup>74</sup> In Global South cities, 'citizen' contributions to urban planning and governance have taken many forms through different channels.<sup>75</sup> Although the four cities have divergent sociopolitical histories and democratic traditions, they share key issues affecting planning participation of 'citizens' in many Asian metropolises.

In all four cities, the plans were prepared through state-driven, top-down processes. In Kathmandu, the plan was developed in consultation with experts, such as national and local

planning consultants, sociologists and anthropologists.<sup>76</sup> In Quezon City, the plan claims it went through rigorous consultations with various stakeholders, but the process and specific proposals or dissenting views received from them were not clearly explained. In Dhaka, a public consultation was conducted after the plan was prepared; however, it was unclear whether changes were made according to public suggestions.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in Mumbai, the stakeholders were invited for their suggestions on the draft plan. Based on those suggestions, a first draft of the DP was released; however, it faced criticisms from all sectors due to inaccurate and missing information. Ultimately, the DP was dumped, and a second draft of the DP was developed, based on suggestions from a constituted planning committee and citizen’s feedback.<sup>78</sup>

Besides the top-down planning, carefully stage-managed consultation processes are another pattern. Mumbai’s stakeholders were segregated into categories to receive their suggestions, seemingly based on their access to power. Government agencies, VIPs (powerful bureaucrats), NGOs, individuals and civil society groups were called in this order separately as per the hearing schedule for complaints and suggestions. While the plan mentions “citizen’s participation is most essential” for an effective implementation of the DP,<sup>79</sup> “its understanding of participation is narrowly focused on state-driven consultation assemblies.”

Mumbai’s stakeholder clustering is also apparent in the three other cities. In Quezon City, there are provisions in the comprehensive development plan on regular consultation with only accredited NGOs and people’s organizations. In Kathmandu, the plan encourages the participation of government agencies – municipalities and political party affiliates – and recognized private sector, civil society groups and development partners. Yet, the marginalized groups are unlikely to be part of relevant stakeholders, as they are unaccredited by the state (Figure 5.3). In Dhaka, the plan suggests consulting with slum-dwellers before developing privately developed slums. However, the reality on the ground is that these slums have owners who are unlikely to agree to the process unless the planning authority provides them with a large amount of money in exchange for their land.

The patterns discussed above reveal how state-led planning follows the conventional notion of governance, which “views that the relationships among the major stakeholders are mainly cooperative and consensual.”<sup>80</sup> There is inadequate attention to conflicting perspectives that arise during the planning process. Thus, ‘planning for multiple publics,’<sup>81</sup> which calls for a celebration of difference while confronting inequality and exploitation, is unlikely to occur in this planning environment. In addition, the state-managed participatory project constitutes a roll-out of neoliberalism in which key decisions are passed on to nonpolitical economic and

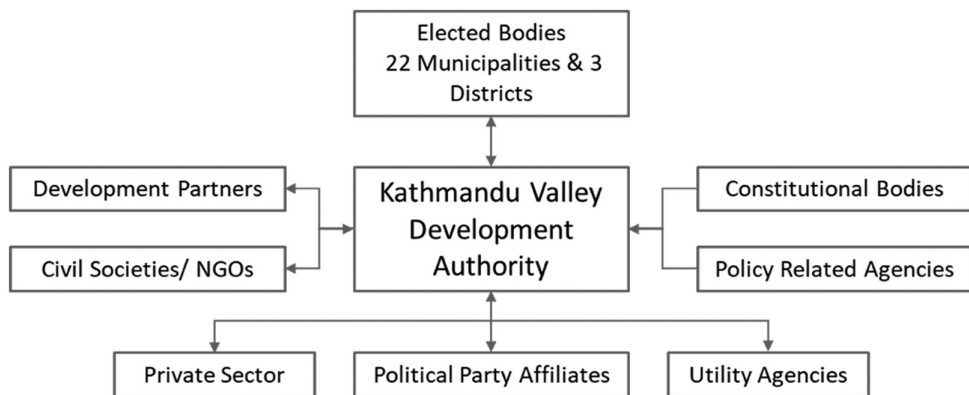


Figure 5.3 Key stakeholders in KVDA’s planning process. Source: KVDA, “Kathmandu Valley,” 7–18.

private actors.<sup>82</sup> As explained in the ‘Spatial justice and social equity’ section, this neoliberal agenda seeks to attract external funding and investments for urban megaprojects, which can strengthen the competitiveness of cities even at the expense of other (often poor and marginalized) stakeholders.

### ***Tackling urban informality through formalization and erasure***

Urban informality in the four cities is expressed in informal settlements and informal livelihoods. Approaches to these informal practices remain rooted in two dominant frameworks: *formalization* and *erasure* through unmapping and eviction. In Dhaka and Kathmandu, the plans acknowledge the role that informal livelihoods play in helping the poor cope with urban poverty. This recognition translates to ‘formalization’ techniques through the following strategies: designated locations for street vendors, tenure arrangement for the informal business operators, and skills development training to promote higher production and quality products. These strategies seek to extend formal registration and legal recognition to informal traders and other informal businesses<sup>83</sup> through a mix of legal and spatial strategies – issuing licenses to those who can afford it and confining trading within inscribed territories. These formalization techniques may have value, but they generally involve an eradication strategy for those who continue to trade informally and cannot comply strictly with legal rules and business requirements.<sup>84</sup>

While formalization shapes the planning approach to informal livelihoods in Dhaka and Kathmandu, erasure is the dominant principle in Mumbai and Quezon City. In Mumbai, the street-vending locations were missing from the first and second draft of the planning maps even though the city government had undertaken land use surveys for three years. Street vendors in Mumbai have been traditionally at the mercy of the different governments and their changing policies. The strategic unmapping of the vending spaces from the maps implies an erasure approach toward street vendors by the city government.

Erasure through unseeing is also seen in the approach to informal settlements. Figure 5.4 shows several informal settlements that are unmapped in the official planning documents of three cities. These settlements have been around for about 40 years. In Dhaka, the ward-level map misses a significant portion of Karail – Bangladesh’s biggest informal settlement that is home to 200,000 residents and in some areas shows an entirely different footprint than what is present on the ground. In Kathmandu, a building footprint map – a basis of the city’s current planning document, excludes a massive area of Bhansigat informal settlement. Darukhana community, an informal settlement on Bombay Port Trust land, is also partly unmapped in Mumbai’s land use plan. This unmapping across the three cities appears to be a deliberate act considering that these informal settlements are all located on public land. The mismatches between the plans and the ground reality in the examples from Kathmandu and Mumbai are classic cases of *unseeing*, where either informal settlements are unmapped or the maps are not updated. Dhaka’s map highlights how its development plan imagines a completely different city, often overlaying a grid layout with regular plot dimensions in place of the heterogeneous composition of the informal settlements, a practice also seen in Mumbai’s development plan.

Further, the Dhaka DP discusses the housing needs of the middle-income and low-income groups, but it does not mention anything about the strategic housing needs of slum-dwellers or informal settlers. In terms of slum improvement programs, the city plan recommends engaging with landowners of ‘private slums’ to ensure that rent will not be raised for a certain period. Although informal settlements in Dhaka are on government land (see Figure 5.4), the planned rent control and upgrading primarily focuses on settlements located on private land. The Dhaka DP also recognizes the importance of informal livelihoods, including street vending. The

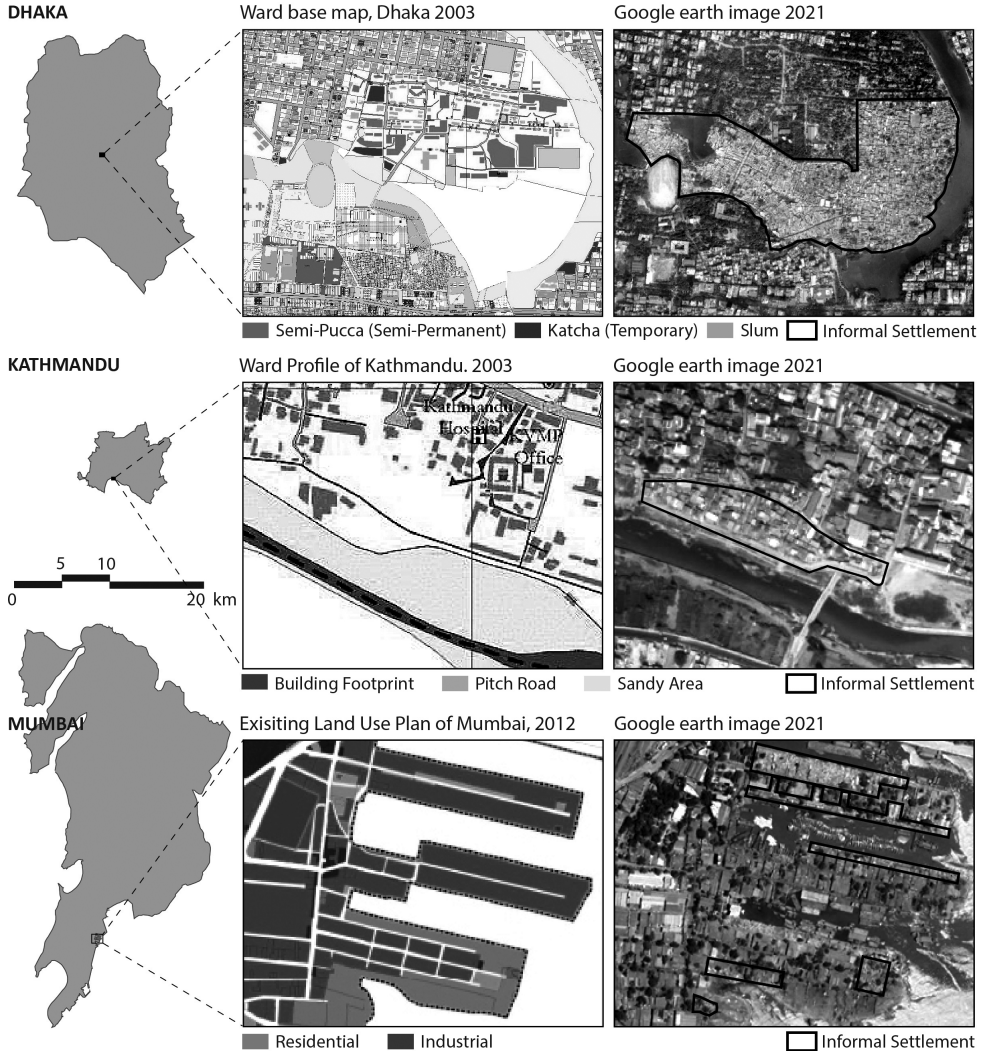


Figure 5.4 Unmapped informal settlements in Dhaka, Kathmandu and Mumbai. Diagram by Ishita Chatterjee, 2021.

document also emphasizes the development of some sites for providing informal business activities. However, none of the planning maps and documents shows any existing informal markets or locations for future informal markets.

Meanwhile, in Kathmandu's strategy to minimize flood vulnerability and strengthen disaster resilience, the eviction of informal settlements along the Bagmati River is high on the agenda. Yet, the plan is silent on how to address the needs of informal dwellers and how they will be resettled after eviction. This shows the urban poor will be evicted without any resettlement agenda,<sup>85</sup> demonstrating how the needs of marginalized people are ignored in the strategic plan.

In Mumbai, the spaces occupied by urban villages, pavement dwellers, tribal communities, informal settlers and street vendors have been historically unmapped from the plan. While the current DP shows the informal settlements, it is an incomplete map with many inaccuracies

based on the slum mapping undertaken by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) in 2015. The SRA map dubbed urban villages as “slums.” It had also missed mapping many of the informal settlements (Figure 5.4) and conflated other forms of settlements with slums. After objections were made on the ‘missing settlements’ the revised plan made provision for undertaking citywide GIS mapping and drafted guidelines for in-situ rehabilitation. The objections from key stakeholders highlight how resistance is needed to recognize the ‘missing settlements’ and push for in-situ upgrading as a better approach over the usual eviction–resettlement strategy of the government.

In Quezon City, the significant discussion of informal settlement as a key challenge is a welcome deviation from the way the three other city plans have framed the issue. The land use maps show the presence of informal settlements, occupied by close to 190,000 residents all over the city. The plan also reveals that the (off-site) resettlement scheme remains a key approach to managing informal settlements, particularly those communities located on land owned by national government agencies. The resettlement approach is complemented by in-situ housing redevelopment, ‘near-city’ resettlement and a financing scheme for registered informal settler groups to buy land and develop housing. While the plan’s attention to informal settlements is noteworthy, the document is silent on the spaces used for informal livelihoods – street-vending locations and informal transport terminals. This reflects the usual confusion among state bureaucrats in the Philippines who associate informality with *housing* units or settlements and treat informal livelihoods as illegal practices. Here, the politics of *unseeing* operate through a limited understanding of informal practices. Inevitably, the planned interventions are inconsistent and myopic. For instance, the city’s development plan sees the enforcement of Executive Order 452 (a Presidential policy issued in 1997 to ensure the security of vendors in the workplace) as a way to “upgrade the level of employability of the labor force and raise the standard of living of Quezon City families.”<sup>86</sup> Yet, the same document recommends the eviction of ‘illegal’ vendors from areas near public markets or wherever they obstruct pedestrian and vehicular traffic.<sup>87</sup> This incoherent planning approach reveals an inadequate understanding of the spatial logic of informal street vending and the state–vendor relationship – two key factors that will render any attempt at eviction unsuccessful.

### (Un)seeing like a state

In his seminal book *Seeing Like a State*, James Scott underscores how state institutions’ efforts to simplify social realities constitute a key dimension of social reengineering. He writes:

These state simplifications, the basic givens of modern statecraft, were ... rather like abridged maps. They did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer. They were, moreover, not just maps. Rather, they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade.<sup>88</sup>

In the preceding discussion, we have shown how urban plans – an outcome of state-led processes – are fundamentally a part of the *politics of unseeing* in which spatial and social simplification results in a limited reading of social problems to advance certain pragmatic solutions. Contrary to the usual claims to ‘comprehensive’ coverage or ‘holistic’ scope, we have revealed that government plans generate a partial understanding of complex urban realities and relations. This is seen in how environmental protection, economic development, social justice and citizen participation

have been framed in the planning documents of Dhaka, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Quezon City. While the planning traditions and trajectories in these cities have been heavily influenced by the project of modernity<sup>89</sup> – with its emphasis on rationality, order and linear progress – their current strategic plans exhibit a strong neoliberal agenda in pursuing environmental ‘sustainability,’ economic growth, social inclusion and citizen involvement. We further contend that the politics of unseeing as a key aspect of statecraft is rooted in the fusion of modernist narratives and neoliberal urban imaginaries.

The vision to promote *environmental sustainability* – a common aspiration of the four cities hinges on the deployment of sustainability as a vague signifier, as none of the four planning documents clearly presented how their vision of sustainable cities will be materialized. The vague presentation of the *sustainability* concept is used to create consensus among all players and manage potential resistance. Although the planning documents aspire to build clean, green, resilient and inclusive cities aligning with the motto of environmental sustainability, the findings discussed in this chapter show that the planning frameworks seem to favorably serve the interests of the affluent citizens over the urban poor. This is reflected in the way they have proposed strong private-sector involvement in many dimensions of urban development – from generating economic growth (Quezon City’s polycentric growth model), advancing social equity (Kathmandu’s mobilization of the private sector) to slum upgrading (Dhaka’s ‘private slum’ improvement) and creating urban gray space (Mumbai’s market-speculative scheme). As a key tenet of neoliberalism, the role of the private sector is enshrined in the urban plans through multiple variants of public–private partnership. Neoliberalism also shapes the nature and extent of ‘citizen involvement’ in planning. In all four cities, top–down and state-managed consultation processes remain predominantly informed by techno-managerial logic, treating the decision-making exercise as a question of ‘expert knowledge’ and less of a political process.<sup>90</sup> The underlying neoliberal ideology is hidden; the involvement of marginalized groups is limited or tokenistic, while elitist participation and network-building are encouraged. Public consultations become an empty ritual of participation, where marginalized groups have no real power to challenge the status quo and introduce meaningful political agenda.<sup>91</sup> This raises the question of whether ‘urban citizenship’ has a place in neoliberal urban planning and the politics of unseeing.

Urban ‘citizenship’ and unseeing in the age of neoliberalism intersect when dealing with urban informality issues in the four cities. This is seen in practices of erasure through unmapping of informal livelihood spaces and misrepresentation of areas occupied by the urban poor, highlighting how *spatial amnesia*<sup>92</sup> takes place in urban settings. Erasure is also linked with the highly unsuccessful yet still-dominant resettlement approach to informal settlements. Here, the neoliberal logic of accumulation by dispossession<sup>93</sup> penetrates urban poor settlements, and ‘citizenship’ is redefined and rearticulated based on someone’s value to neoliberal criteria like human capital or expertise.<sup>94</sup> Rearticulating ‘citizenship’ is sustained through expert knowledges that define spatial segregation, functional hierarchies, and desirable ‘rational’ behaviors.<sup>95</sup> This act reveals the inherent role of planning in legitimizing what Ulrich Beck has called the “relations of definition as relations of domination”<sup>96</sup> in which the resources and power of various agents (e.g., experts and states), the standards and rules determine what is considered (in)visible. The politics of invisibility becomes a tool to stabilize state authority and the reproduction of social and political order<sup>97</sup> by unseeing certain realities and potential *risks*. As we have shown above, this socio-spatial (mis)articulation and (re)imagination is inscribed in zoning maps and codified in urban imaginaries designed by planners and state officials. The state-managed consultation processes also reflect how neoliberal planning segregates ‘citizens’ and creates a fractured urbanity in which groups and individuals interact differentially with state authorities to claim (the rights of/to) urban ‘citizenship.’<sup>98</sup>

These practices undermine the United Nations' SDG11 – make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – and contradict its broader slogan for development, “no one will be left behind.” Amid the much-vaunted role of planning in achieving urban SDGs and NUA targets, planners in Dhaka, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Quezon City need to address unseeing as an exclusionary and structurally violent practice of statecraft. To build inclusive and sustainable cities, the planners in these cities could emphasize meaningful participation of citizens in preparing planning documents and recognize citizen-led initiatives that promote human flourishing in many urban poor communities. Local officials and planners also need to engage strategically with local NGOs and urban poor groups in city-making processes. Otherwise, the politics of unseeing in these cities will further entrench a path-dependent trajectory of inequality that is hard to change in the long run.

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## 6

# ARCHITECTURE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

## The spatial politics of extractivism

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### Introduction

Politics understood as a complex body can be said to concern things coming and going, starting and stopping, working and failing to work, even falling apart: “a social machine, taking men and women into its gears or, rather, having men and women as part of its gears along with things, structures, metals, materials.”<sup>1</sup> That is to say, politics takes up in its machinations live and inert materials, human and nonhuman actors and relations, spatialized along the routes and passages of infrastructural systems. As Reinhold Martin observes, after Michel Foucault, politics concerns “the distribution and deployment of power, where power is a relation rather than a thing to be possessed.”<sup>2</sup> Where securing dominance in relations of power, for instance, of the colonizer over the colonized, the control of the flows and stoppages of infrastructural matters and meanings can place one in a position of significant influence. Infrastructural matters and meanings are complicated, entangled and knotted together with complex architectural support systems. Architecture, following this definition, is less a discrete object in a field than a connective skein, distributed, supportive (or not), providing spaces of both shelter and oppression alike. This chapter attends to the spatialization of politics by defining architecture as a spatial support system working in conjunction with, and even as, infrastructure. Architecture as infrastructure, or in support of infrastructure, is apt to fall apart. It both facilitates and impedes. Things get jammed in its gears, regimes of repair and maintenance come to be neglected. We are interested in the tension that persists between understanding failure as complete environmental and social exhaustion and failure as that which subsequently gives rise to future possibilities. What happens beyond the ends of failure and beyond the exhaustion of environment-worlds? We argue that in positing architecture as akin to infrastructure in terms of what it facilitates, or else, prohibits from passing, the location and event of failure is exactly where a politics emerges. Failing and falling infrastructures are where we seek out the spatialization of politics in this chapter. We expand the definition of infrastructure and its realm of action to landscapes that support and fail in tandem with bodies that work in those landscapes and can play political roles in flows and stoppages, to support or to fail. Even if the most ‘commonplace’ thing that can be said of infrastructure in its rhythms and repetitions, in its sudden cessation, is that “the work of infrastructure remains invisible until it fails” yet failure is an event that reveals so much.<sup>3</sup> Foregrounded then

backgrounded, when infrastructure does loom forward into collective consciousness, we can be sure it is on account of some political controversy.

By using infrastructure and its attendant spatial support systems as an analytical lens, the inequities built into urban conglomerates – inequities understood as a form of failure – are quickly revealed. At a good distance from urban settlements can be found other kinds of infrastructural sites attended by ordinary architectures, sites of extraction that a voracious global hunger for resources keeps perpetually busy. Admittedly, it takes effort to venture further afield to those far flung sites upon whose material resources the construction of infrastructures depends, that is, sites of extraction. Yet approaching these distant places gives us a better understanding of the networked operation of infrastructures that connect the off-scenes of the world to the centers of urban development. As Pierre Bélanger explains, from “the assembly of consumer goods, like smartphones, or the construction of concrete highways, contemporary life is mediated through mineral extraction.”<sup>4</sup> While infrastructures draw different conditions into proximity and facilitate the flow and communications of peoples, things and information, sometimes infrastructures are designed in such a way as to let some things pass, and others not, thereby performing a kind of infrastructural apartheid.<sup>5</sup> In this situation, infrastructures become an instrument of violence, where violence is imposed on human and other-than-human inhabitants of a site by means of exclusion. In the context of this chapter, infrastructural violence is imposed on the people who live and work in the vicinity of sites of extraction through processes of dehumanization. They are rendered as inhuman and, as Kathryn Yusoff writes, are recognized through inhuman relation, “as a commodity with properties, but without subjective will or agency.”<sup>6</sup> Infrastructural projects lend themselves to powerful repressions but, paradoxically, create the milieu in which diverse actors can gather to enunciate their collective concerns. To counter the everyday dehumanization that infrastructures often install, can an infrastructural sociability instead be imagined? One that leads to political assemblies and the reclaiming of agency?

In what follows, we journey out of the city to those distance places upon which the city depends for its projects, toward wounded landscapes and communities. We discuss two sites of extraction located in nation-states at a distance from each other, Iran and Australia. The sites of Sari Gunay gold mine in Kurdistan, Iran and Juukan Gorge, otherwise known as Brockman 4, in Western Australia, are here placed into dialogue and suffer ecologically, socially and politically from harmful mining activities that have destroyed significant Indigenous sites. The mining activity in Sari Gunay, undertaken and colonized mainly by Kyrgyzstan, has caused drastic environmental harm, such as cyanide leakage<sup>7</sup> into the area and the nearby villages, exposing local workers to health risks<sup>8</sup> due to the application of mercury in the extraction of gold. Our second site, Juukan Gorge, appeared dramatically in the news in 2020 following the dynamiting of ancient cave shelters where proof of Indigenous inhabitation goes back over 46,000 years. The mining giant Rio Tinto was expanding an open cut iron ore mine, following a raw material seam that, once refined, composes the steel that builds cities, or, “everything from washing machines to cars, bridges to skyscrapers.”<sup>9</sup> By studying these two sites, we investigate how environmentally devastated off-scenes of the world might support the emergence of surprising socialities and political assemblies as forms of sociopolitical infrastructures in response to environmental degradation.

Our approach to these two sites, and the political dimension of architecture, requires that we first situate our position as dedicated critical feminist theorists. This means we share a specific ethos and a certain orientation to the sites and materials under consideration, and it means we proceed by following a methodology that deems writing to be a large part of the practice of discovery when venturing an argument. It is worth recalling here the famous catchphrase, “the personal is political,”<sup>10</sup> which speaks to the way in which women’s experiences are lodged within complex

systems of power relationships. In what follows, when we call on our own personal experience in fleeting vignettes, it is to acknowledge that we make our way from the midst of our local milieus, including the blind spots of our own biases and privileges. In confronting the Anthropocene thesis and the exhaustion of the earth, this mantra can be expanded, as Claire Colebrook has suggested, for now the “personal is geological.”<sup>11</sup> In this chapter, we argue that there pertains a series of complex relations that entangle sites of extraction with infrastructural projects and their effects, and finally with what falls under the category of the architectural. As feminist scholars, we want to acknowledge how we are lodged directly in the midst of such controversies. To support this situation of which we speak, we locate our concerns at the intersection of the theoretical, even “onto-epistemological”<sup>12</sup> – to borrow from Karen Barad – domains of the feminist posthumanities, the environmental humanities and feminist new materialism. This requires a specific orientation and attention to materials; an understanding that materials are lively and not mute nor merely subject to the imposition of form. When listened to carefully, materials have a story to tell.

### Infrastructures of extraction and extractivism

Extraction as a basic act digs raw materials out of the ground. Every dig site assumes the location of a dump site, someplace else, sometime further down the track of the lifespan of an object of consumption. As Jussi Parikka remarks, this is a process whereby “attributes of a planet unearthed by human technologies [are] then covered with the ruins of those inventions.”<sup>13</sup> The cradle to grave of what it means to extract resources, in order to mold them, exchange them, use them up, and then discard them, reveals the underside of infrastructural-cum-architectural spaces and their relations. The in-built obsolescence of things can be measured both in the exhaustion of laboring bodies and the exhaustion of environment-worlds. In what follows, this infrastructural rhythm of *dig and dump* will be rendered vivid, and what must be kept in mind is that it is not just the precious resources but the material realities of communities and their local environment-worlds that are threatened with exhaustion. Human and other-than-human actors are entangled as complex infrastructural systems enfolded amid constructed environments supporting the circulation of capital. To repeat the formula with which we opened: “a social machine, taking men and women into its gears or, rather, having men and women as part of its gears along with things, structures, metals, materials.”<sup>14</sup>

Sites of extraction point toward permanent growth and urbanization. Gavin Bridge argues that “acts of digging and drilling – and the materialities of the hole as a space of labour”<sup>15</sup> – expose the aggressiveness of neoliberal approaches to nature and the exploitation of human and other-than-human resources. Infrastructures of extraction are structures that connect us to the land and cut through the earth. Structures raised up from the ground are only the tip of the iceberg, indicating far more complex systems of material flow, labor, politics and environmental impact. Extraction efforts penetrate deep into the geological layers of the planet Earth by cutting shafts, tunnels and holes; and the results of these efforts rise up into the sky as constructed edifices. The disturbance and redistribution of materials at a planetary scale transforms landscapes and expands geopolitical territories, feeding urbanization and supporting unimpeded development. Following such transformations, land becomes three-dimensional, it is thickened through repeated acts of extraction and exploitation. Processes of extraction complicate land, territorializing it as layers of capital and political contestation. Various forms of infrastructure define the value of each of those layers, as well as who has access to them, as Bridge writes:

The result is the classic residual architecture of extractive landscapes – spoil heaps, waste ponds, slag piles, tank farms, tramways, stacks, and flues clustered around the

hole – a landscape of sorting, dispatch, and abandonment that materializes abstract calculations of value.<sup>16</sup>

This process of “dig and dump”<sup>17</sup> that sums up the extractivist approach to the Earth and its inhabitants, has been at the core of the long historical project of colonization. It has not only left the land wounded and the planet damaged; it has exploited people as slave labor, indentured labor, and as precarious workers.<sup>18</sup> Acts of extractivism, based on a worldview that makes “ecological violence distant, and therefore possible,”<sup>19</sup> dehumanizes workers by constraining them in the space of the *hole* and, ultimately, in the dump sites resulting from projects of progress and development. What is extracted is accumulated as profit in the hands of the minority who control the power, resources, and industry, to feed further projects of development: profit, accumulation, the stockpiling of wealth. While the dump, literally and metaphorically, piles up in remote and unseen areas at a distance from centers of so-called civilization and modern urbanization, extractivism has not remained bound to those places. *Urban extractivism*, a term that activists and academics in Latin America use to describe “evolving forms of displacement, ecological destruction and enclosure that have resulted from increasingly aggressive techniques of real estate speculation and urban rent exaction in densely populated agglomerations,”<sup>20</sup> is also expansive and invasive in its effects. Extractivism describes both complex material processes of extraction and becomes a theoretical and analytical lens, a key concept, by which to study the diverse assemblage of actors who are affected by extractivist ventures. There are those who extract and those who are extracted, Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino explain, and a material process and conceptual framework like extractivism helps us to address the urgency of environmental degradation and social and economic inequality.<sup>21</sup>

Extractivism can even be said to have produced a form of urbanity that reflects the mirror image of the mine. In *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers*, Stephen Graham calls skyscrapers “inverted minescapes” and renders lifts and elevators similar to the *cage* in coal mining.<sup>22</sup> The mine is not only the material site that feeds the expansion of urbanity, it feeds the project of urbanization through a far more complex relation of physical and organizational infrastructures, as well as the development of technology and knowledge required for urbanization to happen. While sites of extraction are generally located in the off-scenes of urban settlements, the most prominent forms of modern urban living and working spaces, such as skyscrapers, owe their existence to the technology of shafts and the technological augmentation of vertical movements deep into the earth. By vacuuming the geological layers of the earth, extraction creates ecologies complicated by the politics of migration, exploitation, colonization and urbanization. In sites of extraction, environmental, political and social issues come together through a complex system of spatial configurations, material intervention, exploitation of human and other-than-human resources, production of land ownership and capital, as well as the emergence of decolonizing forces as a political response.

It is toward the infrastructural off-scenes of the world, toward the “Anthroscene,”<sup>23</sup> to use Parikka’s unsettling concept, that we travel in this essay, to visit infrastructural sites that pertain to the extraction of resources. Cultural studies theorists like Junka-Aikio and Cortes-Severino, economic geographers like Bridge, urban geographers like Graham and media archaeologists like Parikka provide architectural studies with the means of expanding its remit and acknowledging its political entanglements. We take their lead in order to venture toward the two mine sites, one in Iran and one in Australia, where we expose how the city and its bustling infrastructures, facilitating the habitual rhythms of everyday life, depend on such off-scenes of the world. These are locations to which skilled and unskilled laborers fly in and fly out (labor referred to in Australia as *fiffo*), or where precarious, poorly serviced communities set up camp to feed the demand for labor only

to discover themselves, in the process, poisoned by the effluents and by-products of the mining effort. Infrastructure supports and impacts the everyday rhythms and repetitions of life. As Martin remarks, “When infrastructure repeats, it also repeats us insofar as we repeatedly and rhythmically interact with it.”<sup>24</sup> Dig and dump, dig and dump.

### **Sari Gunay gold mine, Iran**

Walking along Zargarha Bazaar in Tehran, one of the most prominent centers for buying and selling gold in the capital, the glittering of gold ornaments startles, and even exhausts, one's eyes. Earrings, rings, coins, bracelets all delicately crafted out of gold, disguise in their refinement the extraction and production of their material expression and the harm imposed on the environment. Occasional news items alerting readers to workers' strikes at Surry Gunnai gold mine fleetingly connects the shimmer of a gold ring on a tiny black velvet stand to an ecology of extraction and a social and environmental disaster triggered by the dirty business of the highly toxic activity of extraction and production. Surry Gunnai, one of the biggest gold mines in the Middle East, was a potential source of investment for national and international companies for years. It took more than 15 years of negotiations for Surry Gunnai to be inaugurated in 2015 as a joint project between Iran (Zarkuh Mining Co.) and Kazakhstan. Before the Kazakh company appeared on the scene, Rio Tinto, the Anglo-Australian mining corporation, undertook the exploration phase up until 2010, when a disagreement with the Iranian Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade put an end to further collaboration. The contract with Kazakhstan allocated 70% of the mine revenue to Kazakhs and only 30% to Iranians. These disproportionate conditions are mostly due to US sanctions that have targeted revenue from Iran's exports of not only oil but also industrial metals and other resources. From this 30% revenue, according to Article 14 of the Iranian Mining Law, 15% must be spent on the infrastructural development of the nearby villages.<sup>25</sup> However, after almost five years of the mine being in operation, these villages still struggle with basic infrastructure, including water supply and roads. Recently in 2020, activated arsenic following mining activity, polluted underground water resources, and as a result, drinking water must now be transported from other towns and villages into the area. While gold is being extracted from the earth, systems of life collapse, one after another, in stark contrast to the promise of wealth and well-being that the gold mine was supposed to bring to the area. One damaged environment comes to rely on another, while the other begins to degrade and break down.

This exploitative and environmentally destructive process has a material manifestation on the land and in the bodies that live there. The bodies of workers and the bodies of polluted soils and waters are entangled with the damaged earth and wounded landscape. Observing the landscape from above, from Baharlu village to Dash-Kasan and further to the closest town, Qorveh, in the Kurdistan province in northwestern Iran, surveying the wrinkled mountains and rectangular farms lined by roads and pathways, punctuations are to be found, appearing as an abrupt change of color and organic form in the landscape. These changes are registered in meandering roads, stepped valleys, beheaded hills and monstrous structures that stretch out their arms toward what appear to be piles, buildings, pools and geometric lines etched into the ground. Observed from the aerial point of view of Google Earth, the landscape resembles a battlefield between industry and the land, between human subjects and the earth. Marble quarries and gold mines, each with their own color and form, tell stories of extraction in the outskirts of cities in this politically charged land, Kurdistan, which has been suffering not only from dysfunctional physical infrastructures, such as roads, water and electricity supplies, or the lack thereof, but also from a history of structural segregation of Kurds in the region. Zooming

in on Google Earth, it is as though a yellowish powder is sprinkled over the landscape, and some rectangular and triangular shapes pinned as Gold Mine can be discovered. This area of geometric shapes is connected to a concentrated yellowish area of curved roads and stepped landscapes with a two-kilometre linear structure that crosses over the main road in between them. This is a landscape infrastructure of extraction and exploitation not limited to this surface view, but expanded underground, through water and soil, and over ground, in the mercury-affected bodies of exploited workers, who commute between their villages and the mine every day.

Gold, extracted from gold ore in mines, is one of the most destructive activities of extraction in terms of waste and environmental harm. According to *The World Counts*, “[e]very 40 seconds, gold mining produces the weight of the Eiffel Tower in waste. In less than 5 days, you could cover the city of Paris with ‘Waste’ Towers.”<sup>26</sup> Not only the amount of waste but also the level of toxicity of the waste from gold mines places this process in near-equivalence with nuclear waste dumps.<sup>27</sup> Running acid water (the result of the exposure of underground rock to air and water) and cyanide and mercury (the two main substances used in gold mining) are the main environmental harms associated with gold mining. Mercury is used to extract gold from rock and directly affects the health of mine workers. It also pollutes the environment, soil, streams, rivers and water resources. Due to its low price and effectiveness, cyanide – a highly toxic and deadly substance – is used to leach gold from ore in 90% of mining activities.<sup>28</sup> The waste from this process, containing such deadly substances, is dealt with as an infrastructure of waste, rendered vivid in the tailings dams located at gold mines. The frequent failures of such infrastructures expose the level of environmental threat. Tailings dams accumulate environmental threats over time only to release them dramatically in the event of failure.

There is a controversial relationship between gold as material that indicates value, care and attention and the raw material that is extracted by way of a careless process that is environmentally negligent. Bound up with the extraction of the precious mineral resource that is gold, waste, regret and efforts of repair must carry a heavy burden, for the process of extracting gold demands a heavy toll.<sup>29</sup> We never dump gold, but the amount of waste its extraction produces and the level of harm it imposes on the environment is immense. In a *Dezeen* post in 2017, the architect Eduardo Francois argues that “we have to build in gold, after that silver, titanium, stainless steel, copper ... these materials won’t end up in the garbage, but poor materials will.”<sup>30</sup> His poorly constructed argument for sustainability assumes the use of precious materials will lead to less waste, based on the premise that we would never throw gold in the garbage. This statement baldly exposes the disconnection between sites of extraction and sites of consumption and construction from the view point of the architect. A sustainable and recyclable building constructed in gold is here imagined as an autonomous object rather than as a thing caught up in a complex network of material movements, extraction and labor. Despite building materials appearing to be fixed commodities, they transform on their journey from geological deposit to factory and design project; and in each phase, while interacting with other materials, “human hands and tools,”<sup>31</sup> landscapes and environments, they produce and subsequently dump their associated by-products.

In April 2020, news of a general strike by the workers of Surry Gunnai gold mine in Kurdistan, Iran, and political demonstrations by the inhabitants of the villages around the mine brought the gold mine to public attention.<sup>32</sup> The strike was in response to the dismissal of a number of local workers, their generally low wage compared to the foreign workers’ wages, the environmental concerns for cyanide leakage from the mine and the unfulfilled promises of infrastructural development for the surrounding villages by the mining company. In this moment of infrastructural failure on the site of extraction, a resistance movement takes shape at the intersection of environmental pollution, economic inequality and the violation of workers’



rights. The space of the *hole* – the term mentioned earlier in the text and suggested by Bridge to describe the sites of extraction and the constraints it imposes on workers – constructs a ground in which proximity and direct connection to earth material on the one hand, and the duration of inhabiting the hole through labor on the other, forms political togetherness and collective resistance against the act of extraction and the violence it imposes on workers. In this way, while the hole is dug as an act of extraction, it controversially creates an infrastructural sociability.

AbdouMaliq Simone's definition of infrastructure describes the emergence of politics amid such events of coming together when he writes:

The question, 'what is it that we can do together?' – whoever and wherever that 'we' may exist – is largely a question of what is in-between us; what enables us to reach toward or withdraw from each other. What is the materiality of this in-between – the composition and intensity of its durability, viscosity, visibility, and so forth? What is it that enables us to be held in place, to be witnessed, touched, avoided, scrutinized or secured? Infrastructure is about this in-between.<sup>33</sup>

This form of sociopolitical infrastructure at Sari Gunay gold mine, far from resulting in consequential changes, emerges from the logistical space of extraction that, in Martin Alboreda's words, could be a "melting pot for new alliances," not only among workers but also "between scientists and peasants, engineers and workers, lawyers and Indigenous leaders, artists and precarious migrants."<sup>34</sup> Despite exhaustion, despite failures and fallings apart, new alliances and new possibilities must be sought.<sup>35</sup>

### **Juukan Gorge, Hamersley Range: On the weekend of 23–24 May 2020**

Growing up in Perth, Western Australia, one of the most geographically isolated cities on the planet, there was only ever a dim awareness of the mining interests at work in the expansive interior, the mythical outback. Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, locally famous gold-mining towns of the late 19th Century, had subsequently become regional tourist attractions. Read as geological strata of the state capital's architectural fabric, the gold boom could be registered in the impressive buildings that once lined St Georges Terrace, Perth. Wave after wave of urban demolitions and reconstructions would in time produce the motley crew of architectural edifices that now line this prominent thoroughfare: a boom-and-bust resource-dependent economy manifesting in a most unextraordinary urban architecture; a former colonial outpost using periodic bouts of urban reconstruction as a means of constantly expunging its troubled past. In the mild winter months, during school holidays, we would make the three-day car journey up the coast. The landscape would slowly dry, heading first toward dirty green scrub interrupted by wind deformed trees, becoming still flatter and hotter, and by the third day, the dry earth would have turned a dusty, oxide red. Heading toward Exmouth, we would hug the coastal road. Looking westwards in search of the pristine beaches meant turning our backs toward the interior.

Today, from far above, taking a satellite's serene point of view, the interior northeast of Exmouth looks like the crinkled creases of the palm of an ancient weather-beaten hand, hardened with the toil of managing the lithic crust of the world. Here is the Hamersley Range, named in honor of one of the British patrons who supported its colonial capture.<sup>36</sup> Here is where the ancient cave shelters of the Juukan Gorge were once to be found. In advance of the weekend of 23–24 May 2020, in the Hamersley Range, explosives must have been discretely set into the ground round about the Brockman 4 site, managed by Rio Tinto, in preparation for the planned expansion of their mining activities. One can only speculate upon whether the choice of a weekend for the

detonation of the explosives that would destroy the cave shelters at Juukan Gorge was in the hope that no one would be paying too much attention. Whether or not the subsequent media-fuelled controversy that was to erupt came as a surprise or not, the cynicism with which Rio Tinto first responded to the wonton destruction of sacred sites of Indigenous heritage extending back over 46,000 years, evident in their initial, disingenuous apology, suggests that they were expecting less of a fuss.<sup>37</sup> As leaked papers revealed, the crafted apology was consciously directed at the hurt suffered by the traditional custodians, the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura, carefully avoiding culpability for the irrevocable material damage achieved.<sup>38</sup> Irrevocable damage: you cannot undo what has been done. The event of destruction was discovered by chance when representatives of the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples requested access to their sacred site for a ritual event.

A journey across the lands of Google Earth is mesmerising, scrolling east then west, north-west and then south-east, zooming in, and zooming out, cartographic movements adjudicated by a mouse pad. Remotely viewed in satellite mode the earth's lithosphere gives up myriad details, but in map view, there is nothing but an off-white expanse, cut through with the hint of an occasional road. On the map, Juukan Gorge is simply called Brockman 4 in anticipation of the extraction site it is now in the midst of becoming. I'm looking for the inevitability of a rail line leading into and out of the vicinity of Juukan Gorge for the purposes of carrying tons of ore back to the coastal ports at Cape Lambert and Dampier. I am searching for signs of a dig, which from an amateur's point of view looks something like the terracing of a negative pyramid, a void, a landscape signifier of extraction. I am looking for signs, which are in any case probably yet to register, of the destruction wrought.

Scrolling across the Hamersley Range, Western Australia, the disembodied eye happens upon one pock mark after another, dig sites, geological disturbances. From the state capital Perth, many hundreds of kilometres away, you would not realize that all this furious activity was taking place. As Imre Szeman remarks, "we are doubly distanced from the spaces and material processes of extraction, sheltered from them first by physical distance and second by techno-utopian fantasies of a quotidian reality shaped by immaterial forces."<sup>39</sup> The mining giant that manages vast tracts of this land is called Rio Tinto. It is a massive infrastructural enterprise, overseeing 16 mines across the region and four independent port terminals. For too long, from a western colonizing point of view, these territories comprised vast uninhabitable landscapes, all the better to make the existence of activities of extraction "difficult to render visible."<sup>40</sup> Though the material urban wealth that manifests in historic waves in Perth is plain to see.

The iron ore that is dug out of the ground, at the rate of 100 million tonnes a year, is shipped off to destinations such as China, where it is turned into the steel that constructs the infrastructures that organize urban conglomerates. Ore is rediscovered transmogrified in your white goods, your car, your neat architectural details and your structural systems, adequate in strength to hold a multi-residential high-rise, or a skyscraper, up. A little like the single source coffee beans sold in gentrified neighbourhoods, the iron ore is described according to blends, for instance, the Pilbara blend is known for its "high grade quality and consistency."<sup>41</sup> Facilitating the flow of raw materials toward sites of refinement and manufacture, soon the Chinese will be able to order the raw material by using an app, the Rio Tinto webpage explains. The innovative driverless train, the AutoHaul<sup>TM</sup> is capable of moving 1 million tonnes of iron ore a day. Rio Tinto nevertheless reassures visitors to their webpage that they recognize the "cultural, spiritual and physical connections that Traditional Owners have with the land, water, plants and animals across the Pilbara region of Western Australia."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, they have a "comprehensive cultural heritage management framework."<sup>43</sup> The extent of their support to the community makes it difficult to argue with them; they are doing all that is *practicable*, and

they also want to stress that they are sincerely sorry for the hurt caused by the destruction of the 46,000-year-old cave shelters at Juukan Gorge. The thing is, an extra 8 million tons of ore was just too tempting, as rendered all too evident in Rio Tinto's 6.73 billion profit for the six months ending 30 June 2020.<sup>44</sup>

When news of the destruction of the ancient heritage of the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples began to globally circulate, comparisons were made to the destruction of the Bumiyan Buddhas or the ancient city of Palmyra by the Islamic State.<sup>45</sup> A material act of terrorism undertaken by a multinational corporate entity directed at profit. The failure here can be found on a number of counts: a purported failure of communication between Rio Tinto and the traditional custodians, the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples, concerning the cultural significance of the site<sup>46</sup> (this despite the fact that the latter claim to have clearly stressed the importance of the cave shelters); an internal corporate failure must also be assumed, which subsequently resulted in the resignation of Rio Tinto's CEO, Jean-Sébastien Jacques, and two other senior executives, who have exhibited blatant disregard for any fragile trust brokered with the Indigenous representatives;<sup>47</sup> a failure on the part of the Western Australian state government to revise its outdated Aboriginal cultural heritage act, which had allowed for permission to be granted in 2013 to Rio Tinto to undertake mining in the region.<sup>48</sup> Tess Lea remarks upon the state-sanctioned and militarized violence embedded in "policy-enabled extractivism pulsing somewhere in the ambient substrates of our artificially sustained worlds."<sup>49</sup> Violence here is expressed in the vagueries and loopholes of policy documents, the purposeful lethargy associated with lack of institutional change, the assumption of a lack of wherewithal on the part of First Nations peoples, all of which in this instance resulted in the explosions that demolished the material remainders of an ancient culture. Failure of will upon failure of communication brought on the fall. But what happens after the fall? Spurred on by the public outrage, an Australian Parliamentary Inquiry was launched. The Western Australian state government is rushing to convene an Aboriginal cultural heritage council. The stakeholders of Rio Tinto have made their displeasure felt. Gestures to remedy the situation will never be sufficient, and yet some kind of process of healing is being sought by the Puutu Kinti Kurrama and Pinikura peoples. While the restoration of the ancient cave shelters is not possible, the mending of sociopolitical infrastructures will be ventured, aspiring toward what Bélanger calls new alliances and new possibilities.<sup>50</sup> This work of social repair will be a massive one, requiring ongoing concerted maintenance and the building of bridges of mutual trust.

### **Following failures and fallings apart**

It should go without saying that architecture, in its material and political embroilments, in acknowledgement of the material resources it depends upon and the widespread network of supply chains in which it is embedded, can be connected, one way or another, with all this furious activity, increasingly automated, that goes into the digging out of the ground of material resources. Architecture as material act, simply put, is inextricably hooked up with acts and sites of extraction and their material politics. Caught between a rock and a hard place, architecture nevertheless contributes to the provision of those urban places in which a politics might be performed. As the feminist philosopher Judith Butler stresses, a supportive environment and its associated technologies enable the exercise of basic rights, and "when those environments start to fall apart or are emphatically unsupportive, we are left to 'fall.'"<sup>51</sup>

The search of the political import of infrastructural events demands a thinking with the public good: how can we best get along with each other amid those things we share and share out? In her work on vulnerability, which she paradoxically figures as a collective strength, Butler

argues that the street, the square, any urban gathering place, “is not just the basis or platform for a political demand, but an infrastructural good.”<sup>52</sup> Here, public and infrastructure are presumed to be much the same. Butler explains:

The material conditions for speech and assembly are part of what we are speaking and assembling about. We have to assume the infrastructural goods for which we are fighting, but if the infrastructural conditions for politics are themselves decimated, so too are the assemblies that depend on them.<sup>53</sup>

Likewise, associating infrastructure with the public good, architectural scholar Dana Cuff pointedly remarks: “Physical infrastructure is a victim of the present economic conditions from Europe to North America, characterized by an impoverished public sector at federal, provincial, and municipal levels.”<sup>54</sup> In his book *Urban Apparatus*, Martin zones in on the power relations inherent to infrastructural hardware and the cracks that appear in infrastructural systems, the territorializing gestures of wealth and the deprivations of poverty, noting that “[d]ifferentials of race, class, and gender crisscross this divide, cutting new crevices and occasionally building bridges. These differentials, and the fissures and bridges they entail, are without exception enacted by material bodies, infrastructures, things.”<sup>55</sup>

One could summarize such arguments by claiming that a failed infrastructure is indicative of a failed state, the falling into disrepair of the material and conceptual capacity of a public good. When an infrastructural system falls apart, this is less a technological or even an economic breakdown, than the incapacity of a state to organize ways of living together at the scale of a population. Infrastructural networks that operate all too efficiently can result in violence and the most oppressive of power relations: the widened boulevard down which armed forces can march to break up civic resistance; the lowered height of a bridge favoring the private car-owning citizen over those who choose or are obliged to take public transport<sup>56</sup>; and the mine that destroys ancient Indigenous sites of significance or poisons a local population. Then there is infrastructure conceptualized as a support system for politics, opening spaces in which to gather, providing the basic means by which to get along with everyday life from housing to the fundamental utilities of water and electricity.

To repair the failed infrastructures, we need to make more connections, constructing novel sociopolitical infrastructures as Enrique Viale remarks:

This is one of the challenges of our time: We lack bridges between those who resist mining in remote places, those who stand up to glyphosate and the agribusiness, and those of us who live in ever more expensive, fenced, and repressive cities. It is a single struggle ... but the bonds between people in the city and people in the country are not given; it is up to us to build them.<sup>57</sup>

The link between those suffering from extractivism in remote areas and the victims of “urban extractivism” is missed or is still weak, and as Viale writes, “it is up to us to build them.”<sup>58</sup> This bond between those of us directly affected by extractivism and those who are affected by urban extractivism forms a tentative collective that is based on responsibility toward what we extract and use, toward the earth we dig and the dirt we dump. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes: “The alternative to extractivism is deep reciprocity. It’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility, and it’s local.”<sup>59</sup> Planetary and local: Locally situated *and* interconnected on a planetary scale, the worst of devastations, the limits of exhaustion, can occasionally reveal a breaking point at which juncture a new sociopoliti-

cal infrastructure might emerge. New possibilities, new alliances, and reclaimed freedoms might be sought out, Bélanger speculates encouragingly, exactly by attending to the *fall*, the unbuilding and abandonment of “extractive empires.”<sup>60</sup> Falling, failing, moments of political rupture where voices call out in protest can be mobilized as moments of resistance toward a reclaiming of different kinds of infrastructure. The challenge is how to take up and maintain such new possibilities of working together while fostering reciprocal respect amid enduring differences and environmental impacts.

## Notes

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- 2 Reinhold Martin, *Urban Apparatus: Mediapolitics and the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 145. Martin is making reference to Michel Foucault’s argument about power relations. Michel Foucault, “Society must be defeneded” *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976* (New York: Picador).
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- 4 Pierre Bélanger, ed. *Extraction Empire* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 23. See also Pierre Bélanger, “Redefining Infrastructure,” in *Ecological Urbanism*, eds. Mohsen Mostafavi and Gareth Doherty (Baden: Lars Muller Publishers, 2010), 348–65.
- 5 See Albena Yaneva, *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
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- 14 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 81.
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- 18 See, for example, Jane Hutton’s discussion of indentured Chinese labor in association with the extraction of Guano. Jane Hutton, *Reciprocal Landscapes: Stories of Material Movements* (Oxon, Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 26–65.
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# 7

## MANUS PRISON

### The brutality of offshore detention

*Daniel Grincer*

#### Introduction

This chapter employs the notion of ‘witness’ to the survivor accounts of Manus Prison, located at the Lombrum Navy Base, Los Negros Island, Manus Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG).<sup>1</sup> There, thousands of asylum seekers were detained between 2001 and 2009, and again between 2013 and 2017, due to Australia’s inhumane immigration detention policies.<sup>2</sup> Here, the focus is on the latter period to acknowledge the bravery of those who have spoken out about Manus Prison. The witness accounts have been extracted from the published works of survivors through various media such as text, film, podcast, art and sound recordings and, combined with senate inquiries, investigative reports and academic research in order to reconstruct the Manus Prison site. In addition, the material components of the site, such as the buildings, geography and security presence, are examined against the prison’s systems of regulation and sensorial experience as a means of understanding, not only what took place in Manus Prison but how it was allowed to happen. The idea that a building, as a material object, might act as a witness was pioneered by forensic architect Eyal Weizman. He points out that forensic analysis has superseded the need for living witnesses, as it is possible to reconstruct events through a forensic analysis of the architecture itself.<sup>3</sup> As for Manus Prison, it has since been demolished. With so few outsiders permitted on site during its operation, and as those who worked there were required by law to remain silent, there are limited accounts to go by.<sup>4</sup> To this end, criminologist Claire Loughnan asks: “how do we uncover the traces of what happened when the place [Manus Prison] wasn’t only hidden to begin with, but has now disappeared?”<sup>5</sup> This chapter endeavors to mediate between the said and the unsaid, or the witness testimony and the architectural analysis, to uncover the ‘remnants’ of Manus Prison so that we might be able to understand what happened and what it means for us in the present. Both the witness accounts and the architectural reconstruction of the prison will reveal the extent of border violence in Australia, resulting in hundreds of injuries and 12 deaths without significant opposition from a majority of Australian citizens.<sup>6</sup>

Witness accounts, like that of Behrouz Boochani in *No Friends but the Mountains* (2018), a Kurdish refugee who spent six years imprisoned on Manus Island, are significant contributions that expose the needless violence of offshore detention and its deleterious effects on the body of the refugee. His account describes the conditions in Manus Prison and how they contributed to mistreatment by the guards, protests and riots, and the murder and suicide of detainees. Through



text messages sent from a mobile phone smuggled into the prison, Boochani records the daily operation of the Manus Prison, the people detained there, its architecture and how they were made to function to punish, deter and make a spectacle of the asylum seeker's depravity. Other accounts are communicated through a diverse range of media, like the film *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time*,<sup>7</sup> the podcast series by the journalist Michael Green and Manus detainee Abdul Aziz Muhamat, called *The Messenger*, which was recorded in 30-second WhatsApp voice messages while in detention<sup>8</sup>; the sound recordings by the Manus Recording Project Collective, *How Are You Today*<sup>9</sup>; the cartoons of Eaten Fish<sup>10</sup>; and the 3D digital representation of Manus Prison, *Against Erasure*.<sup>11</sup> All provide a means to analyze that which remains even if the tangible structures no longer exist.

To understand the origins of Australia's detention regime, Omid Tofighian, an Iranian-Australian immigrant, philosopher and translator, argues, with relation to what he calls 'Manus Prison Theory,' that immigration detention is rooted in Australia's colonial past. Tofighian contends that this colonial residual continues to shape all aspects of Australian society, in particular, its cultural and political institutions.<sup>12</sup> This is evidenced by the continued mistreatment of Aboriginal people, as exposed by their high levels of incarceration, lower life expectancy and low income levels.<sup>13</sup> To highlight this, the term Manus Prison is adopted in this chapter, as opposed to the commonly used Manus Regional Processing Center or detention center, as a form of linguistic rebellion and to show the site for what it really is: a cruel and unparalleled event in border protection history.<sup>14</sup> Manus Prison is more than a collection of ad hoc structures enclosed by security fencing. Conceptually, it functions within a complex set of attitudes and values that makes it possible to incarcerate people simply for crossing some arbitrary border line in search of help. Indeed, the built components of Manus Prison, their composition and functionality, are the consequence of Australia's imagined history and its subsequent cultural and political ideation that made it possible to conceive of immigration detention in the first place.<sup>15</sup>

Australia commenced the mandatory and indefinite detention of refugees in 1992. However, the Tampa Affair in 2001, proved that not only was it possible to gamble with human lives, the refusal to grant entry to the rescued asylum seekers proved popular with the Australian electorate. Offshore locations, like Christmas Island, Manus Island and Nauru, also provided the means to shift responsibility for the welfare of asylum seekers to private contractors, while at the same time ensuring that refugees are never allowed to step foot on the Australian mainland.<sup>16</sup> Yet despite the closure of offshore detention facilities in 2007, an increase in refugee arrivals in 2012 and mounting political pressure saw the reopening of offshore detention facilities on Nauru and Manus Island. The Manus Prison site, located at the PNG Naval Base in Lombrum, was orientated east to west parallel with the coast, it was only 600 m long and 150 m wide. During WWII, Manus Island was of strategic importance to the Americans in the Pacific, who invested heavily in new infrastructure, including airfields, roads, barracks and hospitals. From 1949, the Royal Australian Navy operated at the base until 1974, when they handed it over to the then newly formed PNG defense force. Following the Tampa Affair, the Australian government negotiated the use of the site with PNG authorities for the detention of asylum seekers; but after falling into disrepair in 2003, it was officially closed in 2007.

Prior to its reopening in 2013, approximately 60 Australian defense force personnel, predominantly surveyors and engineers, were deployed to Lombrum to reestablish the former detention site.<sup>17</sup> The assessment team reported that the area was uninhabitable, overgrown, dilapidated and riddled with termites.<sup>18</sup> According to refugee advocate, Madeline Gleeson, footage of the inspection shows broken windows, rotting timber and exposed electrical wires.<sup>19</sup> Yet, families with children were initially sent there. However, the harsh conditions prompted questions about its suitability for children and families, and after a few months, they

were transferred to the small island nation of Nauru. Manus Prison subsequently became a single adult, male-only prison from June 2013.<sup>20</sup> From that point on, only men considered 'fit enough' were sent to Manus Prison, as it was assumed that they might be better equipped to deal with the harsh conditions encountered there.<sup>21</sup>

After visiting Manus Prison in December 2013, Amnesty International described the facility as resembling something between a prison and a military camp.<sup>22</sup> The site being divided into multiple compounds separated by security fences to prevent too many refugees from gathering in one place at the same time (Figure 7.1). Closed-circuit television (CCTV) was ubiquitous; however, the surveillance was not provided for the protection of inmates but rather for the use of the guards as a means of control. Mike compound, the largest compound in Manus Prison, holding approximately 420 inmates at its peak, consisted initially of green canvas military tents with plywood floors and stretcher beds (Figure 7.2).<sup>23</sup> Following their removal, a maze of two-story accommodation blocks was built using shipping containers stacked on top of each other. The compound also included a large covered area, one of the only shaded areas on site. Foxtrot compound had approximately 320 men incarcerated within its confines and consisted of variety of forms of accommodation, from converted WWII Quonset huts (Figure 7.3) to green single-story prefabricated donga style sheds.<sup>24</sup> Oscar compound also housed approximately 320 men in a mix of tin sheds and shipping containers (Figure 7.4). Similarly, Delta compound on the south side, facing the jungle, also inadequately accommodated another 240 men in shipping containers clustered in groups of two beneath a corrugated tin roof.<sup>25</sup> There were also administrative quarters, a small medical unit, as well as some air-conditioned administrative offices for the guards.

The prison was organized around a central route called Charlie and interconnected with a variety of manned gates and checkpoints. Located at the far east of Manus Prison was Charlie compound, an isolation area where one was brought to for two weeks after 72 hours of solitary confinement in Chauka. White tarpaulins were hung over the fences of Charlie compound to prevent prisoners from viewing in or out of the compound.<sup>26</sup> Chauka was located some several hundred meters outside Manus Prison, concealed from oversight committees, and officially referred to as 'managed accommodation,' or a specialized isolation unit for ill-disciplined men.<sup>27</sup> Chauka, described as Australia's Guantanamo, consisted of three converted shipping containers arranged in a triangle with a wooden bed in each.<sup>28</sup> Abdul Aziz Muhamat, who 'disappeared' into Chauka on three separate occasions, told of his experience: "there was no air-conditioning, no breezeway, no door, no toilet door, no shower curtain, so the guards could always watch you."<sup>29</sup> He was handcuffed for the entire time inside Chauka, claiming that if he behaved during his confinement, they let him out. However, if he caught the ire of the guards, he would be forced to stay longer.<sup>30</sup>

Upon arriving at Manus Prison, Boochani recalls that there was basically nothing there, other than some large tents and fans to circulate the hot air. He describes the prison looking like it was in ruins and having a persistent and suffocating stench of 'rotting excrement' emanating from the toilets only a few meters away from his accommodation.<sup>31</sup> The toilet doors, he says, were missing or rotting away, with mold having engulfed the walls and ceiling, turning the toilets green. The floor was constantly soaked in urine, sometimes up to the ankles, with the toxic residue overflowing into the surrounding area making for lush fertile grounds for weeds to grow and mosquitos to breed. Other accounts describe heavy rains that frequently washed rubbish into the areas around the tents and shipping containers causing a putrid stench as it decomposed in the tropical heat and humidity.<sup>32</sup> In the dorms, prisoners struggled to pass between the rows of bunks, whereby Boochani describes, detainees felt a sense of suffocation due to the pervasive stench of men pressed up against each other. He remembers being so repulsed by the repugnant smell that he felt ashamed to be human.<sup>33</sup>

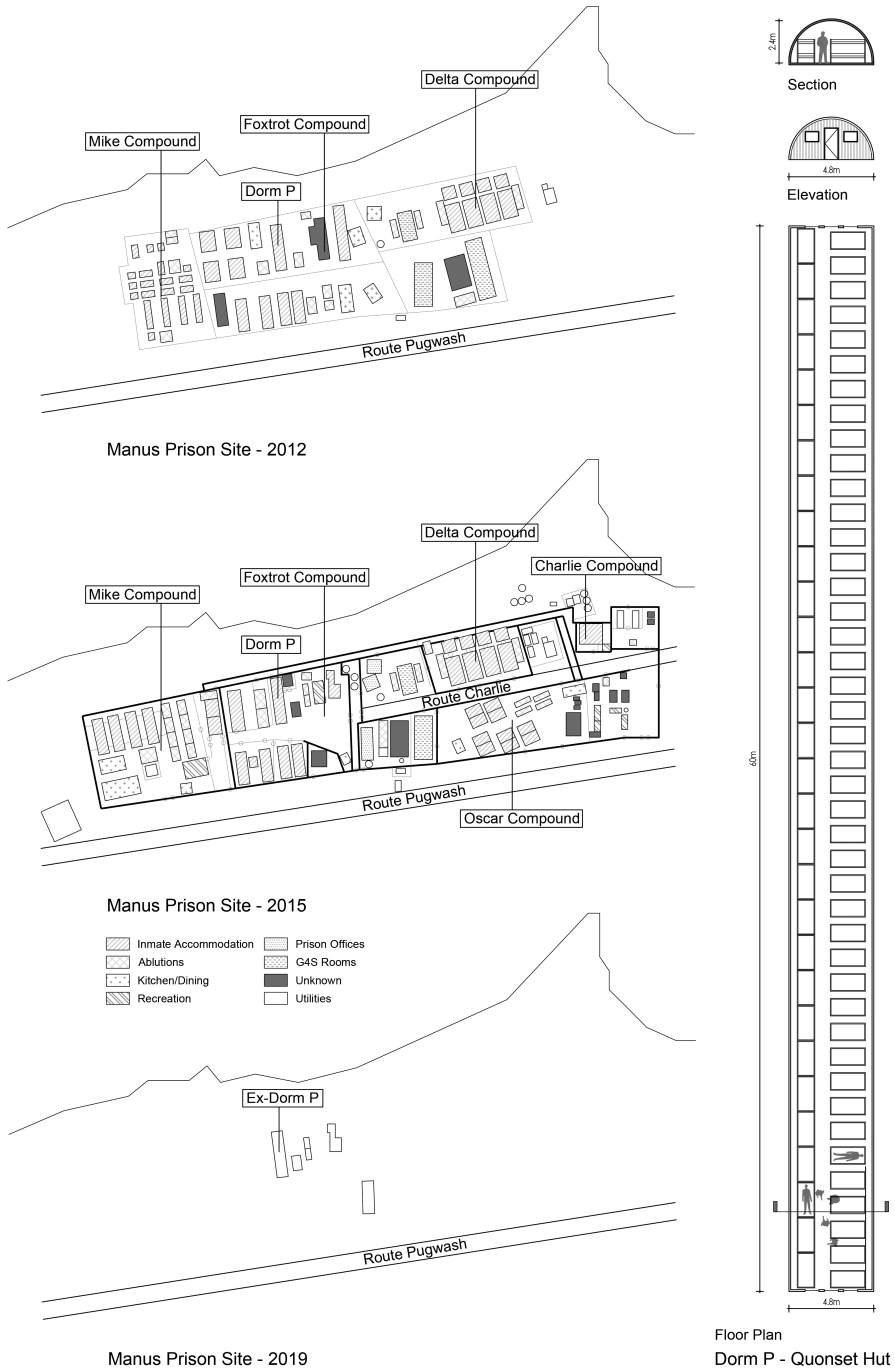


Figure 7.1 Site plans of Manus Prison showing change over time – from prior to opening in 2012, during operation in 2015 and after demolition in 2019. Site plans were reconstructed from available satellite imagery. Also shown, dorm P floor plan (60 m long x 4.8 m wide), section and elevation. Diagrams by Daniel Grincerì, 2021. © Daniel Grincerì.



*Figure 7.2* Tents prepared for the arrival of refugees at Manus Prison. Photograph by DIAC Images, 2012. © Creative Commons.



*Figure 7.3* Manus Island, post-war view of derelict Quonset huts. Photograph reproduction authorized by Naval Historical Collection. © Public Domain.

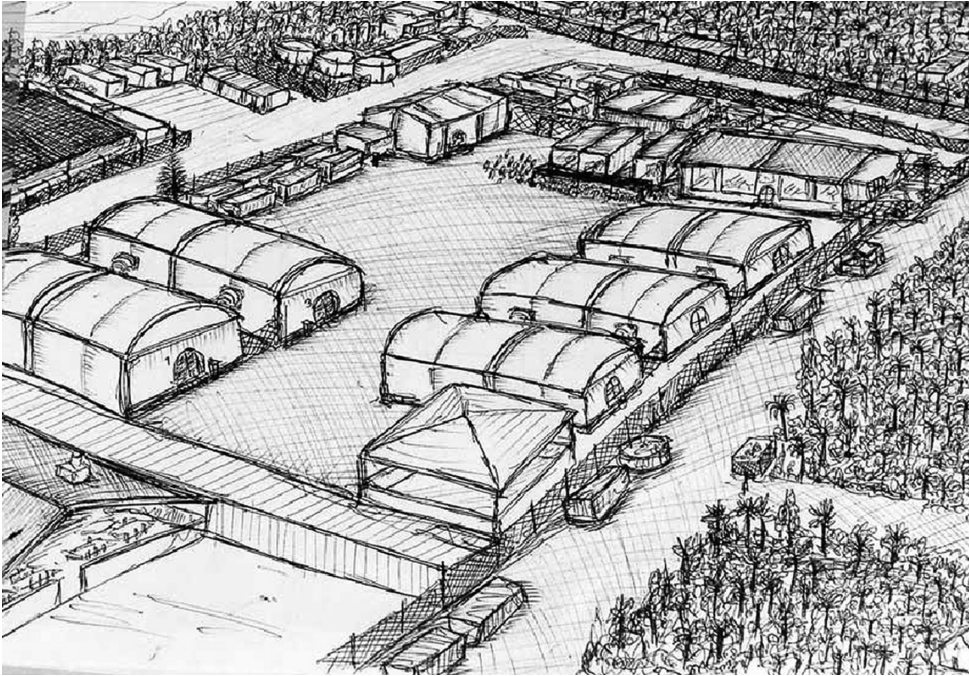


Figure 7.4 Oscar Compound in Manus Prison by Eaten Fish. Image reproduction authorized by Eaten Fish. © Eaten Fish.

Such a vivid recollection of the malodor of Manus Prison is evidence of the trauma etched into the memory of the individuals forced to endure such a place. Exploring the sensory experience with relation to sound, Manus Recording Project Collective, *How Are You Today*, recorded hours of audio on hidden mobile phones to provide insight into the daily life in Manus Prison.<sup>34</sup> Emma Russell, criminology and justice scholar, tells of the unsettling nature of listening to the silence of the prison, which is often interrupted by the haunting sound of the 2.4 m high security fences rattling in the wind.<sup>35</sup> In the recording of a checkpoint, by detainee Farhad Bandesh, we are reminded that the function of a checkpoint is not merely to restrict access, but also to surveil and monitor movement across arbitrary lines. “In this recording,” Russell explains, “we hear both the negotiations of authority over movement and sound as movement; each of these modalities of sound respatialize the carceral atmosphere.”<sup>36</sup> Not only is the checkpoint a sensory experience that reveals the level of biological control within the prison, it also exposes the volume of the prison and its confines as a spatial container of human bodies.

Examining the distinct aspects of confinement, what we can see, hear and smell, magnifies our comprehension of carceral power and the potent sensory nature of the carceral experience.<sup>37</sup> The multisensory experience of incarceration is a growing field of enquiry that attempts to mediate between notions of the said and unsaid in prison life.<sup>38</sup> It is not only concerned with the physical confines of the prison and its inimical architecture, but also the disciplinary regimes that reinforce the power structures between guard and prisoner, generating a climate of fear and dispossession.<sup>39</sup> As criminologist Kate Herry highlights, the sensory experience of incarceration can be combined with other techniques to powerful effect, like combining witness testimony with architectural forensics and acoustic modeling.<sup>40</sup> A forensic analysis of the physical structures and spatial techniques can reveal the political influences, cultural practices and forms

of knowledge that impact on the form and functionality of Manus Prison. For instance, the architectural forensics analysis of *Against Erasure*, has created an interactive 3D model of Manus Prison using archival materials, interviews with survivors, Google Maps, images from the film *Chauka Please Tell Us the Time* and recordings from *The Messenger* project by Michael Green and Abdul Aziz Muhamat. *Against Erasure's* 3D model was created to challenge the Australian government's justification for detention and refusal to acknowledge the harmful effects of its border security policies.

The reconstructed model has the potential to act as a witness for the refugees and their experiences while incarcerated in Manus Prison.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Elahe Zivardar, an Iranian architect who was incarcerated on Nauru (another Australian-operated prison) for six years, is currently documenting her story in a film called *Searching for Aramsayesh Gah*. The film attempts to expose the architecture of torture by creating a detailed 3D model of the Nauru Prison. For Zivardar, this process is not only one of catharsis but also a forensic investigation into the architecture that subjected her to years of torture. She says:

No matter how strong or confident you are, you are made worthless upon your first encounter with this space. The idea, the concept, and every single element within the Nauru detention facility is cruelly designed to torture detainees physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It is the architecture of evil.<sup>42</sup>

Another example of this type of reconstructive forensic analysis via 3D modeling and architectural analysis, deriving from Weizman's work, was also applied to the detention of political prisoners in Myanmar. In the months following the February 2021 military coup, more than 6000 people were detained, with reports of many having been beaten and tortured. A forensic architectural analysis was commissioned by Al Jazeera that made use of photographs, satellite imagery and witness reports to reconstruct the compound and verify the testimony of four former detainees, thus leading to the discovery of where the facility was located.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, the analysis of spaces like Manus Prison requires more than the 3D modeling of the buildings per se: although it is an important element of understanding the space, the analysis should also consider the sensorial elements, such as sound, odor and heat that impact the space in order to fully comprehend the effects of the spatial dimensions on the imprisoned body.<sup>44</sup>

Odor, sound, humidity, mold and vermin are rarely deliberately incorporated into building design; rather, their existence is generally symptomatic of a lack of amity toward the refugee. The detention system is intended to be punitive, to waste years of the refugee's life and reduce the individual to 'bare life.' As philosopher Giorgio Agamben has highlighted in *Homo Sacer*, 'bare life' marks the threshold between politically qualified life and merely existent life, or biological life exposed to violence.<sup>45</sup> The refugee is thus reduced to 'bare life' for the express purpose of deterring others from attempting to cross the dangerous waters into Australia.<sup>46</sup> Yet, this justification belies the actuality that Australia's detention system makes use of violence because it is politically advantageous to do so. Bear in mind, sociologist Michael Humphrey asserted in *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation* that "the first step towards torture is detention."<sup>47</sup> This, he argues, usually occurs during exceptional circumstances like internal conflict, war or, in the case of Australia, protecting its borders from unwelcome arrivals. The exception typically permits the suspension of established judicial processes for political advantage. However, as Humphrey argues, the legal, social and gendered segregation of the detention facility makes it a world unto itself, thus creating a "vortex that sucked in victims selected by a self-generating process of torture and betrayal."<sup>48</sup> The production of bare life in the form of broken individuals is arguably

the intended outcome and the Australian government's strategic gamble, to be explicitly clear about what type of individual will be accepted into Australian society.

Chauka in Manus Prison demonstrates this attempt to deliberately break the individual, as one asylum seeker who experienced Chauka on several occasions for three days at a time, exclaimed: "I was in a very bad state, I was very distressed and dehydrated. I cried out for help, over and over, but no one can hear you from that place."<sup>49</sup> What's more, human rights advocate Ben Pynt voiced concern that Chauka was used as a threat to control asylum seekers' behavior, stating:

It has immediate impacts on everybody who goes in there. People I have spoken to have come out anxious or depressed, or just inconsolable, some have just refused to talk about it. In terms of longer-term effects, some people take a longer time to crack than others, but everybody cracks in the end ... Even the suggestion of being sent to Chauka is enough to make people comply.<sup>50</sup>

For Elaine Scarry, who has written extensively on the language of physical pain, the trauma of confinement is an "internal bodily experience of fear, horror and pain in which the very self is brutally confronted and threatened with the reality of its own extinction."<sup>51</sup> Not knowing how long one might be in isolation and when one will be released places the individual into an existential crisis, a liminal space between humanity and inhumanity. This act of 'breaking' or 'cracking' the individual, is akin to what Scarry refers to as *unmaking the body*, for it effects the human sensory experience, our feelings and emotions and reduces our ability to communicate them. Indeed, this presents the political opportunity of violence, as the voice of the victim is silenced because pain, both physical and emotional, is difficult to properly describe in words.<sup>52</sup> As geographer Derek Gregory explains:

If prisoners are reduced to bare life through torture, violently cast into a world beyond language, then the act of remembering their trauma is both infinitely fragile and, in its potentiality, profoundly political.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the inability to properly describe physical pain provides an opportunity to those who might wish to speak for them, or "ventriloquize its infliction."<sup>54</sup> In other words, the tortured asylum seeker, with already limited avenues for appeal, is further burdened by the inherent difficulty to express their pain and may be spoken for by various organizations who may seek to trivialize and minimize their suffering. In *The Messenger*, Muhamat assumes the responsibility of witnessing the trauma of other detainees. Yet, he finds it difficult to describe seeing his fellow detainees self-harming. During his podcast, he states:

These are the only things that I am able to remember and describe because I feel the pain inside me, I feel now my chest is just beating up to my nose, but I cannot even describe more than that.<sup>55</sup>

For victims and witnesses alike, political power is made real through the mistreatment of the human body. As Scarry argues, violence is an irresistible source of 'substantiation' when other means fail to substantiate the state's authority. Consequently, the Australian government hastily devised a plan for offshore detention, when its authority was challenged over the Tampa Affair.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, 9/11 gave rise to the indefinite detention and torture of suspected terrorists at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay.<sup>57</sup>

With this in mind, a forensic/sensorial examination of Manus Prison, in particular, dorm P in Foxtrot compound at Manus Prison, might help build a case for how violence occurred, leading to the needless suffering of many individuals. Described as the worst quarters at Manus Prison, dorm P was shaped like an elongated semi-cylinder, about 60 m long, 4.8 m wide and 2.4 m high. Consequently, the hut lacked natural light and natural ventilation, with only two windows located at each end. The corrugated galvanized steel cladding was poorly insulated, so the temperature inside often exceeded that on the outside. During rain events dorm P flooded, making ideal conditions for mold to grow and snakes to find a suitable habitat.<sup>58</sup> At one point, as many as 132 men were crowded inside, with one guard, a former firefighter, describing it as a “death trap” and “a hazard to everyone who lived there.”<sup>59</sup> Boochedani, who was also confined there, described it as “damp like a wet barn,” he continues:

In fact, it is more suffocating than a stable for mules, filled with half-naked bodies, stinking breath, stinking sweat. It is hard to believe anyone could live there, let alone the one-hundred-and-thirty individuals packed into the place by force.<sup>60</sup>

Inside dorm P, there were two rows of bunks, arranged on opposite sides of the hut with a narrow walkway in between, just wide enough to let only one person pass at a time. Thus, with only one way in, a person had to negotiate the plethora of bodies to get from one end to the other. Detainees described the space as suffocating, claustrophobic and always filled with people coming and going. Boochedani recalls that upon entering “one can anticipate rubbing shoulders” with other inmates, but “this shoulder bumping and the interaction of your body with the sweaty, near-naked body of another is disgusting.”<sup>61</sup>

On the back wall of the dorm P were written the words, ‘don’t give up.’<sup>62</sup> Indeed, this message was in defiance of the sense of hopelessness offered by the surroundings. There was no solace, no comfort, and every moment spent there was an attack on the senses – all to reduce the detainees to nothing more than biological life.<sup>63</sup> Whether derived from a sense of claustrophobia due to the quantum of unwashed men packed inside an unventilated confined hot space, the endless days with nothing to do or having to excrete in unhygienic and revolting ablution facilities, the experience of living in dorm P was degrading and the sense of abandonment was distressing. Shamindan Kanapathi, a 28-year-old Sri Lankan refugee, lied to his parents for six years because he was ashamed to say where he had ended up. He took photos of the island to send to his family back home but claimed they were of Australia.<sup>64</sup> Omar Jack from Sudan was only 18 when locked up in Manus Prison in 2013. He told journalists in 2019 while still in prison: “I’m sure if I tell my mum about what’s going on, she will never be ok.”<sup>65</sup> For years these men, and no doubt many others were reluctant to tell their families about where they were living, they had failed to find asylum and ended up incarcerated in a place of nightmares. During which, there appeared to be no end to their suffering, other than accepting deportation and returning home to face further persecution.

Architecturally, dorm P was a converted Quonset hut built for the American military during WWII while they occupied the Manus site as a strategic outpost in the area (Figure 7.3). Quonset huts were designed and built by the construction company George A. Fuller and Company in Chicago, when involved in the construction of a naval base at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. Quonset is a word from the native American tribe of the Narragansett in Rhode Island, appropriately meaning ‘boundary.’<sup>66</sup> The company’s lead architect, Otto Brandenberger, while working on the design for the base was asked if he could come up with an easy to manufacture and assemble building similar to the British WWI Nissen hut, which was deemed too complex for the US military’s needs.<sup>67</sup> Brandenberger’s design was for



a semi-cylindrical form constructed from a curved lightweight steel frame with corrugated steel cladding. The design essentially eliminated the necessity for a portal frame with walls and a roof and combined the two planes to form one. The building type was preferred during the war for being lightweight, portable and easy to assemble, taking six to eight people one day to construct with ordinary tools. Quonset huts made use of Masonite paneling internally, the floor was typically made of plywood but in some cases concrete if it could be sourced. Doors and windows were installed in the ends in timber framed walls. The founder of George A. Fuller and Company, George A. Fuller, was an architect and often credited as the inventor of the skyscraper. After his death in 1901, the company continued to expand its operations under new ownership and were commissioned by the US military in 1941 to manufacture more than 150,000 huts for US troops during WWII. The open plan of the interior, free of any obstructions and columns made it adaptable to many uses, including barracks, offices, medical and dental offices, medical wards, bakeries, chapels, theaters, latrines and much more. As many as 86 different interior layouts were incorporated into the design of the huts.<sup>68</sup> Yet, despite the internal flexibility offered by the design, the huts were never intended to incarcerate so many men – nor were they intended to be habitable some 70 years later.

For those who found themselves incarcerated within the cylindrical form of the Quonset hut, it made little sense that such a disproportionate building would be used to imprison so many human bodies. If this was the intention of the architect who designed it, Boochani asks, “according to what line of thinking was this ugly masterpiece created?”<sup>69</sup> However, if the building were designed with a completely different purpose in mind, it would be unreasonable to lay blame with the architect. Yet it is reasonable to ask, how did the architecture contribute to harmfully effect asylum seekers? The very design, regardless of the intended purpose plays a significant role in exacerbating the asylum seeker’s sense of biological existence. The tightly confined space, with poor light and ventilation, not to mention the heat, would have a significant impact on one’s level of comfort within the space. This, combined with the length of time one is forced to spend within the space would only compound the problem. Not only would an asylum seeker become agitated and disgusted by the stench of the other bodies inhabiting the space, but one had little choice but to remain indoors as the option to do otherwise was likely to be insufferable. Thus, the constant movement of men coming and going, never comfortable with stasis, as movement alleviated the boredom of having nothing to do. The dark suffocating confines, combined with the dense hot air, multiplied by indefinite incarceration and the uncertainty of not knowing when one will be released, would no doubt feel like torture. It is, therefore, not surprising that one would, justifiably, develop a sense of hostility toward their captor, but later resign themselves to inevitable depression and the potential that they may never see loved ones again.

As numbers swelled from the originally intended 500 to 1338 all-male prisoners by February 2014, a combination of largely predictable factors reached a crisis point in Manus Prison. Lawyers Alison Gerard and Tracey Kerr, highlight the legal ambiguities inherent in the offshore detention system that created competition among detainees for legal advice and a heightened sense of tension within the prison.<sup>70</sup> They further implicate the lack of consultation with the Manus locals prior to the reopening of Manus Prison which caused acrimony toward the refugees.<sup>71</sup> Before refugees arrived, they were also told that the locals were cannibals. In essence, the two communities were played against each other, made out to be competitors as opposed to neighbors.<sup>72</sup> To address the growing hostilities, PNG authorities, with funding from the Australian government, organized an armed militia group, called the Mobile Squad, to guard the perimeter of Manus Prison. From its inception, even the G4S private security guards complained about their excessive use of force toward asylum seekers.<sup>73</sup> On 16 February 2014, detainees convened a meeting to protest the

conditions of their imprisonment and length of time it was taking to process their claims for asylum. After the meeting, several skirmishes broke out with the guards and some 30 refugees broke through the perimeter fence of the prison.<sup>74</sup> In response, guards and locals physically attacked the asylum seekers causing physical injuries, with one refugee having his throat cut. The next day as protests continued, the Mobile Squad broke into the Manus Prison and shot at asylum seekers.<sup>75</sup> During the commotion, Reza Barati, a 23-year-old architecture student from Iran, who was not involved in the protests, headed toward his dormitory for cover when at least ten people, including Manus Prison guards, attacked him. Consequently, Reza Barati sustained fatal injuries from a blow to the head which shattered the left side of his skull.<sup>76</sup> Another 70 asylum seekers were injured, one refugee lost an eye and several others sustained gunshot wounds.<sup>77</sup>

Reza Barati had been incarcerated in Manus Prison for six months at the time of his death. His friend Mardin Arvin, a Kurdish writer from Iran and witness to the attack that killed Barati, wrote an ode to him on the seventh anniversary of his death:

The whole scene is dominated by darkness.

Darkness everywhere.

Noise. Tumult. Screams for help. Moaning. These noises heighten the horror of the darkness.

We have been under attack, under attack within a detention center. Some carry wooden clubs, some carry metal bars, looking for a body to beat within an inch of their life. They even throw rocks at us from the outside.

I am overwrought. I am bewildered, in a state of shock. Distressed. The truth is we cannot do anything about the situation.

We stand facing them. We stand facing death.<sup>78</sup>

In the moment asylum seekers were under attack, the G4S guards, the Mobile Squad and Manusian locals who got involved were granted power over the life and death of refugees because of a system designed to reduce asylum seekers to 'bare life.' Yet, Scott Morrison, the then Immigration Minister and former Australian Prime Minister, denied that the Australian government was responsible for the attack that claimed Barati's life and caused injuries to numerous others.<sup>79</sup> He initially claimed that the violence occurred outside Manus Prison and blamed asylum seekers for their riotous behavior. Morrison told reporters that asylum seekers had breached the external perimeter and locals did not enter the prison. "This is a tragedy," he stated in a media conference, "but this was a very dangerous situation where people decided to protest in a very violent way and to take themselves outside the center and place themselves at great risk."<sup>80</sup> By claiming that Barati was somehow responsible for his own death for escaping the prison, Morrison managed to shift accountability from the Australian government to the refugees themselves. In fact, investigations into Barati's murder were left to the PNG police, while Australian authorities withdrew investigative assistance despite enquiries showing that Australian citizens had been involved in beating Barati to death.<sup>81</sup> Joshua Kaluvia, a Salvation Army worker, and Louie Efi, a guard at Manus Prison, both Manusians, were charged with murder two years after the incident, and sentenced to ten years' jail for killing Reza Barati.<sup>82</sup> During the trial, the court heard that Kaluvia hit Barati "in the head repeatedly with a piece of wood with a nail in the end, before Efi dropped a large rock on Mr. Barati's head."<sup>83</sup> A senate inquiry found the cause of the violence to be "eminently foreseeable," and the Australian government failed in its obligation to protect asylum seekers. It highlighted the Australian government's disregard for

the welfare of asylum seekers, who instead preferred to make things as difficult as possible while incarcerated so that they might return home ‘voluntarily.’<sup>84</sup>

Weizman highlights the problem of violence when it is justified according to various calculated measures as the least-worst outcome. He argues that human rights are often abused by the state when it is seen to be advantageous to do so. For example, loss of life in Manus Prison might be seen as the ‘lesser evil’ by the Australian government, in comparison to the potential loss of life at sea due to increased boat arrivals. Thus, offshore detention supposedly acts as a deterrent to future boat arrivals. For Weizman, “spatial organizations and physical instruments, technical standards, procedures and system of monitoring have become the means for exercising contemporary violence and for governing the displaced, the enemy and the unwanted.”<sup>85</sup> The tenet of the ‘lesser evil’ is to make two or more preferably avoidable options appear not only comparable but as if there is no alternative. Thus, the decision to choose one or the other can justify the harmful effects that would be otherwise deemed unacceptable if the decision was made in isolation. For example, policies designed to demonstrate that the government is tough on border security are presented in a manner that positions offshore detention as the only means of avoiding far greater catastrophes, like drownings at sea or letting terrorists into the country. As such, Weizman highlights that the principle of proportionality then vindicates sometimes extreme responses.<sup>86</sup> For instance, if the purpose of offshore detention is to prevent terrorists from entering the country, then the precedent established through the paradigm of Guantanamo Bay may appear acceptable to the state, and when weighed against the public interests, the outcome might even appear appropriate. Manus Prison is part of an overall system of immigration control, designed to place asylum seekers in legal limbo, away from scrutiny and oversight, to create a spectacle of the refugee’s depravity in the hope of deterring others from attempting to cross from Indonesia to Australia. In this way, refugees are exploited so that the state might promote border security as protection for its citizens, whereby any perceived success in nullifying external threats seems to legitimize the cruelty in the first place.

The structures of the prison, making use of run-down former military barracks, temporary shelters, tents and shipping containers, appear to provide the minimum living standards possible. It is an architecture of neglect, or as Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese, experts in cultural studies, call it, “anti-shelter.”<sup>87</sup> Which is an architecture that is literally “the very antithesis of shelter: they are spaces designed to engender fear, compound uncertainty, and maximize a sense of exposure to danger.”<sup>88</sup> The structures are intended to appear temporary, to portray the notion of their impermanence and lack of comfort because asylum seekers, as the immigration minister Phillip Ruddock once declared, should not expect to be accommodated in luxury settings.<sup>89</sup> The principle of proportionality is evidenced not only by the conditions in which asylum seekers are detained, but also by the discipline and control met by heavy-handed guards who patrol the compound, the threat of being killed by local militia groups as well as the possibility of contracting a deadly disease due the unsanitary conditions. As such, one could imagine, why under such circumstances, an asylum seeker might object to the way they are being treated. Asylum seekers have limited access to basic amenities, like medical care, legal advice, healthy food and clean clothing, while being subject to the discipline of the guards, confined by security fencing and being threatened by locals. According to the Australian government, this sadly constitutes the ‘lesser evil’ in comparison to any other alternative way of dealing with asylum seekers and future boat arrivals.<sup>90</sup>

If the loss of life and the mental deterioration of several hundred asylum seekers is considered a small price to pay to ‘stop the boats,’ consider the case of Hamid Khazaei, a 24-year-old Iranian man who sustained a minor cut on his foot which developed sepsis due to the unhygienic conditions in dorm P. Treatment was delayed when Khazaei became unwell, and he later died in transit to an Australian hospital. An inquest into the cause of Khazaei’s death blamed delayed

medical care brought about due to the government's reluctance to transfer ill refugees to the Australian mainland for treatment.<sup>91</sup> Refugee lawyer, Sara Dehm, with reference to Khazaei's death invokes philosopher Achille Mbembe's concept of *necropolitics*, a term referring the modern forms of power that have come to govern through death.<sup>92</sup> For Mbembe, necropolitical power has its origins in colonialism which has become paradigmatic of modern state violence. He argues that if colonized people are permitted to live, they are kept in a perpetual state of injury. Necropolitics, as it represents a form of modern sovereignty, "constitutes the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not."<sup>93</sup> Thus, the effects of neoliberal globalization have brought about an escalation in nationalism, protectionism and securitization in once staunch democratic states. This demonstrates that democracies have a propensity to resort to violence and hostility when the existing order is threatened. Mbembe's work on necropolitics is applicable to state-sponsored violence inflicted on migrants and refugees deemed 'disposable' to neoliberal capitalism.<sup>94</sup> Thus, refugee deaths are not an aberration but, rather, intrinsic to how the state organizes political space based on the logic of border security.<sup>95</sup>

In the case of Khazaei, necropolitical violence in Australia's offshore detention regime took the form of what Loughnan calls "active neglect."<sup>96</sup> This is evident in the declining mental health of so many imprisoned refugees due to boredom and a lack of stimulation to pass the time, there were no organized programs to produce meaningful work, education or skilled training. Every day was essentially the same, consisting of queueing and laying around in the shade to preserve energy from the unbearable heat. Cases of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal ideation among the already vulnerable men were prevalent. Former Manus guard, Steve Kilburn, told of depressed individuals spending nights laying in filth.<sup>97</sup> He claimed that some of the prisoners had soiled themselves because of the traumatic experiences they had been through but did not have any additional clothing to change into.<sup>98</sup> Nicole Judge, from the Salvation Army, said she "saw sick and defeated men crammed behind fences and being denied their basic human rights, padlocked inside small areas in rooms, often with no windows."<sup>99</sup> The Human Rights Law Centre Director of Legal Advocacy, Daniel Webb, said that the conditions which gave rise to violence and neglect have not been addressed at Manus Prison. He claimed that in the first two years of its opening, "two men have died and over 70 others have been seriously injured but only a handful have been processed and none have been resettled."<sup>100</sup> In fact, despite the Australian government's claim, offshore processing is not an effective deterrent for refugees attempting to flee persecution. The idea that the harsh conditions in Nauru and Manus might deter asylum seekers from boarding boats has not worked. In fact, the reduction in boat arrivals is largely the consequence of naval intercepts and turnarounds as opposed to imprisonment.<sup>101</sup> Thus, begging the question, why imprison refugees in the first place, if not simply to punish disadvantaged people for political gain?<sup>102</sup>

In April 2016, the PNG high court ruled that the detention of asylum seekers in Manus Prison was unconstitutional, resulting in its closure more than a year later in October 2017.<sup>103</sup> In order to relocate asylum seekers to a temporary facility in nearby Lorengau, PNG officials posted notices around the compound stating that detainees were to vacate the facility by midnight as power, water and food would be cut off from that time. However, nearly 600 men refused to leave because they had not been properly advised of the conditions of the new prison and argued that it might be unsafe for them to do so. They cited a recent event in April 2017 in which shots were fired and projectiles thrown by drunken PNG servicemen into the prison compound.<sup>104</sup> Of the hundreds of refugees refusing to leave, many had not left the detention facility for more than four years. Others were traumatized by their experiences, but their solidarity in refusing to leave brought about a new sense of freedom. After years of queueing for meals, being caged behind steel security fences and crammed into small, uninhabitable spaces, the detainees were briefly back in charge of their lives. As journalists Ben Doherty and Helen Davidson point

out, “each night, the refugees took great ceremony in locking the main gate to the detention center. They were guards of their own prison, but it was they who were in control.”<sup>105</sup> Boochani recalls feeling, for the first time in four years, a new sense of autonomy. He writes: “propelled by the deprivation of our liberty, we found an autonomy embedded in social relationships and shared experience.”<sup>106</sup> Muhamat, in his podcast recorded during the standoff, claimed that PNG authorities began removing fences and demolishing buildings while the refugees still occupied them. In addition, they destroyed their only water supply and removed all temporary shelters they had built to protect themselves.<sup>107</sup> After holding out for 23 days, PNG authorities called in the military to take control and forcibly removed all remaining men to newly built facilities in nearby Lorengau, Manus Province, PNG. Later, Clough, an Australian Company, was announced as head contractor for the \$175 million project to rehabilitate the Manus Prison site for the PNG defense force.<sup>108</sup> When Boochani returned to the Manus Prison site in 2018, it was as if the prison had never existed. He described the site as completely destroyed and overgrown with jungle. Still, he managed to find the area where Foxtrot compound once was because he recognized the only tree there. Chauka had also vanished, leaving no physical evidence that it had ever existed.<sup>109</sup> **highlighted should be an \$ (symbol for Aus dollar) not dollar symbol for US dollar (two vertical strikes), change in the footnote too**

The closure and demolition of Manus Prison is no doubt reassuring, as no one will ever have to endure that horrific place again. However, it does not mean the end of mandatory detention, as asylum seekers were simply imprisoned elsewhere, some in nearby ‘open’ facilities in Lorengau, others in the clandestine prison near Port Moresby, called Bomana. Currently, most asylum seekers are held indefinitely in hotel quarantine in Port Moresby, which, despite the slightly improved accommodation, is even more isolating than Manus Prison ever was. Nonetheless, while the ‘closure’ of detention prisons implies an end to incarceration, Australia’s detention system is entrenched in a pattern of openings and closures, making it more likely that another offshore prison will open sometime in the future when it serves authorities to do so.<sup>110</sup> The history of Australia’s detention regime shows that closures in remote locations of the Australian mainland, like Curtin in northern West Australia and Woomera in remote South Australia, closed in 2002 and 2003, respectively, were followed by the opening of offshore detention facilities on Christmas Island and Cocos Island. Expansion to Pacific Island nations, like PNG and Nauru, has thus furthered Australia’s imperial expansion and political influence in the region. While Australia’s physical and economic reach has extended offshore, support for democratic standards like transparency, accountability and public scrutiny were simultaneously weakened upon the engagement of private security companies to operate the detention facilities.<sup>111</sup> Beginning in 1997, the provision of detention services were outsourced to for-profit organizations for the purpose of offsetting the government’s responsibility for the day-to-day administration of detention facilities.<sup>112</sup> Such undermining of the democratic system creates an interstitial space ripe for the exploitation of others.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, it provides opportunity for a quid pro quo, whereby smaller economic markets become subsumed by multinational corporations and, in addition, provide a third party scapegoat for the violence initiated and perpetrated by the state insisting on punitive measures like imprisonment for seeking asylum.<sup>114</sup>

The spatio-legal architecture of offshore detention functions to obfuscate sovereign responsibility and defer accountability for the livelihood of refugees. Assault, lack of ordinary care, imprisonment and the commodification of inmates’ bodies are the norms that govern detention. The satirical cartoons of Iranian artist, Eaten Fish, a former inmate at Manus Prison, emphasizes this point through a variety of novel means to show how the inmates are rendered targets within the confines of their surroundings. Eaten Fish’s drawings (Figure 7.4), according to Perera and Pugliese, “are minute renderings of a teeming nightmarish world, charged with sexual menace, in a manner that at times evokes the infernal paintings of Hieronymus Bosh.”<sup>115</sup> Some of Eaten Fish’s cartoons contain the

gravestones of Reza Barati and Hamid Khazaei, overlaying the sensorial experiences of the prison with the physical limitations of the space, like steel fencing, guards and the all-pervasive security cameras. In many cartoons, Eaten Fish conveys a necropolitical form of 'anti-shelter' in the figure of a graveyard where all detainees will eventually find rest. In a statement, he declares the futility of seeking asylum in Australia:

In the future, you will always already have been dead. Don't even bother to set off in your rickety boats seeking asylum on our shores. You will have escaped one form of death, only to be embraced by the slow death of anti-shelter.<sup>116</sup>

Anti-shelter bears complete disregard for its occupants, in fact, it openly makes occupation worse, by the fact that the very worst of humanity is revealed through the architecture of Manus Prison. The sensorial experience is fully immersive and inescapable, leading one into a downward spiral of hopelessness and depression, and out of reach of anyone who could potentially help.

## **Conclusion**

Manus Prison is part of Australia's legacy of mistreatment of 'others,' from the White Australia Policy to the Stolen Generation, and a significant feature of its contemporary history. It is thus an extension of Australian society, including the system of governance that co-opts and dictates policies designed to harm asylum seekers. Images of unsanitary conditions, self-harm, asylum seekers walking through mud during a rain storm, packed accommodations, sheets draped across openings to dormitories where doors have been removed, and security fencing patrolled by G4S guards in military fatigues, all contribute toward the normalization of offshore imprisonment and the discursive construct that that's what 'illegal' boat arrivals deserve.<sup>117</sup> Such imagery are a remnant of negative attitudes toward immigrants and others who perhaps don't suit the national imaginary of what it means to be Australian. Should Australia ease its border restrictions and dismantle the detention system, the mistreatment of refugees as collateral for policies of deterrence would not be required, along with the significant cost of operating these deleterious carceral apparatuses like Manus Prison.

Apparatuses like Manus Prison are the very antithesis of shelter, as every component of its composition was intended to maximize the effects of isolation due to the prison's setting in remote PNG, far from adequate health care, legal aid and loved ones. Simultaneously, the prison's architecture sought to minimize one's sense of worth by forcing hundreds of men into confinement within ad hoc structures, like shipping containers, dongas and WWII Quonset huts, all of which were never intended, and inadequately converted, for long-term human occupation. This combined with the lack of amenities within the prison, including disgusting ablution facilities, poorly ventilated or shaded spaces to shelter from the oppressive tropical sun and the crowded living conditions lacking privacy and separation from other male prisoners, signifies the Australian government's neglect and abandonment of asylum seekers. The superfluous dimension of security fencing, cameras, checkpoints, guards and sometimes, hostile locals, across the site, all coalesce with the architecture to further denote the asylum seeker's depravity and humiliation. The forensic analysis merged with the sensorial experience derived from witness accounts, reveals the heard and unheard, the said and the unsaid, drawing a straight line to the outbreak of violence resulting in injuries and murder, bodily retaliation in the form of self-harm and suicide and the significant decline in the detainees mental and physical health. With the prison now razed, it's reconstruction through modeling and witness accounts, including written works, poetry, art and other media better enables our understanding of Manus Prison, its systems of operation and the brutality of offshore detention.

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## PART III

# Security and borders



## 8

# INTRODUCTION TO SECURITY AND BORDERS

*Anoma Pieris*

Following on the previous section on *Violence and War Machines*, this second topic, *Security and Borders*, offers two ways of approaching the theme of *Urban Space and Politics*: firstly, through direct engagement with theories of sovereign border creation, control and securitization, addressing how intrastate conflict, forced migration and conditions of extreme precarity manifest in the built environment and architecture; and secondly, by discussing shifting strategies of urban governance in localities impacted by economic policy changes, greater securitization and public participation, where the idea of the border is implicit. This introduction, written while waves of infection still engulf us and time is measured by lockdowns, situates the five contributing chapters at the cusp of this shift between the geopolitical understanding of sovereign inclusion and exclusion to recognition of pandemic-provoked intimate and embodied economic and social border effects. Our sensibility of being national subjects, the physicality of our sovereign borders and the idea that border crossing could be perilous for all – not only for seemingly anonymous masses of displaced persons – has influenced this introduction’s theme.

*Border Region Studies* or *Borderland Studies* is a highly dynamic interdisciplinary research area encompassing topics as varied as migration, globalization and intrastate conflict.<sup>1</sup> Related literature focuses on the geopolitics of nation-state sovereignty, its multiscalar manifestations and relational social formations but is highly mutable because of what Étienne Balibar describes as the “polysemic nature” of the borders concept, where multiple and differing even contradictory meanings may be associated with it.<sup>2</sup> In architecture and related spatial disciplines, the topic of borders has become diffused, encompassing themes as varied as borderland urban environments, socially produced through human ‘contestations’ and ‘flows’;<sup>3</sup> geopolitical boundary politics, as revealed through refugee movements and minority identities alongside state apparatus for exclusion and control; and intrastate conflicts over border heritage.<sup>4</sup> For example, Eleni Kalantiou and Tony Fry’s collection *Design on the Borderlands* explores design practices in terms of friction, activism and informality.<sup>5</sup> Writings on migration have used border-related ideas like liminality, or interstitial spatialities indicative of transitional or marginal spaces and activities, to describe socio-spatial aspects of minority marginalization.<sup>6</sup> But these are highly malleable categorizations because of the ways in which national, transnational and minority identities overlap. Imperial and national inscriptions or expropriations of territory may extend beyond the limits of the nation-state<sup>7</sup> and of identity formation.<sup>8</sup> They are multiscalar in scope. When focused on human movements, they uncover the extraterritorial spatial logic of biopolitics, that is, the politics of

population management and control. Focusing on creative practice, for example, *Exit*, a 2008 virtual exhibition by architects Diller, Scofidio and Renfro with Paul Virilio used Big Data statistical documentation technologies for documenting the cross-border flows of labor, capital (remittances) and refugees.<sup>9</sup> The 2016 MOMA exhibition *Insecurities* created public awareness of the fragile materialities and confronting scale of refugee camp environments, globally.<sup>10</sup>

Since then, Covid-19 has reinvigorated a medicalized discourse incongruously connecting sovereignty and securitization to overseas travel and public health regimes, a seeming throwback to an imperial era of maritime migration which Alison Bashford, responding to the 2002–04 SARS epidemic, historicized through a review of past quarantine practices.<sup>11</sup> Academic and design forums interrogating the pandemic's spatial effects, for example, "Other Spaces of Quarantine" in the journal *Fabrications* and the *Epidemic Urbanism Initiative*, acknowledged the ways in which border security, labor, migrancy, displacement and public health were intimately entwined.<sup>12</sup> This multilayered understanding of how systems of surveillance, securitization and public health in responding to the pandemic have reconfigured the spatial freedoms of not only immigrants and guest workers but also ordinary citizens by imposing localized physical boundaries that restrict human mobility gives the urban approach to security and borders greater salience at this point in time.

With the escalation of the global pandemic throughout 2020–22, heightened strategies for border securitization saw unprecedented levels of institutional and governmental control for demanding compliance in minute aspects of everyday life with resistance to these processes manifesting as urban protests and riots in pandemic-vacated public spaces. Border-making practices seemingly imploded, circumscribing our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our homes and our bodies, silencing the everyday socialities that make democratic action materially visible. We have had to consciously calculate how these globally transformative events would impact domestic and professional life and how our understanding of built environments would embody anticipation of catastrophe. An earlier discourse on the physical and political instrumentality of borders was rethought in order to understand the pandemic's pervasive and damaging socioeconomic effects. As international borders hardened and became increasingly prohibitive to all manner of citizen travelers, irrespective of class or nationality, our polysemic understanding of borders converged around a common threat.

Building on the shared sensibility of constraint and entrapment caused by the invisible virus, this introduction discusses intellectual responses to socio-spatial border creation providing a conceptual backstory for the five chapters that follow. Learning from Henri Lefebvre's theorization of the social *Production of Space*, this introduction seeks to understand borders as geopolitical, lived realities, integral to local and global forms of urban spatial production that are co-constituted relationally with territorial configurations of nation-state sovereignty.<sup>13</sup> Rethinking borders as socially produced by a dialectical relation between border protection and neoliberal economic expansion, which reached their mutual crises in this global pandemic, I explore this temporal convergence of multiscalar border conditions as catalytic for future border studies. The dialectical character of border conditions has been studied previously, in terms of fixed legal boundaries of sovereign states and expansionist imperial or pioneering ventures, but most importantly the mobility of capital and the relative immobility of migrant labor within the global capitalist system.<sup>14</sup> Scholarship on Lefebvre, linking spatial production to territoriality, and reviewing his discourse on the "right to the city" by focusing on the social dimensions of both territorial and urban approaches to space, provide important anchor points for this approach.<sup>15</sup>

Although visualized as demarcating territory, sometimes manifesting as physical barriers, our understanding of the physical properties of borders relates to the ways that they modify human behavior or have done so historically with varying degrees of prohibition and violence.

Underlying spatial meanings of permeability that we also associate with borders, boundaries or fences linked to property and sovereignty, and to their political economy (production, product and labor) enhance the border condition's relational attributes. The confluences of social and physical interpretations that situate or challenge cartographic abstractions of borders have encouraged greater focus on multiscalar social and relational urban border effects. Anssi Paasi, summarizing this changing interpretive terrain, quotes sociologist Georg Simmel, saying "the boundary is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that forms itself spatially."<sup>16</sup> This observation remains salient for a study of borders through urban space and politics.

Lefebvre's *Production of Space* constructed a theoretical unity between the ways in which space is discursively constructed, codified and experienced.<sup>17</sup> Space, he argued, is an "ambiguous continuity"—the manner in which we see it, as codified and compartmentalized is "a precondition and result of social superstructures" that often conceal their latent social relationships.<sup>18</sup> Unmasking these relations is a political project comparable to Karl Marx's decoding of the social relationships of things (of works and commodities). Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden have extended Lefebvre's thinking to an analysis of territory, including the production of territory, state territorial strategies and what they describe as "the territory effect"—the state's tendency, through its territorial form to naturalize (at once to mask and to normalize) its own transformative intensely patterning effects on socio-spatial relations."<sup>19</sup> Building on Lefebvre's analysis of urban spatial formations as preconditions for capitalist accumulation, they encourage us to reflect on how territorial formations might be similarly analyzed; shifting emphasis from the more literal interpretations of borders as limits to political territory, to a more implicit recognition of the interplay of territoriality with the neoliberal economy; the economic systems and processes which, following the collapse of the two contrasting Cold War systems – socialist and capitalist – has become a force of homogenization and sometimes of radicalized resistance to it.

Lefebvre argued that the spatial struggles, between capitalism's homogenizing force (of monetization, commodification, waged labor) and counter strategies of meaning creation through differential spatial and material practices, constituted a dialectic through which space is produced and perpetually transformed. We can track this dialectical production of territory and territorial symbolisms and meanings in a border's duplicity as an impenetrable barrier and permeable point of egress. Borders both enable and prohibit flows of people, capital and goods. This opposition is maintained as a productive and ever-changing expression of statist control.

Much of the related literature explores how social inequity manifests in the material conditions and opportunities found in relationships shaped by neoliberal globalization and measured, since the 1960s, in terms of economic growth. National success is measured by development indices such as Gross Domestic Product figures rather than the political and social achievements of nation-states and their citizens. The resultant North-South differential has displaced previous Cold War political divisions and has been mobilized in academia in political science, international relations and development studies since the 1990s to counter the homogenizing tendency of globalization as a concept.<sup>20</sup> The idea's origin in South-South, Third World political solidarities that distanced themselves from the USA and Soviet Union during the mid-to-late 20th Century Cold War era has gained more currency recently for defining global social inequity. The term 'Global South' is used to describe the so-called developing nations but also identifies depressed economic groups within affluent Global North societies. Gaps and fissures caused by exploitative and poorly democratized state processes aligning with neoliberal market forces were exposed during the pandemic, when numerous failures in maintaining the sovereign duty of care were unmasked, most grievously in failures to protect economically or socially vulnerable groups like the aged, migrant workers and economically



disadvantaged immigrant communities. The Covid-19 crisis unveiled the unevenness of public health infrastructure in Global North and South nations, and in urban and rural communities, as vaccine production and delivery became politicized. International relations realigned on the basis of *vaccine diplomacy*: the provision of vaccines to poorer countries as brokering trading advantages and opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants and migrant workers, displaced persons at state borders and border communities who experience everyday precarity due to their borderline social status were disproportionately impacted by border closures, with no guarantees of care or welfare provision, particularly if they stood outside the boundaries of citizenship.

The language and behavior of border security has shifted from statist criteria of centralized control at a federal level to address the intimate registers of ordinary everyday life in suburbs and municipalities. Throughout the pandemic, its multiscalar effects were experienced intimately, not only at the scale of securing a country or city against the potential spread of the virus but also extending to regulations preventing us leaving our homes and neighborhoods, thereby defamiliarizing our surroundings as prohibited pathogenic sites and environments of risk. Whereas much of the discourses in border studies had focused on extraordinary scenarios, the pandemic uncovered the everyday banal articulations of borders through socio-spatial praxis as linked to capitalist modalities associated with democratic freedoms. The neoliberal schema of borderless globalization, discussed shortly, which had buoyed economic and political integration for several decades was brought to a shuddering halt. This hiatus affords us an opportunity to scrutinize borders from a fresh perspective.

### **Border creation**

The border is a liminal but constituent feature of nation-state sovereignty because of the ways in which we visualize nations as bordered entities; visualizations strengthened by intrastate conflict. Sovereign borders are generally perceived as static geopolitical formations with immanent divisiveness, both physical phenomena and man-made constructions: environmental features – the littoral boundaries between the US and Canada for example, being the Great Lakes;<sup>22</sup> or local riparian borders – the Murray-Darling Basin – shared by four Australian states.<sup>23</sup> Transborder disputes over management of shared resources amplify these boundaries. Even where state formation is linked to liberal democratic political strategies, border securitization often evokes forms of statist violence, either benign strategies of prevention or suppression or offensive or defensive action, which we come to understand discursively due to the ways in which border struggles are historicized as expressions of imperial, or nation-state, power.<sup>24</sup>

In the most extreme forms of the statist model borders are weaponized, a term indicative of the heightened offensive securitization of spaces, for example, the Atlantic Wall of art-deco bunkers built by the Nazis along the northern European coastline during WW II.<sup>25</sup> The partitioning of India, with political independence in 1947, internalized this border violence as part of the process of nation-state creation of East and West Pakistan for Muslim minority populations. Partition saw mass cross-border human displacements of 20 to 30 million refugees.<sup>26</sup> The walled circumscription of West Berlin, in 1961, the division of Görlitz between Poland and East Germany and the green line through Nicosia in Cyprus are examples of borders dividing cities. Breaking down these physical barriers came to signify emancipatory actions: the lifting of the Iron Curtain – the built features that separated ideologically communist pro-Soviet bloc countries from what was then regarded as the free world.<sup>27</sup> The tearing down of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, seemingly celebrated an era when physical barriers would become obsolete.<sup>28</sup> The residual sites of Cold War division in Vietnam or in Korea, territorially divisive demilitarized zones snaking across their respective land masses, were seen as anomalies awaiting

eventual dismantling – Vietnam in 1976 (Korea sometime in the future) – the last remnants of Asia’s Cold War.<sup>29</sup> In these examples, internal ideological division of an ethno-cultural group internalized the hostilities of intrastate conflict.

James O’Leary’s chapter in this section examines the urban legacy of such a political division, focusing on peace wall development in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where the organic creation of temporary barricades for securing Protestant or Roman Catholic neighborhoods from 1969 through the 1970s hardened into a political strategy of managing conflict through peace wall creation. At first, they were monitored by the British Army but with assumption of greater British government authority, 18 major security barriers were erected across parts of the city. O’Leary notes how urban planning strategies, like roadways and public spaces, were subsequently conceived with this same objective of socially engineering urban segregation, a strategy that served to deepen social division rather than reconcile the polarized communities.

### **Border dissolution and rebordering**

The end of Soviet-led communism and European reunification during the 1990s saw a resurgence of cosmopolitan values alongside governmental structures for global economic integration of capital and markets, sometimes interpreted as a feature of this process. Yasemin Soysal’s 1994 term “postnational” emphasized that the mid-20th Century guarded models of sovereignty were increasingly obsolete.<sup>30</sup> Europe was reintegrated as a regional political unity with a common currency. Literary and cultural studies’ debates on cosmopolitics scrutinized the forms of liberal personhood these structural changes framed.<sup>31</sup> Neoliberal realignments toward expanding markets and postnational and borderless territorialities, nevertheless, gave rise to new expressions of nation-state sovereignty, aimed at securing and defending economic opportunities, and produced a global order based on access to them.

The ways in which architecture and the urban spatial imagination were engaged in representing social symbolic meanings of border-related traumas idealized an emancipatory liberal democracy that was later critiqued. The Berlin Wall Association erected a Memorial (1998) including a strip of wall in East Berlin, a Chapel of Reconciliation (2000) and visitor center (2009), which accretion of meanings and symbolisms around victims of the Nazis were appropriated by groups protesting Germany’s refugee policy.<sup>32</sup> The post war creation of Israel and resultant displacement of Palestinians, had complex and problematic political legacies,<sup>33</sup> theorized by Eyal Weizman in *Hollow Land*.<sup>34</sup> Israel’s manipulation of border settlements for territorial expansion to receive the expelled Jewish diaspora contributed and continues to be a referent for ongoing tensions in the Middle East.

Former Yugoslavia, as the last European country resistant to neoliberalism, experienced the implosion of borders during the 1990s war concluding notoriously in the 99-day NATO bombardment of 1999. As argued most recently by Nikolina Bobic, a country previously unified by socialism was opened-up for militarization of every aspect of the society, and western-style neoliberal expansion through reconstruction in the war’s aftermath.<sup>35</sup> The 1992–96 siege of the capital, Sarajevo, provoked an architectural critique of wartime destruction conceptualized as *Warchitecture* by Sarajevo’s architects.<sup>36</sup> Siege lines within Sarajevo created internal boundaries that the enemy-encircled city residents had to navigate.<sup>37</sup> The attacks on the New York World Trade Center twin towers in September 2001, exposed the inconsistencies, unevenness and underlying violence of the globalization process.<sup>38</sup> The threat posed by insurgent groups combating western military involvement in conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia brought about a new global, so-called ‘war on terror’ – where perpetrators operated by stealth. Suicide attacks in western metropolitan centers forced European publics

to reckon with territorial conflicts they were indirectly connected to through their militaries' involvement in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. Rebordering processes responding to global catastrophes identified transnational migrant flows as major causes of instability and threats to "homeland security."<sup>39</sup> Writing on siege conditions in European cities in the aftermath of, or in anticipation of, terror attacks, Stephen Graham in *The New Military Urbanism* described invasive biometric technologies for securitization and surveillance as imposing new forms of biopolitical and border control on urban citizenry.<sup>40</sup> Surveillance cameras, security guards and biometric tracking aimed at identifying embodied threats to security form abstract or invisible assemblages of state power that help maintain the neoliberal fiction of border dissolution and increased personal freedom; Paasi describes a remarkable hardening of borders alongside the securitization of state and suprastate (EU-like) spaces and increased biometrical tracking of human movements across them.<sup>41</sup>

### The right to the city

The ideas of rights and ownership bear co-relation with "the right to the city," explored in Lefebvre's 1968 publication, as a revolutionary right created by use rather than property ownership or citizenship.<sup>42</sup> Writing on this issue, Mark Purcell observes, his desire was to reintegrate urban space into the web of social relations, ideals that have recently mobilized numerous social movements, most notably, the early 2000s anti-capitalist protests known as Occupy Wall Street.<sup>43</sup> Gunnar Sandin's chapter in this collection, explores this concept's resonance for codesigned environments and participatory urban planning that have challenged top-down or market-driven urban renewal and gentrification projects. Focusing on case studies from Malmö, Sweden, a city with a high percentage of non-Swedish residents, he explores how rights can be reinterpreted for the intersubjective and dialogic production of space.<sup>44</sup> Sweden incorporated a participation incentive within the 2010's national planning law. Failures observed in the four different processes he studies, however, suggest the need for mutual learning and communication when applying this approach. Unlike North America, where rights are determined by civil liberties afforded by liberal democracy, Sweden's governance model was built on ideals of solidarity and inclusivity that gave citizens greater agency in determining their lives and spaces.

In contrast, responding positively to neoliberal structural changes, former Soviet, Chinese and Indian economies and Eastern European nations previously closed to western investors witnessed unprecedented urban development both within those nations and globally through introduction of forms of governance responsive to market integration – most notably, the massive scale of industrial growth in China and India. Undressing the myth of China's progressive expansionism, Yunpeng Zhang and Weilin Zhang's chapter in this section discloses that while dispossession, exploitation and state-sanctioned violence have underscored urban development in Shanghai since the mid-2010s, small-scale, experimental design fixes are increasingly influencing urban renewal. While experimentation is an established state legacy, its application by multiple stakeholders (in processes they describe as ambiguous or fuzzy) is identified by them as integral to state strategies for managing potential crises of exploitative land-based capital accumulation. These include the land-financing model and resultant dispossession of residents creating crises of legitimacy, demands for compensation and eventual inflation of land prices, thereby reducing this strategy's profitability. Such processes invite criticism of the government, prompting conjectural strategies like master-planning to limit population growth and constraining urban expansion to put land to better use. Poor democratization of processes that spearhead structural dissolution means that new articulations of state power aligned with market forces too easily replace them. Regionally, these changes perpetuate a neoliberal world

order of predatory globalization and economic dependency between Global South nations and between urban and rural areas, modeled after the unequal relations of North and South.

### **Fortification**

The shift toward managing capital and human flows that maintain asymmetrical forms of privilege has produced a new understanding of border spaces as synonymous with statelessness including from mass human exoduses following national catastrophes:<sup>45</sup> the metaphorical re-emergence of 'Fortress Europe' (previously associated with Nazi-occupied territories of WW II) as a citadel against immigration,<sup>46</sup> the defensive occupation of Palestine lands by encroaching Israeli settlements.<sup>47</sup> In such instances, the border is concentrated as a legal threshold or entry point for populations seeking new opportunities or political refuge, the immigration checkpoints and toll booths that control human movements, maintained as part of the securitized armature established for exports and imports of commodities at seaports, airports and road borders.<sup>48</sup> So-called 'illegal' arrivals, in seeking to avoid these designated entry points, risk their lives crossing diffused bodies of water like the Mediterranean, the Pacific Ocean – or their inverse, the Sonoran or Sahara deserts.

Global politics' right-wing shift is exemplified by Brexit, the legislative fortification of Europe through anti-immigration and immigrant detention policies and US President Trump's proposals for extending and enlarging the US–Mexico border wall.<sup>49</sup> As Wendy Brown notes, the liberalization of borders through marketization was accompanied by heightened border construction, most notably in relation to the US–Mexico border wall.<sup>50</sup> Physical barriers were more directly related to preventing displaced persons crossing nation-state boundaries often involving exceptional levels of violence, including expulsion, detention and imprisonment. The shift toward managing capital and human flows that maintain asymmetrical forms of privilege produced a new understanding of border spaces as synonymous with statelessness including mass human exoduses following national catastrophes.<sup>51</sup>

Creative explorations of the border's relational capacities were applied as tools for countering state oppression, for example, in Ronald Rael's *Border Wall as Architecture*,<sup>52</sup> the 'Teeter Totter wall' of giant see-saws threaded through the border wall structure. In these experiments the border was conceived as a socially shared urban spatial zone, in which the wall was an intervention, a boundary that in places cut through borderland communities, which Cruz and Forman united through strategies for 'un-walling citizenship.'<sup>53</sup> Thomas Nail, in his chapter in this section, asks us to see the border as coproduced and transformed by nonhuman and human movements focusing on the entanglements of stable physical features with mutable human flows. He sees bordering as processual and occurring wherever prohibitions are enforced, intensified in the case of the US–Mexico border through legislations empowered by the pandemic. Studying four different patterns, namely the funnel, the cage, the current and the pool, Nail describes the highly mutable border enforcement infrastructure as transformed by human interaction and the ways in which migrants respond to it. Building on Marx's theory of *primitive accumulation*, Nail advances the idea of *expansion by expulsion*, that historically were contingent on one another as offering insights into interlocking circulation patterns that redirect migrants through expulsion for optimal exploitation.

### **Exception**

Because of the ways in which affluent nations' military actions have exacerbated human displacement, these spaces at times are intimately linked to neoliberal political motivations for war

and genocide in Latin America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.<sup>54</sup> For the 82.4 million persons displaced globally, as documented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), most recently from Syria, South Sudan, Venezuela, Afghanistan and Myanmar, their life experience outside the security and opportunity of capitalist modes of production defines the limits of social and spatial privilege.<sup>55</sup> Often their social reception by host communities is hostile rather than welcoming. Humanitarian efforts of separate shelter provision for maintaining and alleviating what Giorgio Agamben described as “bare life” outside sovereign care, occur at the scale of cities.<sup>56</sup> Agamben’s theories oriented scholarly discourses from the biopolitical manifestation of power in urban formations to power’s excesses and exclusions, which increasingly simulate urban forms. Large urban camps reliant on humanitarian aid, created in neglected border zones of host countries for war-displaced refugees such as the Dadaab camp in Kenya or Zaatari in Jordan, with populations of over 100,000 persons, are confronting contemporary examples of this type.<sup>57</sup> Irit Katz, in her chapter in this section, explores the perceived dichotomy between cities and camps, or of the latter replacing urban spaces as biopolitical paradigms, by studying the evolution of camps into cities. Her focus is on the very different city–camp entanglements of Israeli transit camps and Palestinian refugee camps, both established during the 1940s and the 1950s. The frontier *ma’abarot* (transit) camps were planned to facilitate creation of the development towns, as ‘temporary scaffoldings’ for producing the spatial conditions that would discipline *Mizrahi* immigrants into “good modern, self-regulating Zionist political subjects,” while the UN-established Palestinian refugee camps evolved through bottom-up processes as hybridized and mutable urban spaces, invested in identity constructions that maintained their politics of displacement. By contrasting the urban means by which Palestinian refugees seek to construct agency outside state protection with the use of urban planning to discipline marginal ethno-racial migrants, Katz argues that these camp spaces are not depoliticized.

In its most insidious form as a device for biopolitical control, the border camp converts to a detention center, the metaphorical *bridges* into Fortress Europe – the island detention center at Lampedusa, Italy and Melilla near Morocco; or Australia’s onshore and offshore detention centers<sup>58</sup> – illustrate how borders were reconfigured as selective barriers against refugees or labor migrants from war-torn countries in the Global South, seen as potential economic burdens threatening the prosperity and security of affluent nations.<sup>59</sup> In Australia, “[f]ree trade and offshore detention have become bipartisan policy” argues Grainger Brown.<sup>60</sup> These heavily securitized punitive facilities, part of global-national detention-industrial complexes, segregated from everyday life with fences of razor wire, criminalize their refugee occupants through an extreme deployment of border securitization to protect neoliberal nations’ economic security.<sup>61</sup> The exclusionary physical border is reconfigured as a camp.

## Conclusion

As discussed in this introduction, specific exclusions and inclusions have helped sustain and magnify the territorial and political instrumentality of state borders in physical and symbolic ways, impacting the formation and interpretation of their relational social attributes. Far from creating a borderless world, neoliberal market-oriented processes and policies have increased their capacity for regulating flows of capital, information and humans, amplifying borders’ functions and meanings including their nonhuman effects. Just as sovereignty is defined and empowered by its exceptions, so are borders strengthened by the prohibitions they manifest.

The global pandemic has focused attention on how utopian representations of neoliberal governance are upheld by mechanisms for border securitization in which state power and global market forces are complicit. It has also revealed the dialectical tensions inherent in these

relationships. These tensions are traceable to historical motivations of social opportunism and social welfare which we previously, during the Cold War decades, saw as ideologically opposed. Implicit and explicit border formations, heightened because of the pandemic, have halted the free movement of goods and capital, fixing populations in their national territories, and thereby giving national governments exceptional control over citizens' everyday social lives. The pandemic, by limiting individual freedoms, has resuscitated cultures of extreme insecurity we associate with these more negative aspects of borders and has exposed the extent to which mechanisms of control were already embedded in our everyday spaces and lives. It has also made us increasingly aware of the bordered nature of urban social formations preconditioned for capital accumulation and mobilized during the pandemic for enforcement and dissent.

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# 9

## DIALOGIC DILEMMAS

### Citizen participation in built environment alterations in Malmö, Sweden

*Gunnar Sandin*

#### **Participation as a matter of dialogue with multiple agents and scales**

This chapter will discuss citizen participation, both as a formalized part of city planning and as a more temporally pursued codesign initiative. The chapter starts with a general reflection on the right to have a say when something is added to one's built environment, as expressed in theories of space, architecture, planning, geography and identity. A social semiotics approach will be used for a critical study of how dialogues with citizens work in cases of urban planning and design in Malmö. Located in southernmost Sweden, Malmö is part of the quickly developing urban landscape that defines that part of the country, and it is in close proximity to the Danish border. Like many other coastal and border regions around the globe, this Scandinavian region experiences continuous population profile changes related to migration and is also facing rising sea levels; these conditions demand renewal of social and environmental politics. It happens that, in Sweden, the population growth coincides with a growing official interest in actively involving citizens in urban planning and architecture. This official interest is expressed, for instance, in the national document *Policy for Designed Living Environments* and in the legalization of *The Planning and Building Act*.<sup>1</sup> The idea of a *society for all* is recurrently used in this national policy to address citizens' benefit and enjoyment as well as their influence.<sup>2</sup> However, the formats for such influence are not sufficiently developed to fulfill such objectives. The ever-changing contemporary prerequisites for participation promote new types of wishes, needs and plans for dialogue to be theorized and communicated in participatory practices. This chapter focuses primarily on the practices of dialogues in citizen participation: how they are established and how they may fail in reaching democratic objectives. My reflection is based on an agency-oriented view of the constituents of dialogues, and it concludes by suggesting the need to view dialogic acts not only as communicational transactions between two main contracting parties but also as multi-agentic, enduring and trans-scalar productions of space.

#### **Communication and its performative power**

Planners' and architects' comprehension of the wishes and needs of citizens could be considered a natural part of a client- and user-sensitive design practice. In a traditional view of spatial design, it is up to the architect or planner to determine what kind of spatial design is best for

the end user.<sup>3</sup> Today however, dialogue with citizens is also a profound projective facet in itself,<sup>4</sup> acknowledged as a significant and formalized part of the practice. Citizen participation has many faces, and not all of them are pleasant, as Sherry Arnstein exposed as early as 1969 in a deliberately polemical dichotomization of stakeholder camps into “powerholders” and “have-nots.”<sup>5</sup> She effectively pointed out the negligence, placation and dishonesty of urban development programs claiming to have a dialogue with citizens and communities.<sup>6</sup> Arnstein’s approach later influenced more comprehensive views of strategic planning, including social life environments, governance and communication in a more detailed analysis.<sup>7</sup> Participatory spatial planning has since been described in numerous ways and includes organizational, experience-based and pragmatic case-related insights.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, apart from general disciplinary or communicational approaches, accounts that required development of certain participatory ‘languages’ have been developed, for instance, by Leonie Sandercock, who noted alternative media, such as film, as a workable means of communication in dialogue, especially in participation situations with noncoherent or conflictual local group identities. Hence, coping with social demands has led to the development of new languages of participation. As a specifically architectural design approach, participation has been theorized by, e.g., Susanne Hoffman, allowing projective work to include a common sensing of “atmosphere,” proposed and tested as a participatory methodology in professional projects.<sup>9</sup> Through the notion of “transformative participation,” Jeremy Till suggests the establishment of a more inclusive multi-agentic common language, claiming that “conventional methods of architectural communication are describing something that is not in fact architecture” in its broader experiential meaning.<sup>10</sup> A forerunner with regard to the change in the language of practice was the architecture group Matrix Feminist Design Collective, with their way of engaging in closer dialogue with both clients and users throughout the design process.<sup>11</sup> Hence, in retrospect, in the light of the here-mentioned architecture- and space-oriented activities and theories, we can see that in the decades just prior to and following the turn of millennium there were a variety of modes of participatory practices, as well as the appearance of new forms of design communication.

A recurring aspect in theorizations and practices of participation is the need to find a ‘language’ that is more socially grounded than the obligatory intra-professional technical or rhetorical jargon. One recurring aspect of the participatory approach is therefore the phatic part of communication, meaning the continuous establishment of partnership that requires a common ownership of language needed to ground and situate actions and processes socially.<sup>12</sup> Hence, in the following, specific attention will be dedicated to such communicational aspects, and the translational acts needed whenever visions and concepts of new lived environments are at stake.

### **Translational acts that build dialogue**

“Translation” was theorized as a linguistic as well as a sociological notion in the 1980s by Michel Callon in view of the representational possibilities of a variety of actors in participatory acts.<sup>13</sup> This approach has influenced theoretical and methodological attempts to describe participation as networks, sometimes tending toward schematic mapping of sets of relevant actors, sometimes more generously allowing “mistranslation and untranslatability” as qualities necessary for situating a network.<sup>14</sup> In relation to dialogue as part of planning and design practices, this chapter will use a semiotic view on translation that includes multiple communicational facets and resources. Translation will mean any transformation of a social circumstance into a mediated act, which in turn allows new interpretations.<sup>15</sup> There are many – and often conflicting – translational acts in practiced participation relating to architectural and urban design, and each of them contains such transformations: from one stage of design to another, from one participant to another, from

one scale to another, or from one governmental dimension to another. Viewing participatory practices this way is ultimately ethically motivated, addressing the question: who is allowed in the communicational space? While there can be no 'perfect' control of interpretations and results in gradual transformations, it must still be possible to attend to certain democratic rights.

### **Democracy through pragmatic means – reflection on the right to space**

The complex acts of deliberation that precede and run parallel to the remaking of cities, buildings or landscapes seem almost by default – even in cases with the best of intentions – to generate situations in which some parties are neglected. In a global overview of large-scale urban and architectural renewal, in high-rise housing, in industrial complexes, in large-scale establishments erected from scratch on previously unbuilt soil, as well as in the everyday remaking of a great many existing housing areas, we must conclude that the value of citizens' opinions and involvement in planning, urban design and architectural production remains rather low. In the streamlined apparatus of projects with the "predictable logic" of "authoritarian planning,"<sup>16</sup> the room for citizen dialogue is poor, if not negligible as a driving force, compared to the projective power of financial interests, political calculations or routine architectural recipes. Even in cases when democratic objectives are held high – as in legal protection of citizens' rights in city planning, or in singular interest-driven participatory architectural projects – some parties will inevitably be considered less, not sufficiently recognized, or completely omitted. In spite of insufficient representation and despite fake, placatory or capitalist use of participation, we must nevertheless conclude from the increasing number of participatory projects and communicative planning initiatives in the first two decades of the 21st Century, in what seems to be a global trend,<sup>17</sup> that there is a continuously growing belief in dialogically situated, experience-based and socially grounded planning thought to guarantee a more sustainable future.

Apart from purely project-oriented wishes to support lived life through planning and architecture, there are also, on the other existential end, given human rights – or at least the ideal or hypothetical rights – stated in official law regarding built space. Existentially speaking, the question of rights to space can be seen as an indisputable part of human rights – their foundation, in fact. In *Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street*, Judith Butler discusses this as "the right to have rights,"<sup>18</sup> which is a right granted not by a political order, but by the mere fact that (individual or collective) action itself is a demonstration of the human will to create and personalize space. This fundamental right corresponds to some extent with Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city," especially the appropriation of space that Lefebvre associated with a basic mode of production of space conditioned by the desires of lived life.<sup>19</sup> While Lefebvre's *right* emerges from a dialectics closely tied to the forces and pitfalls of society's dependence on capitalism, Butler also recognizes the mutual formation of identities that becomes a fundamental intersubjective production of space. One could argue – fairly enough and quite generally – that both of these thinkers share the view that a combination of existential, ethical and political perspectives is fundamental for how we define space. Thus, whether our judgments of citizen participation in the production of space are tied to the architectural project, to the demands of a democratic society or to the acknowledgment of basic existential needs, these three facets of the right to space are actualized: the existential issue of belonging socially to a place, the ethics of someone making space for someone else, and the political circumstances that determine the degree of freedom in dialogue. Accordingly, dialogues about cities and architecture automatically address dimensions beyond the immediate local site of discussion. As noted by Mark Purcell in a reflection on the heritage of Lefebvre's concept "right to the city," the current limitations that often define given scalar frames of participation (typically city, region and nation) need

to be considered in relation to a more trans-scalar sense of community – not only to that of global trade, but also to transnational issues of gender and ethnicity.<sup>20</sup> Such trans-scalar facets of existence, to which climate could also be added, will be regarded here as part of how spatial change is communicated in the case of Malmö, a city formed by its Swedish political context as well as by its relation to global circumstances.

### **The Swedish model**

Like the other Scandinavian countries, Sweden maintained a certain stability regarding the relationship between state government, private capital and working citizens in the latter half of the 20th Century. The Swedish welfare model was located between straightforward market liberalism and state-controlled socialism, and the Swedish model for democracy was considered built on solidarity. That is, it was not limited to welfare politics for the existing population that enabled the worker to leave a state of need and attain “a middle-class life”,<sup>21</sup> it was also a way of thinking inclusively. More specifically, in relation to citizens’ explicitly *spatial* possibilities, the model also came to feature in design- and planning-oriented literature, in relation to official regulations on citizen involvement in planning and design.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the model was supposed to allow citizens the possibility to control and arrange their own lives and space. However, the focus on those with the fewest assets began to shift before the turn of the century. Paradoxically, this was due in part to the liberating ‘success’ of welfare politics, which had given the working and middle classes more individual possibilities, but also because in Sweden, as in many other European countries, the politics of inclusion became increasingly debated and contested. Consequently, the nation’s welfare intentions turned into a more neoliberalist kind of pseudo-social-democratic politics, partly with public institutions like schools and health care facilities being privately run.<sup>23</sup>

These political changes meant that the role of municipalities’ professional planning agents in Sweden diminished. Instead of the traditional monopoly position of the official planning department, independent developers or financial bodies of interest started to present their own architects and social investigators as part of developmental plans. Moreover, a growing class of consultants and communicators (who did not necessarily possess specific knowledge of spatial formation) operating within the official bodies gained decisive power in planning, not least in participatory processes, simply by mediating, translating and summarizing the dialogic content between politicians, planning experts and the population.<sup>24</sup> The official municipal civil servant organization, tied to traditional divides of expertise-based labor, had a tendency to lag behind these changes in the governing of spatial change, and despite the emergence of new formats for dialogue, planners were generally still hesitant to give citizens actual space in decision-making, and even more reluctant to actively promote citizens’ interests.<sup>25</sup>

There has been a certain turn in planning matters since the early 2000s, not only by the introduction of a participation incentive in the national planning law but also in new ways of allowing more design-oriented activities to become part of decision-making processes. Sweden thus aligned with several other, especially western, countries with its development of new formats for participatory projects and temporally situated design initiatives. Some of these include artists who have found unorthodox ways to activate communities using activist or alternativist means of operation. There is a rapidly growing international number of tradition-breaking, community-driven and dialogue-experimental projects, including well-known forerunners like Matrix (London), Center for Urban Pedagogy (New York), Al Borde (Quito, Ecuador) and Lacaton & Vassal (Paris), and these have counterparts in a Swedish and Scandinavian context, for example, the urban design dialogues by Testbedstudio Architects, the art-based planning projects

by Kerstin Bergendahl and the practice and artistic research projects by Apolonija Sustercic. Experimental approaches like these have led to a more general appreciation for small-scale implementation of socio-spatial ideas developed in dialogue, with apparent possibilities to lead to actual change in the built environment partly because of the site-specific translatory means that are developed in such projects.<sup>26</sup> The recent period of proliferation of smaller scale dialogic initiatives also includes both official and semi-official design initiatives (for example, with partly private or corporate interest), including so-called participatory governance arrangements (PGAs).<sup>27</sup> Some of these may show certain progress in terms of new ways forward for city planners and architects, but there are also several examples of a more cynical preservation of pre-established power relations.<sup>28</sup>

### **Dialogic dilemmas – Four cases of participation in Malmö**

The following will briefly discuss the recognition of and cooperation with citizens in four cases in Malmö, in southernmost Sweden. The cases reflect planning culture in the years around the turn of the millennium. In order to show a variety of urban design dialogues, the four cases, which correspond to four geographical locations in the city, represent different cultural, economic and environmental conditions. While Malmö has been a lively and productive city for the last decades, renowned for moving on from its heavy industrial heritage to become a sprawling cultural city by the sea with green qualities, Malmö has also recently struggled with a persistent media image in which segregation and violence in the city are emphasized.<sup>29</sup> Malmö is one of the municipalities in Sweden with the highest percentage of inhabitants with non-Swedish background: just below 50%.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the recently developed comprehensive plans have given little attention to the role and the voice of the ethnical diversity of inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> Several urban studies have been devoted to the overall intentions and social consequences of master-planning in Malmö;<sup>32</sup> the following analysis thus only indirectly addresses the overall governmental policy as such. It is a more specific reflection on how architectural and urban visions, projects and detailed plans are related to the general issue of public exposure and dialogue, with a particular focus on the issue of unevenness in participatory practices.

#### ***Case 1: Malmö – Slussplan. A contested densification and privatization of a public square***

*Slussplan* is a small public square in Malmö, located adjacent to the canal that surrounds the old city center. As part of an ongoing densification policy, a 12-story building was erected among neighboring five-story blocks in 2012 as part of a renewal of the square. When the ideas were initially presented in 2002, they prompted a great number of written objections from concerned neighbors. Some of these citizens were protective of their immediate economic and environmental values and spoke with a certain measure of authority, formulating quite elaborate arguments and referring to EU legislation. Other protesters were less versed in expressing their opposition, and some, but not all, could join temporal interest groups, writing straightforward responses in the public review. Finally, there were the homeless individuals who resided in the area but lacked a formal address, who had no voice at all and were unrecognized by authorities as well as by neighbors and ultimately forced to leave.

Despite a quite elaborate formal public response procedure that included invitations being sent to citizens to respond to the ideas and answers being provided to the citizens' comments and complaints, officials treated the many diverse voices that in varying ways concerned the building's height as a single, unified category. Arguments that could

otherwise be considered distinctly critical could thus be smoothed over; for example, the issue of shade could ultimately be an issue of a minor alteration of the building's height and could thus be treated technically, as a detail. When responding to other issues such as traffic, the responses from citizens could instead be kept separate; this resulted in the impression that the citizens' responses were more scattered.<sup>33</sup> While formally correct, such strategic grouping and selection of voices risks evading the basic political intention of participation. In general, the reluctance of planners, architects and civil servants to engage in reviewing answers or in highlighting the opinions of unheard parties is often based on the argument that engagement takes time in an already tight logistic schedule, but also that such engagement is accompanied by the risk of unearthing preexisting local conflicts that may be difficult to manage. Such professional averseness to citizen's opinions may unfortunately also lead to other available professional parties whose task is to engage marginalized citizens, such as social security assistants, not being permitted to take part in order to avoid delays and instability in the planning processes.<sup>34</sup> In the *Slussplan* case, both those with a voice and those who could not mobilize a voice were virtually ignored, even if the municipality produced formal official responses to written complaints.<sup>35</sup>

The 'response' in the case of *Slussplan* was also manifested materially: the fenced protection of the area and the large stone blocks to hinder pedestrians passing the square close to the nearby railways became materials given rejective agency,<sup>36</sup> brusquely communicating to the citizens who resided nearby that this was no longer their home ground.<sup>37</sup> These examples, in connection with the strategic use of delays caused by waiting for decisions and economical solutions, resulted in the protests slowly fading away. After a couple of years, the municipality, in cooperation with a new developer, could also begin to deviate from the original plan, which promised rentable apartments, and instead turn the units into condominiums.<sup>38</sup> The uneven possibilities to act in this place became an instrument of governmental power, as well as a uni-directional dialogic element in the extended phase where citizen participation could have instead been developed in more constructive and creative ways.

The market and project-oriented approach – as opposed to the community-oriented perspective of earlier third way politics – was also apparent at *Slussplan* in how images were used to promote a completed design rather than as a dialogic element. The first visual renderings of the area that had launched the project gave the impression of a building that was low enough to be accepted, whereas in the second phase, after permission to build had been issued, new images emphasized the building as a high-rise landmark offering apartments with a panoramic view.<sup>39</sup> This control of the uni-directional communication is essentially part of a dominant and authoritarian spatial production and does not allow any significant range of voices to emerge. In the beginning of the construction phase, a temporary platform displaying the colors and structures that would be used for the place was erected as a minimal informative effort. A simple platform of this kind could easily have been used as an opportunity for mutual dialogue, but it was evidently only seen as a piece of information thrown to the public in a phase when the project was up and running (Figure 9.1).

If communicational resources and material devices for the display of the future project had instead been presented in earlier phases and with a truly dialogic rather than a one-sided and belated communication attempt, they could have become open-ended, translational stepping-stones. Again, although such strategies obviously do not guarantee any specific design impact, they can be a transformative part of a deliberation that accepts disappointment as well as satisfaction,<sup>40</sup> and thus actualizes a sense of a right to the city that also depends on others' rights. This benefit – as concerns mutual sharing of urban space – is a multidirectional effect of dialogue. In practice, the achievement of such an effect, especially in complex cases, needs to be clearly communicated from the start and



Figure 9.1 Temporary public display at Slussplan, a construction placed on the square by the developer JM during the phase of the newly begun construction, to show images, colors and material samples of the prospected building, Malmö, Sweden, 2011. Photograph by Gunnar Sandin.

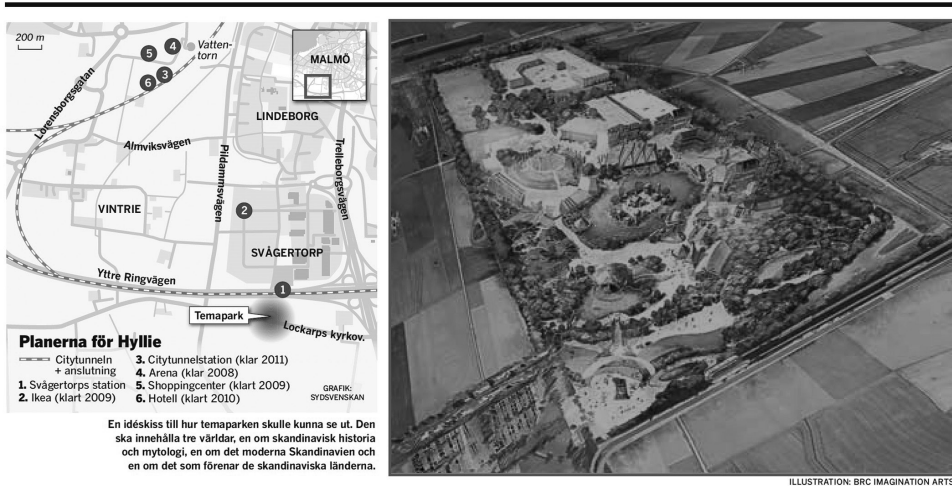
successively in a dialogue process, by translating ideas from one participating agent to another, in order to reach “a condition of sincerity”<sup>41</sup> and avoid a lingering sense that rights have been betrayed.

### ***Case 2: Malmö – Hyllie. One-sidedness in the vision of a Scandinavian theme park***

Located close to the bridge connecting Sweden with Denmark and Copenhagen, Malmö’s *Hyllie* district is a rapidly growing suburb and an important node for the city. Significant financial and architectural investments have been made in this part of the city in recent years, and in 2002 the City of Malmö decided to support an investigation into the possibility of establishing an amusement park in *Hyllie* with the theme *Scandinavia*.<sup>42</sup> Three American consultants specializing in the design of large-scale amusement parks were invited to collaborate with local initiators and visionaries who saw a theme park as a possible motor for tourism and service industry development.<sup>43</sup> The *Scandinavian Theme Park* was planned to be located on agrarian soil at the southern periphery of the city, ready to receive tourists from northern Europe.<sup>44</sup>

Initially, the theme park was expected to open in 2008; the date and site were then changed because of the park’s size (equivalent to approximately 40 football pitches). The new location was in nearby *Svågertorp*, where it would open in 2014 after improved vision sketches. A rough overview vision appeared in the local public newspaper *Sydsvenskan* (2008) and showed the future park with its attractions in an image reminiscent of cartoon fantasy worlds (Figure 9.2).<sup>45</sup> As the outsourced plan of financing and future management of the park remained unresolved, the project was terminated in 2013 and vanished from Malmö’s official planning agenda.

Throughout the 10 years of visionary planning, the local Swedish visionaries and the American consultants involved in the project remained the only clear stakeholders, and they tried to solidify the project through in-house discussions with possible future managers of the park, presenting visualized concepts where *Scandinavia* appeared through amusement attractions designed as clichés of an ancient Nordic history comprising a narrative of Vikings and Nordic mythology, with battleships in a pond for visitors. Everything adhered to a style of conventional adventure park aesthetics.<sup>46</sup> The plans, thought of as presenting a park with amusement as well as



# Temapark ska locka 700 000 per år

**MALMÖ. En temapark med skandinaviskt tema byggd söder om Svågertorps station kan locka över 700 000 besökare om året och öka Malmöturismens årliga omsättning med nästan 350 miljoner kronor. Det menar Turismens utredningsinstitut. Temaparken kan vara invigningsklar tidigast 2014.**  
Malmö stad anslog 2003 2,5

miljoner kronor till att låta några amerikanska företag ta fram förslag på hur en temapark söder om Svågertorps station skulle kunna se ut.

Nu har Turismens utredningsinstitut lagt fram en utredning om temaparkens väntade dragningskraft på turister och dess effekter på Malmös turismekonomi och på arbetsmarknaden.

**Disney är förebild**

Tanken är att temaparken ska spegla skandinavisk historia och mytologi, det moderna Skandi-

navien och det som förenar de skandinaviska länderna.

Parken ska främst vända sig till skolbarn och familjer med såväl information som underhållning.

Förebilder finns i Disneys upplevelsepark Epcot i Orlando och den franska Futuroscope i Poitiers.

Turismens utredningsinstitut menar att temaparken skulle bli Malmös största besöksmål och öka stadens attraktionskraft.

Med säsongöppet april-september och en månad före jul har

"The Scandinavian Theme Park" företagsningar att locka 650 000 besökare plus 75 000 vid speciella kvällsshower, menar Turismens utredningsinstitut. Av besökarna är 572 500 icke Malmöbor.

**Skapa 300 säsongsarbeten**

Temaparken väntas öka Malmöturismens omsättning med 340 miljoner kronor och skapa 55 helårsarbeten och över 300 säsongsarbeten.

Dessutom beräknas parken skapa över 200 jobb i olika branscher utanför parken.

Malmö stad förhandlar nu med företag som kan tänka sig att investera i temaparken eller sponsora delar av dess verksamhet, berättar kommunens utvecklingsstrateg Christer Persson.

– Men jag kan inte nämna namnet på tänkbara finansierare, det skulle försvåra förhandlingarna.

Christer Persson säger också att tidigast tänkbara invigningsår för temaparken är 2014.

Anders Ljungberg  
anders.ljungberg@sydsvenskan.se

Figure 9.2 Newspaper article in Sydsvenskan on 12 February 2008 with a promotional image for the Scandinavian Theme Park. The vision image shows an air view of the suggested extension of a set of amusement facilities in the agrarian surroundings just south of the denser part of the city of Malmö. The title reads: Theme park will attract 700,000 per year; and the subtitle states: Disney is the model. © Promotion image: Exploria Edutainment. © The illustrated article: Sydsvenskan.

educational experiences, were not negotiated or tested with potentially concerned local publics and parties (nor with remote ones, for that matter), and important dialogic input was thus lost in this limited mode of visualization and planning.<sup>47</sup>

As the wishes of civic society were underestimated and living evidence of Scandinavian culture was ignored in the promotional material, important values were lost, i.e., values that could have more truthfully fulfilled the declared educational and popular objectives.<sup>48</sup> Despite the obvious possibility to actively use the designed proposals in public consultancy, the confinement of interpretational diversity became a weakness here, possibly also contributing to the shutting-down of the project idea.<sup>49</sup>

### Case 3: Malmö – Spillepeng. The delayed making of a recreational landscape

The third case of turn-of-the-century physical planning in Malmö is *Spillepeng*, a landfill area near the municipality's northern border, separated from the dense city by industrial harbor areas and



leftover land. At the time of its proposal in 1987, this artificially constructed peninsula stretching into the Öresund Strait, which separates Sweden and Denmark, was subject to the obligatory and legally anchored detailed plan<sup>50</sup> presenting a reorientation of land use from landfill to a recreational area with a marina including sand beaches, harbors for small boats, walking and cycling paths (Figure 9.3). However, none of this came to fruition.<sup>51</sup> Today, the artificial waste dump peninsula continues to function primarily as the major regional waste dump area. It is landfilled with ever more refined end products from incineration, and the only thing that remains from the original landscape design ideas is a single road leading to an outlook site located near the natural coastline.

The detailed plans and their revisions did not lead to any public debate,<sup>52</sup> despite initial concerns being expressed in the first formal response by an environmental protection association and by a neighboring petroleum industry, saying that this sudden appearance of a new peninsula would affect wildlife and conditions along the shoreline. When a reworking of the original detailed plan was suggested in 2010,<sup>53</sup> the legally required public consultation review was announced but silently passed without any public deliberation or debate. Such silence is not unusual in reviews of regional landscape matters since official participation processes do not have the same recourses here as matters of more direct urban concern.<sup>54</sup> An often-stated feature of participation is that people's concern increases the closer the subject matter is to their homes, and this may, of course, be part of the dilemma here. But this 'truth' has to be reconsidered today, given the last three decades' accelerated awareness of global environmental impact. Concealment of environmental problems, such as the handling of waste, grows ever more difficult to manage via hope that no significant group of the civilian population will object.

The mere size of the incineration plant and landfill, which receives waste from several other areas and regions, is decisive for the slow rate of change in the process of reshaping this large area. Vast areas and multiple stakeholders make further participation aiming for possible new uses more difficult. The formal public participation process in this case, signed by the County Administrative Board in its evaluative role confirmed by law, can be characterized as un-engaged, indirect, or indeed even nonexistent, since it is rather a deliberation mainly between the directly concerned official political and managing bodies (three municipalities) with shared ownership of the land.<sup>55</sup> Major actors like these, generally seen as undisputedly accountable,<sup>56</sup> can calmly proceed in an "informal"<sup>57</sup> way to decide if change will come or if the convenient state of affairs will prevail.

In summary, the case of *Spillepeng*, like the previous case of *Hyllie*, highlights the difficulty of establishing a communicational base in geographically peripheral and inter-municipal regional matters, as well as the ethical dilemma of informally obstructing the dissemination and translation of ideas to parties outside the inner circle of planning agents.<sup>58</sup> From a communication



*Ny badplats mot Lommabukten*

Figure 9.3 Drawing that shows sunbathing people at a beach, illustrating a part of the future landscape of a remodeled waste dump area. Image from detailed plan program for the original extension and remaking of *Spillepeng*, 1987. © Burlöv Kommun.

perspective, the ethically dubious result was that public expectations prompted by a legally stated possibility for recreation in a detailed plan, were put aside by a dominant silent order.<sup>59</sup>

#### ***Case 4: Malmö – Rosengård. Addressing a marginalized city district from a central position***

The fourth and final Malmö-based case concerns codesign initiatives made as part of an overall renewal strategy for the city district *Rosengård*. The district, with around 25,000 inhabitants, 85% of whom come from an immigrant background,<sup>60</sup> suffers demographically from a high rate of unemployment and low median income. Apart from a series of social initiatives aimed at improving the integration of this partially marginalized district in the city, the larger scale physical planning and architectural renewals here include a new stop for local trains, completed in 2019, and a proposed but never realized, high-rise building. The proposal by the Danish architects Lundgaard & Tranberg, for the high-rise *Culture Casbah*, won an architecture competition launched by the city in 2011. An earlier project by the same architects had featured as an illustration of the competition program.<sup>61</sup> The city's plans stated that the building would change the face of the whole district, attracting newcomers and visitors to this culturally diverse but also socially isolated area.<sup>62</sup> The project was heavily criticized; there were demonstrations by some of the local population and public media debates between a number of academic researchers. Amid a fear that the gentrification that would accompany such a risky project would crush the personal economies of the local population, the whole project was completely remodeled in 2019 into a more normalized, site-aligned set of lower buildings, pathways and squares.

Just before the effectuation of the larger renewal plans, an enduring codesign project took root here (2007–2012). The project, which aimed to improve the media facilities and possibilities for local musicians and music producers,<sup>63</sup> was run by interactive design researchers from Malmö University in cooperation with the City of Malmö, media firms, and the main national television and radio broadcasting companies.<sup>64</sup> In a self-evaluating retrospective written eight years later by two researchers, Erling Björgvinsson (who actively participated in the music project) and Mahmoud Kesharavarz, it was deemed that the project had failed to include sufficient representatives from the area, and that this revealed the initiators' limited view of the existing group interests in the area. While this dialogue succeeded in terms of musical production events, it lost a communicational reciprocity toward the complex group dynamics, which created "a rupture in the social fabric of the organization."<sup>65</sup> Another completed codesign project, *Rosens röda matta* (The red rose carpet), was later (2010–2013) planned and produced by the City of Malmö in collaboration with local representatives. The project, which eventually evolved into a detailed plan, consisted of the remaking of a parking area near the center of the district into a public space with an outdoor stage area in an eye-catching design with rounded and colorfully shaped objects (Figure 9.4). The project's initial success in terms of participation that led to a built result and new social opportunities was later criticized, among other things for reproducing gender clichés by stating its function as an open public performance arena specifically for a young female population.<sup>66</sup> The project has also been said to lack sufficient enduring municipal support, despite serving as a window of goodwill for the city.<sup>67</sup> Hence, from a sensitive communicational point of view and in relation to the political issue of representation (of gender, community, municipality), the project could be seen as suffering from insufficient endurance and lack of global reflection in terms of how space can be appropriated.

The mass and magnitude of participatory development projects of this kind in Sweden,<sup>68</sup> of which *Rosengård* in Malmö is but one, led the media columnist Nabila Abdul Fattah to state that she was "tired of experiment-people who exploit the system for their own profit."<sup>69</sup> Instead,



Figure 9.4 Red asphalt, colorful sculpture and seating elements that form the letters *Dansa Pausa* (Dance Pause), and pink markers of a public stage area. Situation image of the former parking lot remade into a public activity square labeled *Rosens röda matta* (The red rose carpet), 2021. Photograph by Gunnar Sandin.

Abdul Fattah maintained, there was a need for direct contribution from granters, municipality councils and city districts to support activities already anchored in areas like this. In what can be read as an elaborate reply to this frustration, the researchers Björgvinsson and Kesharavaz suggest that the renowned Scandinavian participatory design tradition needs to reconsider the “smoothness of participation presented by its advocates, academics and government actors alike.”<sup>70</sup> Instead of a one-sided attribution of a ‘flat’ role for the participant, an active form of *part-taking* is needed, they say, suggesting a truly operative mode of participation, which brings to mind Arnstein’s *citizen control* and Till’s mutually *transformative* involvement.<sup>71</sup>

Reflecting on the Rosengård example, we see that well-meaning initial communicational intentions may get lost in the successive translation of ideas, when the dialogue is not sufficiently viewed as an open and reciprocal act of interpretation that also allows extraneous influences. Such shortages can be avoided through continuous trans-scalar awareness that allows the engagement of multiple actors in the dialogue.

### Concluding remarks

The examples of planning and architectural renewal addressed in this chapter show the dilemma of including citizens’ wills and voices by revealing various types of flaws in the staging and realization of dialogic processes. Even in cases where formal protocol for public

review were followed, we saw moments of ‘informal’<sup>72</sup> handling of dialogic moments (such as strategic grouping of answers in public reviews), that essentially mean devaluation or omission of citizens opinions. With the compartmentalization of specific aspects of decision-making or protectionist approaches, there is a risk that democratic rights are not respected; furthermore, individuals’ and groups’ sense of belonging to a place are also at risk. In addition, it has been shown that such omission may simply lead to unfulfilled projective intentions, in projects that could have been more profoundly and more creatively negotiated between municipalities, developers, designers and citizens.

Participatory practices of a more freely initiated kind were seen in this chapter as fulfilling partial objectives that would be difficult to achieve in formalized planning procedures. However, we also saw that such projects run the risk of either disrupting locally existing social networks or failing to establish long-term engagement, as they lack sufficient anchoring and enduring evaluation. Such endurance requires attention to the phatic quality of communication, or the continuous ‘handshaking’ among participants in the long run, as it were.

In cases in which a participatory project must lower its original design ambitions and be pursued without any guarantee that it will result in the realization of architectural ideas, a beneficial mutual learning and acknowledgment of local resources and forms of communication can still be reached. This chapter has also shown that broadly anchored dialogues about architectural futures are fundamentally related to issues and conflicts beyond the local, site-confined scale, such as migration (risk: segregation), ecology (risk: ignoring regional situatedness) and economy (risk: secretive authoritarian planning).

In summary, this reflection on the right to a place in the daily production of space shows the importance of dialogic reciprocity, translational endurance and trans-scalar awareness. By acknowledging these dimensions, the role of citizen participation may be strengthened as both a political and creative force in the alteration of our spatial conditions.

## Notes

- 1 Swedish National Board of Housing Building and Planning, *Legislation Planning and Building Act*, 2010:900 (Karlskrona: Boverket, 2018). Government Offices of Sweden, *Policy for Designed Living Environment Bill 2017/18:110* (Stockholm: Swedish Government, 2019).
- 2 Government Offices of Sweden, *Policy for Designed Living Environment*, 5.
- 3 See for instance Markus Miessen, in *Crossbenching: Towards a Proactive Mode of Participation as a Critical Spatial Practice* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016). Despite mentioning with admiration certain actors working with participatory methods, such as CUP (Center for Urban Pedagogy), Miessen ultimately suggests an essentially traditionalist role for a decisive architect subject.
- 4 Like others, Jeremy Till suggests a more multi-agentic mode of dialogue through what he calls “transformative participation” in “The Negotiation of Hope,” in *Architecture and Participation*, eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 27–30.
- 5 Sherry R. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35, no. 4 (1969), 216–18.
- 6 Arnstein’s examples are from the American Housing and Urban Development Programs in the 1960s. See “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” 216–24.
- 7 Patsy Healey, “Planning Through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory,” *The Town Planning Review*, 63, no. 2 (April 1992): 43–162. She later followed up with a more elaborate dialogic strategy in Patsy Healey, *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: Towards a Relational Planning for Our Times* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- 8 One example is Judith E. Innes and David E. Booher, *Planning with Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy* (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 9 See Susanne Hoffman, *Architecture is Participation: Die Baupiloten – Methods and Projects* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014).
- 10 Till, “The Negotiation of Hope,” 37.

- 11 Julia Dwyer and Anne Thorne, "Evaluating Matrix: Notes from Inside the Collective," in *Altering Practice: Feminist Practices and Poetics of Space*, ed. Doina Petrescu (London: Routledge, 2007), 39–56.
- 12 Used by the linguist Roman Jakobson, and before him the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, "phatic" describes speech that is deliberately social or emotive, used to keep the communication as an ongoing social event.
- 13 Callon continued to investigate the complexity of participation, such as in Michel Callon, Pierre Lascoumes and Yannick Barthe, *Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2009). Callon's both openly inclusive and procedurally schematized view on participation through what he called "hybrid forums" where "uncertainties predominate" in the 1990s is part of – and in fact partly defines – what came to be known as ANT (actor–network theory). Also applications of Callon's ideas of a more technical sort continue to appear, as in Andrea Botero et al., "Getting Participatory Design Done: From Methods and Choices to Translation Work Across Constituent Domains," *International Journal of Design*, 14, no. 2 (2020): 17–34.
- 14 John Law and Annemarie Mol, "Words to Think With: An Introduction," *The Sociological Review Monographs* 68, no. 2 (2020): 263–82.
- 15 Here, translation is seen broadly as the transformation of an idea from one communicating agent to another, or from one form of media to another. For a semiotic account of translation that emphasizes it as a double act – in the first instance from one subject (writer) to a text, then from that text to a second subject (reader) – see Göran Sonesson, "Translation and Other Acts of Meaning: In Between Cognitive Semiotics and Semiotics of Culture," *Cognitive Semiotics* 7, no. 2 (2014): 249–80. This view of a stepwise semiotic act fundamentally builds on Bakhtin's dialogic thinking and the theory of interpretants by Peirce.
- 16 Giancarlo de Carlo, "Architecture's Public," in *Architecture and Participation*, eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, Jeremy Till (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 18.
- 17 Sager, Tore. "Communicative Planning," in *The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory*, eds. Michael Gunder, Ali Madanipour, Vanessa Watson (New York: Routledge, 2017), 103.
- 18 Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," *Transversal*, 09 (2011).
- 19 Lefebvre differentiated between appropriation and domination as two counterparts, two fundamentally different types of takeover, as it were, in his dialectics of space. He also discussed appropriation as distinct from diversion and co-optation. See Gunnar Sandin, "Democracy on the Margin: Architectural Means of Appropriation in Governmental Alteration of Space," *Architectural Theory Review*, 18, no. 2 (October 2013): 237. For Lefebvre's notion of appropriation as a spatial right, see Mark Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant," *GeoJournal* 58 (2002): 99–108, 103.
- 20 Mark Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre," 102.
- 21 For a critical account of the rise and decline of Swedish (and Scandinavian) welfare politics, see Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 134–84. See also Sven E.O. Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden, Vol. II: The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988–2015* (Lund: Arkiv Förlag, 2014).
- 22 Judith Gregory, "Scandinavian Approaches to Participatory Design," *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 19, no. 1 (2003): 64. See also Louis Albrechts, "Strategic (Spatial) Planning Reexamined," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 2004, 31 no. 5, 748; and Susan Fainstein and Norman Fainstein, "Restoring Just Outcomes to Planning Concerns," in *Policy, Planning and People. Promoting Justice in Urban Development*, eds. Naomi Carmon and Susan Fainstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 45.
- 23 For overviews, see Wolfe, *Whose Keeper?* and Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden*.
- 24 See Jesper Falkheimer and Mats Heide, *Reflexiv kommunikation, nya tankar för strategiska kommunikatörer [Reflexive Communication, New Thoughts for Strategic Communicators]* (Stockholm: Liber, 2003).
- 25 Marcus Johansson and Abdul Khakee, *Etik I Stadsplanering [Ethics in City Planning]* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), 123.
- 26 For an account of such methods, reflected in international cases, see Meike Schalk, Apolonija Sustersic and Gunnar Sandin, "Acting in Common: Critical Participation in Controversial Urban Development Projects," in *Rethinking the Social in Architecture: Making Effects*, eds. Sten Gromark, Jennifer Mack and Roemer van Toorn (New York and Barcelona: Actar Publishers, 2018), 298–315.
- 27 Nazem Tahvilzadeh, "Understanding Participatory Governance Arrangements in Urban Politics: Idealist and Cynical Perspectives on the Politics of Citizen Dialogues in Göteborg, Sweden," *Urban Research & Practice* 8, no.2 (2015): 238–54.

- 28 Marilyn Taylor, "Community Participation in the Real World: Opportunities and Pitfalls in New Governance Spaces," *Urban Studies* 44, no. 2 (2007): 297–317. For a Swedish context, see Tahvilzadeh, "Understanding Participatory Governance Arrangements."
- 29 Samaré Gozal, "Malmö, A Segregated City – Separating Fact from Fiction," *EUobserver*, 18 November 2019.
- 30 In 2019, 47% of Malmö's residents were born abroad or directly descended from parents born abroad. Source: SCB (Statistics Sweden), 2020. [www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/topplistor-kommuner/andel-personer-med-utlandsk-bakgrund/](http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/topplistor-kommuner/andel-personer-med-utlandsk-bakgrund/).
- 31 Katarina Nylund, "Conceptions of Justice in the Planning of the New Urban Landscape – Recent Changes in the Comprehensive Planning Discourse in Malmö Sweden," *Planning Theory and Practice* 15, no.1 (2014): 41–61.
- 32 See, for instance, Tove Dannestam, "Rethinking Local Politics: Towards a Cultural Political Economy of Entrepreneurial Cities," *Space and Polity* 12, no. 3 (2008): 353–72, where Malmö's changing urban policy is the main case. See also Hoai Anh Tran and Yvonne Rydin, "A New Formula for Sustainability Planning? The Vision Programme for Norra Sorgenfri, Malmö," *Scandinavica* 58 no. 1 (2019). For further references, see Nylund, "Conceptions of Justice."
- 33 Gunnar Sandin, "Democracy on the Margin," 242.
- 34 Johansson and Khakee, *Etik i Stadsplanering [Ethics in City Planning]*, 60–61. See also Verner Denvall, *För samhällets bästa. Socialtjänstens medverkan i samhällsplanering. [For the Benefit of Society: The Contribution of Social Service in Planning]* (Floda: Zendon, 1994).
- 35 Gunnar Sandin, "Temporal Agency and the Gradual Privatization of a Public Square: The Renewal of Slussplan, Malmö," in *Urban Squares: Spatio-temporal Studies of Design and Everyday Life in the Öresund Region*, ed. Mattias Kärrholm (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2015), 105, 109.
- 36 For delegation of agency to materials, see for instance Bruno Latour's seminal article "Where Are the Missing Masses? Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society*, eds. W. Bijker and J. Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 225–58.
- 37 Sandin, "Temporal Agency," 104.
- 38 The apartments were then marketed for a new type of receiver, see Sandin, "Architectural Imagineering and the Semblance of Dialogue," 324.
- 39 Sandin, "Architectural Imagineering and the Semblance of Dialogue," 324.
- 40 "Transformative" as suggested by Till in "The Negotiation of Hope."
- 41 Such achievement was seen for instance in the formation of smaller groups reporting to a main one, by Judith E. Innes and David E. Booher in *Planning with Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 106.
- 42 Malmö Stad. "Preliminär bedömning av förutsättningar för en temapark i Malmö," [Preliminary Assessment of Prerequisites for a Theme Park]. Report by Economics Research Associates (ERA), 22 March 2002, Malmö: Malmö Stads Arkiv.
- 43 ERA (Economics Research Associates), BRC Imagination Arts, and Jack Rouse Associates.
- 44 Malmö Stad, "Preliminär bedömning ..." [Preliminary Assessment ...].
- 45 Anders Ljungberg, "Nöjespark vid Svågertorp kan locka 700 000" [Amusement Park at Svågertorp can attract 700 000]. *Sydsvenskan*, 12 Feb. 2008. [www.sydsvenskan.se/2008-02-12/nojespark-vid-svager-torp-br--kan-locka-700-000](http://www.sydsvenskan.se/2008-02-12/nojespark-vid-svager-torp-br--kan-locka-700-000).
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- 48 For an analysis of the promoted combination of education and popular aesthetics, see Sandin, "The Making of 'Scandinavia,'" 258.
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- 59 For dominance as opposed to the possibilities of the right to appropriation, see Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre," 103, 107; and Sandin, "Democracy on the Margin," 237–38.
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- 65 Björgvinsson and Keshavarz, "Partitioning Vulnerabilities," 256.
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# 10

## REGENERATING SHANGHAI THROUGH URBAN SPATIAL DESIGN?

### The limits to experimentalism and participation

*Yunpeng Zhang and Weilun Zhang*

#### Introduction

In parallel to the prevailing modality of urbanization characterized by large-scale and often violent destruction of urban fabrics,<sup>1</sup> since mid-2010s there has been more and more participatory, design-based urban interventions in central Shanghai. Taking inspiration from David Harvey<sup>2</sup> and Shenjing He,<sup>3</sup> we group these interventions under “design fix.” As will be discussed later, while we consider design fixes to be part of urban development processes, they deviate considerably from the dominant modality of urban development. Their approaches and forms vary considerably from project to project. Some projects are led by (quasi-)state institutions with an interest in improving communal spaces of residential compounds. Others are driven by development companies of different ownership structures seeking to reutilize existing retail and industrial spaces. In some other instances, urbanists play an important mediating role in bringing together diverse stakeholders to improve the quality of existing communal facilities and public spaces. Notwithstanding the variances, these interventions tend to be smaller in scale, less drastic and destructive, and more open to residents from targeted neighborhoods. In these design fix projects, a great emphasis is placed on urban spatial designs and their experimental nature.

The emergence of these design fixes has immediately attracted much attention. In the media, the design fixes are celebrated as a useful local experiment and a viable, scalable alternative mode of urban development.<sup>4</sup> They are also touted as a promising means to meet Shanghai’s ambition of becoming a humanistic global city, echoing the goal of Shanghai’s master plan 2017–2035.<sup>5</sup> Academic literature revolves largely around the technical question of how to bring together different stakeholders and utilize design and planning techniques to improve the built environment and inform future practices.<sup>6</sup> There is a shared belief in the prospect of the design fixes to empower local communities and align urban planning and urban restructuring more closely to the needs of local residents. It resonates with the widely circulated discourses seeing community capacity-building and participation as a panacea to bring about a just and equitable society.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, we take issue with these ahistorical and overly optimistic, or perhaps romanticized, views of the design fixes. We wish to take a step back and look more closely into



the conditions and mechanisms of the design fixes to bring out their limits and contradictions and to assess critically their potential. Our approach is cross-pollinated by the literature on the geographies of capital accumulation<sup>8</sup> and urban governance, especially experimental urbanism.<sup>9</sup> Rather than seeing these design fixes as a *sui generis* (unique) phenomenon, a common problem of the extant literature, our analysis situates the design fixes within the wider context of evolving accumulation strategies in Shanghai. We argue that the design fixes are path-dependently shaped by the land-based accumulation in Shanghai, responding to the twin crises of accumulation and legitimation. Experimentalism – enacting changes of policies or places through iterative, cumulative experiments under favorable conditions – and participatory design practices play an important role in clearing the obstacles for carrying out these projects on the ground and concealing the underlying interests and logics. It is important here to note that the state is always present, either visibly through the involvement of grassroots state agents or less visibly through shaping the minds of urbanists. Participation is framed to complement state governance rather than make a demand on the state.

This chapter is informed by empirical materials collected from both primary and secondary sources.<sup>10</sup> We reviewed policy and planning documents of both municipal and district level authorities, especially Shanghai's new master plan<sup>11</sup> and urban regeneration plan.<sup>12</sup> This set of secondary data was supplemented first by interviews with 11 key stakeholders including experts from (quasi-)state institutions, managers of the development firms and members of civic organizations. Second, we participated in two workshops organized by a civic organization involved in providing design fixes, both of which aimed to facilitate dialogues and learning between different stakeholders. In addition, we observed spatial changes and neighborhood activities in selected case sites in Changning district, one of the popular destinations for design fixes and an officially recognized successful experimental site.

### Conceiving the design fix

Our term – the design fix – is inspired by He, who following Harvey, coined the term “creative fix” to refer to the attempts of local governments in Shanghai to resuscitate some unsuccessful creative and cultural industry clusters.<sup>13</sup> Since the 1990s, authorities of Shanghai have wrapped the production of creative and cultural spaces into its broader economic growth and urban regeneration strategies.<sup>14</sup> This has led to the rapid development of creative and cultural clusters in former brownfields in central locations, many of which in fact became real estate projects and/or triggered gentrification in surrounding areas.<sup>15</sup> The design fix discussed in this chapter refers to neighborhood-level design-based interventions. It differs from these creative and cultural spaces in at least two ways. First, in addition to brownfields, residential neighborhoods are also sites of design fixes (e.g. artistic community furniture in public spaces or renovated meeting rooms with chic interiors). Despite neighborhoods being the targets, design fixes have not led to direct displacement of original residents, at least not at the time of our study. Second, while design fixes may offer opportunities for creative professionals to contribute to Shanghai's brand as a “city of design” (a recognition from UNESCO), unlike creative and culture clusters, design fixes are not meant to be spaces for creative laborers or to nurture artistic networks.<sup>16</sup>

Notwithstanding these differences, we retain the political economy approach when conceptualizing design fixes, in order to keep sight of the hitherto overlooked logic of capital underpinning the design fixes and the function played by design and culture spaces in capital accumulation. Our conceptualization of design fixes similarly draws on Harvey's theorization of the production of space under capitalism, especially his oft-cited notion of spatial fixes.<sup>17</sup> Spatial fix foregrounds the contradiction between fixity and motion in capital accumulation.

On the one hand, the production of the built environment absorbs surplus capital and labor, thereby restoring profitability of capital accumulation in times of crisis.<sup>18</sup> Once capital is fixated to space, it also becomes the spatial barriers for further accumulation due to the immobility and durability of built structures.<sup>19</sup> Hence, in capitalist development, as Harvey contended,

there is a perpetual struggle in which capital builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it, usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent point in time.<sup>20</sup>

While Harvey restricted *crisis* more to capital accumulation in the economic sphere, Martin Jones and Kevin Ward developed the analysis further and expanded the scope of crisis to the political and cultural domains.<sup>21</sup> Their expansive view includes rationality crisis (due to state's objective incapacity to manage socioeconomic systems) and legitimation crisis (the perceptions of society about the failures and legitimacy of the state). Crises in these different spheres do not exist in isolation. Rather, as Jones and Ward argued, a crisis in one sphere may trigger and/or reinforce a crisis in another.<sup>22</sup> The state plays an indispensable role in managing the crises. Two types of state responses are distinguished – conjunctural strategies to resolve crises within existing state structures, political systems and institutional practices; and structural solutions that transform the state and its relation to the economy.<sup>23</sup> Although this typology places its focus on the state, following a productive view of space,<sup>24</sup> we must acknowledge that space is integral to these crisis management strategies.

To attend to the conflict-laden processes in which design fixes are fixed in space, we refer to the literature on urban experimentation and policy experimentalism and suggest that experimentalism is an important condition for design fixes. There is a growing body of literature on urban experimentation in western-centric literature over the past decade, reflective of the collective desire to find solutions to ever more complex socio-ecological challenges.<sup>25</sup> According to James Evans, Andrew Karvonen and Rob Raven, seeing cities as sites of experiments entails a shift in epistemology.<sup>26</sup> At issue is no longer simply the questions of why certain processes are taking place in cities and what *should* be done about them.<sup>27</sup> These questions remain important, but they tend to lead to political impasse. Experimentation, on the other hand, is informed by the pragmatic concern of what *can* be done and *how* to make a difference under present constraints. Unlike conventional policy or planned interventions, which rests upon rationalistic and rigid cycles of problem definition, agenda-setting and policy implementation, urban experiments are often carried out without *a priori* (already made) plans but instead in a provisional, flexible and adaptive way, so that urban actors can learn from experimental solutions and deal with emergent responses in a dynamic and uncertain world.<sup>28</sup> This approach necessitates “the integration of the qualities of fluidity and interactivity” that characterize the urban conditions and experiences.<sup>29</sup>

Although experimentation is often portrayed as a recent phenomenon in the West, in China experimentation has been discussed extensively, especially in the literature on policy experimentalism. According to Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry, as a technique of governance, experimentalism is rooted in the legacy of guerrilla warfare of the China Communist Party.<sup>30</sup> Among many examples of urban experimentation in post-reform China, a distinctive feature of these experiments in China lies in the role of the state. The general thesis of empirical studies is that experiments controlled by the state enable it to tap into local knowledge when designing and deploying innovative, boundary-spanning solutions to socioeconomic problems.<sup>31</sup> Incentives offered by upper-level state units to experiments induce lower-level authorities into competition to become experimental sites.

This allows the upper-level state units to maintain control of territorial organization while containing the risks of possible failures.<sup>32</sup> Although the active role of the state should never be underestimated, it is worth drawing attention to the opening of political space through policy experiments to actors that are normally in the margin of the political landscapes, such as NGOs, community groups and expert communities.<sup>33</sup> Ideas and knowledge are not simply drawn from the usual suspects of the Global North/West but also, and increasingly more, from Asia and homegrown solutions.<sup>34</sup>

Inarguably, experimentalism has potential to generate situated knowledge and foster collaborative networks, which has been celebrated in much of the literature.<sup>35</sup> However, in this chapter we take a more cautious position. As soberly pointed out by Evans et al., experiments are susceptible to the influence and interests of dominant actors.<sup>36</sup> Relatedly, since many experiments are first carried out on smaller scales, this tends to lead to further fragmentation of urban spaces.<sup>37</sup> Instead of catalyzing broader transformative changes as many experiments claim to, they may end up reinforcing the status quo. This risk is not a cause for dismissing urban experiments entirely. For Evans et al., it is important to recognize that urban experiments may be ambiguous, incoherent and fuzzy because they tend to involve activities that are not always consistent and compatible.<sup>38</sup> It is also necessary to situate experiments and the ways they are conducted in the wider political and economic contexts.<sup>39</sup>

The literature on geographies of capital accumulation and urban experiments provides useful insights into the cause and process of the design fixes. They can be seen as conjunctural strategies of the local state in Shanghai to resolve the crises of land-based accumulation. Promoted as a policy experiment, the design fixes operate under tolerant and favorable conditions in a trial-and-error, flexible, improvisational manner. Without predetermined templates, visions and methods, the design fixes adapt and evolve over time. By enlisting different actors in the process, especially those formerly excluded in urban planning and development, the design fixes manufacture consensus and consent to different projects, thus taming the frontier of capital accumulation. Redesigned landscapes contribute to further commodification of places and perform the ideological function by deflecting attention away from the real problems and social inequalities.

### **Land-based accumulation and its fixes**

Key to our argument is that design fixes cannot be analyzed in isolation from Shanghai's changing accumulation strategies, in particular the land-based accumulation. In this section, we chart out the tenets of the land-based accumulation model and the inherent crises. The notion of land-based accumulation comes from You-tien Hsing's work on the urban transformations in China and underscores a shift from rural industrialization to land and real estate development in the organization of urban political economy since the 1990s.<sup>40</sup> A host of reforms in land governance, public finance and urban planning have created a strong incentive for cash-strapped local governments to take advantage of their monopolistic control over land markets and their dominance in urban planning in order to extract land revenues.

This development model is prone to crises, especially the legitimation crisis. First, this model requires land and property dispossession. The violence and exploitation involved in the process directly undermines the legitimacy of the state. Resistance and protests from the residents constitute a main source of social conflicts. Important legal changes have been introduced to pacify and diffuse social tensions. While the local state remains dominant in instances of dispossession and displacement, these changes have significantly increased the upfront financial costs of land acquisition, thus reducing profitability of the land-based accumulation model. In fact, rising costs of resettlement have prevented many urban renewal projects.

Second, while offering higher compensation may be able to dissipate the tension with the dispossessed, to sustain this land-based growth model, the local authorities must wage a different kind of battle and engage in difficult negotiations within the bureaucratic field. This owes partially to fragmented land ownership. Land in many central locations is often controlled by state-owned enterprises. Reclaiming land from them may require adjustment of industrial strategies. Partly, it is because of China's centralized land use planning system, which controls land use both qualitatively and quantitatively.<sup>41</sup> Under this system, land is classified for different purposes (e.g. agriculture, commercial facilities, residential construction), and land used for construction and for agriculture must be kept in a dynamic balance by all means. The annual land use plan determines the amount of arable land that can be converted for development and that must be restored to compensate the loss. Owing to the rapid development in the past decades, Shanghai has run out of land to accommodate further urban expansion. The authorities of Shanghai have attempted to circumvent this land use planning system through policy instruments, like the transfer of development rights system.<sup>42</sup> However, it remains doubtful if such schemes would be able to satisfy the appetite for land to expand and grow, given that these schemes are preconditioned upon displacement and dispossession of rural households.

Third, the field of urban development is also becoming increasingly dynamic and complex. Urban professionals are more vocal about the fast disappearance of traditional lane housing from the central city and the destruction of urban social fabrics (Figure 10.1). Although their influence in urban development decisions remain weak, they are now more involved in the reflections and visioning of Shanghai's future directions and in the pursuits of constructing alternative spaces.<sup>43</sup>

The Chinese governments openly acknowledged the challenges brought by the land-based accumulation to achieving sustainable development goals. In the very first national urbanization



*Figure 10.1* Laned low-rise apartment buildings surrounded by modernist planned high-rise apartment buildings on a construction site in central Shanghai were planned to be demolished to give way to urban land development. Photograph by Weilun Zhang (2019).

plan announced in 2013, while still upholding the view that continuous urbanization is the key to economic growth and coordinated development, the central government claimed that urbanization as land and real estate development exacerbated rural-urban inequity, constituted a threat to national food and ecological security, increased public debt and financial risks and destroyed valuable historical and natural landscapes.<sup>44</sup> These problems are similarly recognized by local governments in Shanghai. As revealed by the Shanghai Urban Master Plan 2035, a product of planning exercise and public consultation between 2014 and 2017, the government reiterated the risk of the reliance of economic growth on land and investment and highlighted the urgency to change economic growth models, preserve urban landscapes and improve governance modes.<sup>45</sup>

As with the central government, the municipal government of Shanghai uses urban space restructuring as one of its conjunctural strategies to fix the problems. To distinguish from the prevailing mode of urbanization, the municipal government explicitly laid out a few mutually reinforcing redlines for Shanghai's development in the coming decades in the master plan. Two of them are noteworthy. First, the municipal government will continue to control population growth in the city-region and limit the overall population to 25 million in 2035, meaning zero population growth between 2020 and 2035.<sup>46</sup> To rationalize population structure, priority will be given to well-educated groups, including creative and cultural laborers.<sup>47</sup> Second, it will continue to strictly control the expansion of the city-region and only provide additional land of 15 km<sup>2</sup> to accommodate urban development within the same period.<sup>48</sup> Within these constraints, the priority of urban development is then shifted from outward expansion toward consolidation, densification and redevelopment of the existing built-up areas. Concretely, this entails demolishing 320 km<sup>2</sup> of settlements and collective facilities in the countryside and repurposing land between 359 km<sup>2</sup> to 519 km<sup>2</sup> currently used for industrial production and storage.<sup>49</sup> By doing so, the ambition of the government is to further optimize land use structure and accelerate Shanghai's economic structure adjustment. It is evident that this strategy is not so much about identifying an alternative growth model and reducing the reliance on land. Rather, it reinforces the reliance on land and aims to extract higher rent from land. Although not explicitly stated, gentrification is wrapped into wider territorial restructuring strategies, or 'urban regeneration' as in the official discourse.

These strategies are bound to encounter barriers arising from fragmented and contested property relations. Controlled experiments, as we argue, are then important techniques to eliminate these obstacles. In 2015, the municipal government announced the urban regeneration plan, establishing experimentalism as a key mean to its implementation.<sup>50</sup> The scope of regeneration is expansive, including spatial interventions aimed at providing public spaces and services, conserving historical landscapes, improving urban connectivity and protecting the ecological environment.<sup>51</sup> The municipal government set up a leading group to coordinate and oversee urban regeneration activities in the city-region, whereas the district governments were tasked with executing regeneration plans and supervising the day-to-day governance within their jurisdictions.<sup>52</sup> Following a classic mode of policy experimentalism to upscale from the points to the surface (*yi dian dao mian* in Chinese),<sup>53</sup> the municipal government selected 12 pilot projects (the points), although it is open to accepting more projects as "experimental sites."<sup>54</sup> By containing experiments in selected sites, the municipal government limited the shock of the regeneration strategies to the land and real estate market. Without concrete, fine-grained guidelines, the district governments were encouraged to carry out further experiments in financing, land and planning.<sup>55</sup> In this way, it is expected that lessons from the pilot projects can be identified, abstracted and promoted for the city-region and beyond (the surface).

Besides controlling the selection of experiment sites, the municipal government established a couple of additional parameters for the experiments. First, it placed a stronger emphasis on public participation in regeneration projects.<sup>56</sup> This responds to the problem of typical urban planning and development process that is often dominated by the state and excludes local citizens. By including more urban actors, especially urban professionals and creative laborers, into the experiments, it contributes to legitimatizing experimental regeneration projects and bureaucratically absorbing the interest of urban professionals. Second, regeneration projects were expected to advance public welfare by, for instance, improving public spaces or communal facilities or protecting urban heritage,<sup>57</sup> meaning reduced profitability. To incentivize the participation of developers and investors and to reduce the burden on public finance, the municipal government introduced favorable policies such as increasing development density, relaxing zoning control and allowing conversion of land for different purposes (e.g. from residential use to commercial real estate).<sup>58</sup> However, it remains an empirical question as to how to balance the public orientation of regeneration projects and private interests in profitability. This will be discussed in the next section.

### **Experimental design fixes in Changning district**

In this section, we offer a micro-level analysis of Shanghai's policy experiments in urban regeneration. Urban spatial design features prominently in these experimental activities. An important reason was the acute need of expert knowledge and skills to repurpose or rehabilitate existing building stocks. Upon completion, they can also become testimonials for Shanghai as a 'city of design' and contribute to attracting capital and creative professionals, one of the priorities of the Shanghai Master Plan 2035. We look into two types of experimental design fixes – one initiated by state actors and the other by urban professionals, with a focus on Changning, a centrally located district sitting next to the more well-known Xuhui and Jing'an districts. By juxtaposing them, our aim is to identify the limits of both approaches and draw out the ambiguities and incoherences of the design fixes, rather than finding out which is more successful.

#### ***Old wine in a new bottle? The design fixes initiated by the state***

For many (quasi-)state actors, an experimental approach to design fix projects in space was a necessity. As Wang justified the importance of flexibility and adaptivity, "each place has its own pain points."<sup>59</sup> By "pain points," Wang meant complex property relations, power structures and ethical tensions involved that would impede the design projects. One example that Wang offered was the clearance of built structures without legal titles in some neighborhoods, some of which were critical to residents and small businesses and therefore ethically dubious to simply demolish. Another case was the relocation of state-owned enterprises from targeted places, which inevitably requires difficult political bargaining with other state units. Because of these different circumstances, Wang deemed it critical to remain improvisational and reflexive and to learn from the practice, a process which Wang compared to "crossing the river by feeling the stone" quoting directly Deng Xiaoping's view on China's gradualist market-oriented reform. Such a pragmatic approach means that design fixes are heterogenous in practice, and some activities are not consistent or compatible with each other.

Broadly, there are two kinds of design fixes initiated by state actors in Shanghai. The first concerns mostly cosmetic changes of communal spaces and improvement of collective facilities in residential neighborhoods from beautifying the landscape, redesigning parking spaces to redecorating meeting spots. The key rationale by starting at the scale of neighborhood was

that the structure of interest was much simpler. As Wu, from a state agency responsible for many design fixes explained:

the stakeholders of a neighborhood are homogenous – mostly residents. All we need to do is to communicate with them and understand their needs. Moreover, on this level, it mainly involves Street Offices (subdistrict state agencies) and residents' committees, which are much easier to coordinate.<sup>60</sup>

Pilot neighborhoods were selected through consultation with Street Offices and township authorities as well as through an open call for expressions of interest. Despite the varied needs of residents from different neighborhoods, participatory design was central to their proposals. In a typical project, residents would be invited to collectively reflect upon what needs fixing in their neighborhoods, whereas designers, selected through design competitions, would coordinate the interests of different actors and provide design-based, aesthetically appealing solutions. These pilot projects allowed state agencies behind the ongoing urban restructuring, such as Wu's, to gather experiences and iteratively improve subsequent practices.

At a first glance, these design fixes were oriented toward community interests. They can be seen as examples of what Jane Jacobs calls "gradual money" that supports "gradual, constant, close-grained changes," capable of keeping "streets and cities up to a good operating condition" and thereby nurturing inclusive growth.<sup>61</sup> They are in sharp contrast to projects financed by *cataclysmic money*, outpouring of which in concentrated forms leads to drastic changes including demolition and redevelopment.<sup>62</sup> Without downplaying the progress made by these design fixes, it is also important to note the limits and contradictions, due to the experimental approach. First, aversion to potential resistance and conflict means that some places and some issues that may require difficult political bargains and negotiation were left out despite the urgent need of capital investment. Second, as reminded by Evans et al., a common challenge to urban experiments is upscaling and connecting experiments and catalyzing wider changes.<sup>63</sup> While offering useful lessons for future practices, the design fixes were fragmented along neighborhood lines and disconnected not only from each other but also from wider processes. Third, the "gradual money" came mostly from state agencies.<sup>64</sup> Its supply was limited and bureaucratically managed and thus unable to finance the design fixes in the long run. This then fosters a reliance on external private capital, which simply lacks interest unless a Faustian pact is made to promise profitability.

This final point is best illustrated in the second type of design fixes, which combines both for-profit and for-community design fixes. Our example here is the transformation of Yuyuan Road, Changning district's signature project in urban regeneration through spatial design.<sup>65</sup> The regulatory frames and property relations there are far more complex. The road and its surroundings are dominated by garden villas and western-style lane houses that were homes to many famous business, political and cultural elites in Republican China. With 60 buildings recognized for their historical architecture and 11 as historical artifacts, this area is one of the 12 historical and cultural preservation areas in Shanghai under statutory protection; whereas Yuyuan Road itself is one of 64 streets prohibited from being widened. Urban heritage conservation not only sets a limit to private capital by reducing profit margins but also clashes with the interests of residents in housing improvements.

To finance the design fixes, the district government via its corporate arm, the Joinval Trade Group, partnered up with a private firm, CREATER, which had a longstanding interest in the real estate market in Changning. Together, they founded a joint enterprise, Shanghai Yuyuan Culture and Creative Development Co., Ltd, to oversee design fixes surrounding Yuyuan Road. The investment of 8 million RMB allowed CREATER to control 80% equity of the firm.

Self-branded as a company dedicated to sustainable urban renewal through the use of arts, CREATER's fix to Yuyuan Road to a large extent was, in fact, retail gentrification. Nearly 50% of stores along Yuyuan Road, once their leases expired, were closed and turned into galleries, cafes, designer food shops and boutique stores for more affluent customers. CREATER's business partner – the Joinval Trade Group – was not innocent in the process either, since it was the landlord for nearly 40% of commercial properties along the road.

Art and design were CREATER's means to give the façades of this area a makeover in order to extract higher rents and make a profit. Two key projects are important profit centers. The first project is Yuyuan Department Co., Ltd. Marketed by CREATER as a life experience store, it allows customers to shop and, if tired, to grab a coffee and/or view art galleries. The other is the Creation International Park. This is an office space renovated from old factory buildings and villa houses with a large open green space for regular jazz festivals.

CREATER's pursuit of profit was veiled by its involvement in community upgrading. In cooperation with the design and media firms – Urban Matter and Assbook – during the Urban Design Festival they initiated, CREATER contributed to improvement of collective facilities and neighborhood environments by, for example, providing designer trash bins, installing new urban furniture and redesigning the waiting area of a kindergarten. To make their motive more ambiguous, they also invested in the Yuyuan Public Market (Figure 10.2). In response to the complaints of residents on subtle changes to neighborhood character due to shop closures, the



*Figure 10.2* A renovated two-story building with new white façade and a sign in black saying “Yuyuan Public Market.” On its ground floor, there are several shops with their entrances facing the street. Opposite to it are low-rise villa houses in an old urban neighborhood. Photograph by Weilun Zhang (2020).



ground floor of this two-story public market hosts food stalls, shops for local craftsmen and a locksmith displaced by the clearance of “illegal” built structures and renovated restaurants known for traditional cuisines. The other floor is used for art exhibitions. Granted, these investments would improve community welfare. Yet, by beautifying the landscape, it also benefits the profit-driven projects financed by CREATER in surrounding areas and enables the company to extract more rent. Together, these design fixes also contribute to further commodification of places. Through content platforms, Yuyuan Road and the shops along it have been branded as one of the trendiest sites to take the perfect snaps on social media.

### ***Between the state and capital: Design fixes initiated by urban professionals***

Design fixes were also initiated by urban professionals – younger generation of architects, planners and urban designers. In the current wave of design fixes in Changning, Dayu Community Building Association has been an active professional group involved in the regeneration activities in the Xinhua Road area to the south of Yuyuan Road. It was jointly founded by five urbanists, all of whom had professional affiliations before they formed the partnership and created this association. As with design fixes initiated by the state, they place similar, if not more, emphasis on community participation. They had experimented with different participatory planning and design techniques. In a typical project, they would organize a few seminars and workshops involving different stakeholders to share their views and coproduce planned interventions. In one of their workshops we observed, they invited leaders from residents’ committees, researchers from local universities and local residents to exchange their views openly and candidly on what needed to be done, to share their knowledge of the governance system and reflect on the lessons learned from design fixes elsewhere.<sup>66</sup> They also organized participatory mapping exercises, street market fairs and street theaters. Furthermore, they conducted oral history interviews with residents and choreographed the construction of community history from the ground up. For urban professionals then, participatory design is more than a tool to create consensus for upgrading the physical space. It is also a means to produce local knowledge, nurture neighborhood ties and foster a sense of community. It can be seen as a Polanyi-style counteraction to resuscitate community lost to large-scale urban neighborhood clearance and redevelopment.<sup>67</sup>

The urban development process in China has long been dominated by the coalition of actors of the state and capital, whereas local communities in most cases are excluded or found to participate in urban projects in rather superficial, if not completely tokenistic, ways.<sup>68</sup> Against this backdrop, design fixes exemplified by the case of Xinhua Road are undoubtedly a welcoming progress. In contrast to top-down exclusionary urban intervention, local residents took greater ownership in these design fixes by setting the agendas, identifying action plans and steering the process. Urban professionals also changed from simply being contractors of the growth coalition designing for profit to coordinators of urban projects designing for community needs. As enchanting as this progress is, the inherent incoherency and ambiguities in urban professionals’ practices cast shadows on the potential of these design fixes to upscale and catalyze more lasting, fundamental changes.

The main problem comes from the reliance of urban professionals on the state and capital, despite their vision as an independent civic group for the community or the public in general. Vis-à-vis the state, the political opening created by controlled experiments of the Shanghai government to regenerate Shanghai was indispensable for professionals of Dayu to lead urban design projects. As revealed by an interviewee,<sup>69</sup> one of the founders of Dayu had attempted to present a design-based solution to shrinking public spaces and disordered parking in the neighborhood where the founder lived to different state authorities but to no avail. In the

end, it was the invitation from the Municipal Bureau of Planning and Resources, one of the agencies promoting design fixes, that put the founder of Dayu on the bureaucratic landscape. Subsequent participatory events organized by Dayu benefited from the support from the grassroots institutions. Moreover, Dayu also relied on the state for legitimacy, partly because of its commitment to community building and political suspicion it engenders. The idea of community building took inspiration from Japan's *machizukuri* (method of inter-community dialogue). Akin to community movements in many western countries in the 1960s, community is invoked in *machizukuri* by ordinary citizens to make demands on the state.<sup>70</sup> The professionals of Dayu were not unaware of this political history of community. When organizing participatory events and framing their activities, they shrewdly depoliticized their theoretical roots. In response to one of the author's commentaries on their practices, one founder of Dayu immediately interjected and insisted that the author's word choice "bottom-up" was a mischaracterization of their initiatives as it would imply that they pursued agendas against the state.<sup>71</sup> For the founders, their role was more complimentary than antagonistic. Although their activities had the effect of cultivating the collective agency of residents, they viewed these activities as an assistance to existing community institutions.<sup>72</sup> Their view of community and community participation therefore leans less toward the political ideal of *machizukuri* than to the version of the Chinese state. Similar to the discourse on community under neoliberalism,<sup>73</sup> iterations of communities in China similarly turn communities into a technique of governance to enact active, responsible citizenship and to improve delivery of public services in a more cost-effective way.<sup>74</sup>

This is of course not necessarily a bad thing. However, close alignment with the state's interests renders Dayu susceptible to bureaucratic absorption. Innovative participatory events and design fixes coordinated by Dayu allowed the grassroots state actors to distinguish their communities as examples of good self-governance while accumulating political capital. One iconic project in this regard was the redesign and renovation of the communal parts of the residential buildings in Jinglao Cun to make them more suitable to older inhabitants and more aesthetically appealing (Figure 10.3). Another project was a renovated janitors' room, the walls of which were decorated with stories of the community. It has now become a meeting spot for residents (Figure 10.4). These projects received frequent visits from journalists and policy tourists. Because of these successful fixes, as an interviewee from a state agency divulged,<sup>75</sup> bureaucrats of Xinhua Street Office had all been promoted. For Dayu, this was not a completely exploitative deal. Identification with state interests allowed them to tap into otherwise inaccessible financial and institutional resources from state units. This was important for civic organizations like Dayu to stay financially afloat, a lesson the founders of Dayu gradually learned in practice. As of 2019, Dayu had ten staff members, of which six were full-time employees.<sup>76</sup> As frankly admitted by a founder of Dayu, one of the biggest challenges was to finance operating and personnel costs.<sup>77</sup> Upon the nudge of a bureaucrat, founders of Dayu registered Dayu as a nongovernmental organization so that they could qualify to receive grants for commissioned research and become service providers of governments. In the auditing year of 2019, Dayu received 1.33 million RMB from three Street Offices for five commissioned planning and designing projects.<sup>78</sup> Financial dependence on continuous state funding then put them in a more compromising position.

The issue of finance brings us to Dayu's ambiguous relations with external capital. In an interview with Zhong and Leung, one of Dayu's founders reflected upon the tensions with Vanke (a major real estate developer and the investor of a rehabilitation project in Jinglaocun) and said: "Vanke as the investor intends to attract a more creative class to work and live in the community. But for us, we are trying to find a way to realize our professional dream and make our design more socially sustainable."<sup>79</sup> However, unless a substantial amount of money is made available, Dayu would be constantly caught up in the predicament of resolving the conflict



Figure 10.3 The hallway of a residential building in Jinlaocun after the design fix. It is now refurbished with yellow staircases, floor tiles in blue, steel protective gears painted in green, wooden walls and wooden storage spaces for the residents. Photograph by Xing Xing (2020).



Figure 10.4 A street-facing open community space named as “for neighborliness micro-space” (or *mulin wei kongjian*, in Chinese). The motorbike partially blocked the entrance on the day when the picture was taken. But the space was intended as an open and inviting space for residents. Its interior space is furnished with wooden chairs and decorated with pictures relating to the stories about the community on the wall facing the entrance and some decorative signs in Chinese characters saying “This is Our Lane 669” on the wall of the right side of the picture. Photograph by Xing Xing (2020).

between professional values and the market imperative. Because, compared to state-initiated design fixes that receive inadequate but stable financial support, design fixes initiated by urban professionals suffered more from funding deficits and thus relied on external private capital. Although local businesses and real estate firms such as Vanke had contributed to the design fixes in the form of charity or donation, such practices were rare and financially unsustainable. More often than not, there were strings attached. Neighborhoods must exchange something for it, although not immediately, as a leader of a residents' committee disclosed.<sup>80</sup> External investors will get their 'pound of flesh' one way or another. This relation of power and exchange can be masked by time lapses. Gentrification, especially of retail spaces, may not take place right away, or in one experimental site, but may be pursued at a later stage or in a different site.

This tension is more acute if we bring the thorny question of housing into the picture. Like its state counterparts, Dayu has thus far mainly focused on communal spaces and facilities, leaving behind the challenging task of housing condition improvements. This is partly due to the regulatory constraints imposed by urban conservation planning and restrictive zoning, which Dayu was unable to work around and perhaps unwilling to demand the government make regulatory adjustments to. This is despite the fact that these constraints are the cause of declining neighborhood and housing conditions.<sup>81</sup> Another reason is that a fix to housing requires a much more substantial amount of capital, especially from private sources. This then begs the question of how to finance housing improvements in ways that satisfy private capital's interest in profits without comprising the professional interest in social sustainability. Without addressing the housing question, housing inequalities, which should have been a target of urban interventions, will continue to be overlooked.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have sought to explain the underlying logic of Shanghai's ongoing experiment in urban regeneration and its inherent contradictions and ambiguities in order to add a more cautionary note to the overly exuberant claims of their potentials for progressive changes. Linking the discussions in urban political economy and urban experimentation, we argued that the ongoing restructuring of the built-up area in Shanghai can be seen as conjunctural strategies of the local state in response to the crises of accumulation and legitimation inhering in the land-based accumulation. Experimentalism created a tolerating and enabling condition for various forms of urban regeneration activities to emerge and test out different approaches. Of them, design fixes as one of these experiments to regenerate Shanghai have gained much traction. Both the technique of participatory design and the architectural form of the urban projects were conducive to manufacturing consensus and removing barriers for capital flows into space.

Against the history of violent place annihilation and exclusionary urban development in Shanghai, the emergence of design fixes is an undeniable achievement.<sup>82</sup> However, as our case studies demonstrated, the goals and interests of different actors involved in the design fixes were not always consistent or compatible. In the case of Yuyuan Road, design fixes essentially became a project of retail gentrification, using the architectural façade and gestural investment in neighborhood environments and facilities to conceal its interests in inflating land values and extracting rent from revitalized spaces. While both the state and urban professionals shared an interest in upgrading neighborhood environments and communal facilities, urban professionals testified by the case of Dayu conceived participatory design as part of the ambition to cultivate neighborliness and resuscitate community from the damages of large-scale urban renewal led by the coalition of the state and capital over the past three decades. Rather than seeing community

as a force opposing the state and/or capital, community building through participatory events, strategically or otherwise, became a means to consolidate the power of the state and pave the way for further commodification of places. These contradictory and ambiguous activities make it difficult to neatly characterize the ongoing experiments in regenerating Shanghai. Gentrification is part of the story but cannot capture all the spatial changes. Consequently, they pose a challenge to conceiving the prospects of these experimental design fixes to create alternative spaces and democratize the production of urban spaces.

These conceptual difficulties are not unique to our case. As reminded by Evans et al., experiments are neither inherently progressive nor conservative but are often ambiguous, incoherent and self-contradictory, hence the necessity to situate assessment of their potential within the wider context.<sup>83</sup> Arguing from Shanghai, we suggest that ambiguities and incoherences also play a strategic role in fixing these design-based projects in space by creating blurry targets for more critical voices and resistance. This has the effect of clearing political obstacles to fix capital in space. One such blurred target is the question of housing. Initiated by either the state or urban professionals, the design fixes we examined in this chapter focused mainly on the neighborhood environment. Not only the issue of housing has been marginalized but also resources that could have gone into housing improvement had been drained away. By saying this, we are of course not suggesting that upgrading neighborhood environments is insignificant. Rather, our interest is to bring to the fore the question of priorities of urban regeneration. If adequate and decent housing was not the primary goal of urban regeneration, we then must ask, whom were these design fixes really for?

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# THE CITY AND THE CAMP

## Destabilizing a spatial-political dichotomy

*Irit Katz*

### Introduction

The city and the camp are often perceived as oppositional spatial-political paradigms standing on the two sides of what has been described as a “strict analytical dichotomy.”<sup>1</sup> While cities are seen as the formation of ever-changing and diverse spatial, social and political relations,<sup>2</sup> camps on the other hand are often recognized as spaces linked to a particular and contested political reality, such as illegalized migration and refuge.<sup>3</sup> In the imaginaries of “seeing like a state,”<sup>4</sup> the camp reifies a unified sovereign order by functioning as a space of exception where particular ‘outsiders’ are controlled. In contrast, “seeing like a city” suggests the multiple, incomplete and incremental crafting of alternative forms of order in practice, offering more relational, flexible and heterogeneous environments.<sup>5</sup> While for architecture and urban design, cities make a central object of analysis,<sup>6</sup> until recently camps were not considered as part of architecture’s history, theory and settings and remained excluded from “disciplinary memory.”<sup>7</sup> However, more than two decades after the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben influentially stated that “it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West,”<sup>8</sup> camps and cities are increasingly being examined by architectural and urban thinkers as entangled environments with situated spatial and political meanings.<sup>9</sup>

Camps are spaces which are inherently connected to modern nation-states and their “national order of things.”<sup>10</sup> As spaces which could be rapidly erected as a response to an urgent need, camps make up part of the border and security apparatuses which ‘protect’ states against a perceived threat through the exclusion of those who are Othered as unknown ‘guests’ or racialized population groups, whether these are refugees, migrants or subaltern natives.<sup>11</sup> Such camps for ‘unexpected’ or ‘suspected’ newcomers make up part of what Didier Fassin calls ‘ambivalent hospitality,’ where compassion toward those arriving destitute is accompanied by their repression.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, camps increasingly appear within and in relation to today’s urban borderscapes, containing and excluding those deemed unqualified to be included as citizens where they reside or seek refuge.<sup>13</sup> As this chapter suggests, the complex relationship between the camp and the city is also related to the ways borders, including their colonial and national aspects, are both securitized from within and challenged from the outside by different groups.

Israel–Palestine, a territory that went through significant geopolitical transformations since the beginning of the 20th Century by the post-WWI British rule and the Zionist settler-colonial



project and its resultant Palestinian displacement, is particularly relevant to the study of camp–city relations. Settler camps, immigrant camps, refugee camps, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and detention camps were all used as key modern “spatial political technology”<sup>14</sup> which became an integral part of the drastic territorial and demographic changes in the area of Zionist and later Jewish–Israeli expansion and the parallel destruction of the Palestinian homeland.<sup>15</sup> Many of the Zionist and Israeli camps have evolved into permanent settlements, towns and cities such as Rosh HaAyin, which was created as an immigrant and then transit camp in 1949, which were based on a former British military camp, and recognized as a city in 1994. Differently, the Palestinian refugee camps such as Jelazone in the West Bank, created following the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, still exist as camps today after significant processes of urbanization which started a few years after their creation. These Israeli and Palestinian camp–city entanglements provide an example to other geopolitical situations in which camps and cities are inherently linked through political transformations and spatial realities, while also revealing the complex spatial-political workings in Israel–Palestine.

This chapter explores two different examples of city–camp entanglements. The first is the transit camps for Jewish immigrants, which many of them formed the foundation of Israel’s modernist frontier development towns and were used to securitize the newly formed Israeli borders. The second example is the Palestinian refugee camps formed outside the Israeli borders of the 1948 war in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan (including the West Bank, controlled by Jordan until 1967) and the then Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip. These camps were transformed through extensive processes of urbanization and exist until today while politically challenging Israel’s refusal to recognize the right of the Palestinian refugees to return. Both these camps and their related urban environments were formed in the same period, during and following the 1948 war, the establishment of Israel and the resultant *Nakba*, or the catastrophe, of the Palestinians’ mass displacement. These camps were formed because of population movements of roughly the same size – around 685,000 Jewish immigrants entered Israel in the three years following its establishment in May 1948, while around 700,000 Palestinians became refugees who were displaced from their homes.<sup>16</sup>

For a few years, these two types of camps created similar physical landscapes of precarious environments of tents or prefabricated shelters (Figures 11.1 and 11.2) where men, women and children were temporarily accommodated as an emergency solution to their mass displacement and immigration. These camps, however, have evolved into very different, if not contrasting, urban landscapes. The frontier immigrant transit camps were eventually liquidated by the Israeli government, and those temporarily ‘stored’ there were transferred to the highly modernist development towns, often built next to the camps. While these towns were often constructed by the camps’ dwellers, their architectural design and urban planning were dictated *top-down* by modernist Israeli architects and planners such as Ariel Sharon and Eliezer Brutzkus. Differently, the Palestinian refugee camps have evolved *bottom-up* to urban environments constructed by their own dwellers according to their needs, skills, resources and limitations, while some of these camps became enclaves in the expanding cities which they were created adjacent to.

These city–camp entanglements have substantially different, if not opposing, political roles and meanings. The Israeli immigrant transit camps were used to discipline and educate their residents as new state subjects, while dispersing them to the state’s frontiers to securitize its new territories until the creation of the modernist development towns which the immigrants built and populated. Following the creation of the development towns and new dwellings for the immigrants, the camps eventually disappeared, leaving no spatial trace for their existence as the scaffolding for the state’s new geopolitical and spatial order. Differently, the Palestinian refugee camps still exist as the live manifestation of the *Nakba* and the symbolic materialization of the Palestinian right of return. As urbanized spaces of refuge which exist for over 70 years,

*The city and the camp*



*Figure 11.1* Immigrant tents and a baby in a crib in Bat Yam ma'abara transit camp, Israel. Photograph by Teddy Brauner (1952). © National Photo Collection of Israel, Government Press Office.



*Figure 11.2* Refugee tents and residents of Jelazone camp for Palestinian refugees, the West Bank. Unknown photographer (1950). © ICRC Audiovisual Archives.

these camps continue to challenge Israel and its borders which remain closed for the refugees' return. The examination of these two forms of camp–city entanglements moves beyond the Agambenian paradigmatic understanding of the camp as inherently distinct from the city. Rather, exploring their links to one another enables the illumination of two closely related political realities, Palestinian refugees and Israeli–Jewish immigrants, in which the camp, the city and the relationship between them have core political roles.

### Theorizing the city and the camp

The camp and the city have a complex relationship rooted in early times. Many cities we know, such as Vienna and Manchester, were established as Roman military camps which were themselves the diagrammatic evocation of the Roman city.<sup>17</sup> The urban is indeed recognized as an important analytical framework to examine the camp,<sup>18</sup> yet the relationship between the camp and the city is still a debated subject between scholars. Some, such as Liisa Malkki, see refugee camps and cities as dichotomized spaces, since “the city entails expectations of citizenship” and is seen as the normative human environment, while camps form a space of exception for the noncitizens.<sup>19</sup> Differently, Michele Agier considers the city as an advanced form in relation to the camp, which, even if it urbanizes, forms a “city–camp” hybrid that might be “comparable to the city, and yet it cannot ‘reach it’.”<sup>20</sup> In these accounts, the camp forms a social and juridical exceptional space in the encompassing state order, where particular populations, such as refugees, are contained in a form which excludes them as the Other while ‘securitizing’ the body politic of the state within its borders. While these reflections on the city–camp dichotomized relationship are grounded in actual spaces, they are often theoretically based on Agamben’s identification of the camp as a core political paradigm of Western politics.<sup>21</sup>

Just before the new millennia and the appearance of the post 9/11 ‘war on terror’ detention camp in Guantanamo Bay and the proliferation of encampments for refugees and irregular migrants across the globe, all containing those deemed the racialized Other, Agamben located the camp and the figure of *homo sacer*, a person banned from society and denied all rights, at the center of modern politics. The camp, for Agamben, is

produced at a point at which the political system of the modern nation–state, which was founded on the functional nexus between a determinate localization (land) and a determinate order (the State) mediated by automatic rules for the inscription of life (birth or the nation), enters into a lasting crisis.<sup>22</sup>

As such, the political technology of the camp forms a temporary yet protracted “space of exception” which includes noncitizens within the state territory and borders while excluding them from its juridical order and its entailed rights.<sup>23</sup>

Building on the Nazi death camps as his core example, and following the ideas of central political thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault and Carl Schmitt, the camp, for Agamben, is the exceptional core around which our normal democratic liberal juridical structure circulates.<sup>24</sup> Rather than being the outcome of the state’s democratically agreed mode of governance and legal order, the camp is “a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms become indistinguishable.”<sup>25</sup> While state subjects are protected from the violence of the sovereign under the normal law, in the camp, where “power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation,” they are completely exposed and could therefore be mistreated and dehumanized.<sup>26</sup> In the dehumanizing space of the camp, the Aristotelian separation between life (that is, biological life, which is taken care of in the private and hierarchical space of the household, the *oikos*) and

politics (happening in the public space of the free and the equal, the *polis*) collapses, creating a zone of indistinction where people are exposed as “bare life” with no rights and proper protection.<sup>27</sup> In the camp, populations with no citizens’ rights such as ‘war on terror’ suspects or refugees are being suspended outside a political community in which they could act to change their situation.

It was the political philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself a Jewish refugee who escaped Nazi Germany, who was among the first to recognize how new technologies of power which were tested in the colonies have transformed in the West to the spaces of unlimited power seen in both the Nazi concentration camps and in camps for stateless people.<sup>28</sup> In her 1942 essay “We Refugees,” Arendt reflects on how “[a]pparently nobody wants to know that contemporary history has created a new kind of human being – the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends,”<sup>29</sup> while blurring the distinction between refugees and detainees. Recognizing that camps in the colonies “were used for ‘suspects’ whose offenses could not be proved and who could not be sentenced by ordinary process of law,”<sup>30</sup> Arendt illuminates the significant difference between the camp and the prison, highlighting the camp’s political meaning: while individuals are interned in prisons because they have committed a crime and are therefore subject to the state’s juridical and penal system, people are interned and often dehumanized in camps not as individuals but as ‘masses’ who have committed no crime. Rather than being interned as a penalty for *what they did*, people are contained in the camp because of *what they are* – refugees or those whom the state has deemed as undesirable ‘Others’ excluded from its national body of citizens. Refugees for Agamben, in continuation to Arendt, “represent such a disquieting element in the order of the modern nation-state,” as they break “the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*” and are therefore excluded in camps.<sup>31</sup> For Arendt, the camp was indeed a real site where she herself was interned by the Nazis. Agamben, beyond his core example of the Nazi death camps, also reflects on recent examples of real camp spaces, yet for him the camp is not (only) a historical event but primarily a *paradigmatic space* of modern political order. As such, for Agamben the camp is ultimately about the topology of sovereignty which secures its borders and body politic by including the exception (such as noncitizens asking for refuge) through its exclusion from the normal juridical order.

Agamben’s work has brought the camp to the focus of scholarship’s attention, while it was also criticized by scholars who found that his theory is not easily applicable to many existing camps around the world which became “fields of possibility for political action” and as a space where residents or inmates could reconstitute their political subjectivities while possibly claiming their rights.<sup>32</sup> Refugee camps, migrant camps, Roma camps, detention camps and protest camps are studied by these scholars as highly politicized spaces.<sup>33</sup> Agamben sees the camp in a different way, as a paradigmatic space that exposes the political and legal structure of the modern nation-state which supports the freedom and life of its citizens while operating spaces where rights, freedoms, and political actions of those seen as the Other are severely curtailed. Furthermore, in Agamben’s argument, the city could be seen as the paradigmatic *polis* which is created and operated by the freedom and political actions of its citizens. This is of course far from the reality of real cities where freedom and rights of a growing section of people who are not represented in the nation-state, such as ethnic minorities who are seen as ‘outsiders,’ are constantly being abused by sovereign power.<sup>34</sup> To understand the entangled spaces of camps and cities, then, there is a need to go beyond their Agambenian paradigmatic dichotomized separation and discuss them as situated spaces with particular political meanings.

Palestinian refugee camps have become central sites where Agamben’s theory was examined and criticized,<sup>35</sup> and Israel–Palestine as a whole has been explored as a continuous colonial state of exception following his work,<sup>36</sup> which was criticized for its shortcoming in adequately relating

to colonialism.<sup>37</sup> The settler-colonial reality in Israel–Palestine indeed problematizes Agamben’s argument on the nation–state and the camp as the space of the rightless bare life. In Israel, the nation–state was substantially composed of Jewish immigrants who arrived after the state’s establishment and were immediately naturalized and disperse in camps in frontier areas to securitize the state’s borders, while the native Palestinians were expelled outside the borders of the new state and were suspended in camps while their return to their lands was and still is being prevented.<sup>38</sup> Agamben’s argument about the camp, however, is still helpful in distinguishing the camp as a space of exception in the modern nation–state which enables it to swiftly respond to, and create rapid geopolitical changes in exceptional manners. Rather than comply with Agamben’s paradigm, however, these real camps and their relation to cities create spatial constellations grounded in their specific roles, realities, populations and material worlds which enables to unpack their political meanings.<sup>39</sup> The two types of camp in Israel–Palestine which I will now examine in relation to their associated urban forms will show how the camp/city dichotomized paradigmatic spaces might assume very different political meaning which is materialized in their actual spaces. These camp/city constellations could also enable us to further reveal the logic of the complex contested political reality in Israel–Palestine which they both make part of.

### **The Israeli immigrant transit camps and development towns**

The Israeli immigrant transit camps were created after Israel’s establishment in 1948 during the mass immigration period (1948–51) to provide temporary accommodation for the influx of Jewish immigrants arriving to the new country and to disperse them across the territory. These transit camps were named *ma’abarot* in Hebrew (*ma’abara* single), a term which is etymologically derived from the word *ma’avar*, meaning transit, reflecting their intended role as temporary accommodation for the immigrants.<sup>40</sup> Immigration was perceived as necessary to Israel, with the understanding that the state’s future is dependent on settlements, which were created to secure the state’s new emptied frontier territories and exposed borders, and immigrants to populate them.<sup>41</sup> With immigrants flowing into the country, the main challenge was *time*, which was needed to complete planning and construction of the strategic Israeli national master plan, also called the National Plan or the Sharon Plan after its main architect Ariel Sharon, a senior Israeli architect who established the governmental Planning Department. The plan included the creation of small modern–designed *development towns*, planned mostly in remote frontier regions with the aim to spread the Israeli–Jewish population to the country’s newly conquered territories and next to its new borders, while the *ma’abarot* camps bridged the temporal gap between the arrival of the immigrants and the planning and construction of the towns.

The national plan’s development towns were planned and created to internally colonize the territory of the newly formed state, which spread over 77% of the territory which was Mandatory Palestine managed under British rule since WWI. As Sharon explained, “[w]hen the [Israeli] state was founded the overwhelming majority of the population, totaling 82%, was concentrated in a narrow coastal strip extending from Haifa to Tel Aviv”;<sup>42</sup> the aim of the national plan was “to spread the [Jewish] population away from the Mediterranean seaboard into the country’s empty areas”<sup>43</sup> by directing the immigrants into the distant regions. The development towns were one of the main planning and architectural tools for the state’s population distribution. This was not only a territorial but also a modernist planning project. The 20 development towns which were included in the plan (28 were eventually created) were planned and designed in the spirit of the Regional School and according to European planning models such as Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City, Walter Christaller’s Central Place Theory, and Sir Patrick Abercrombie’s Greater London Plan; the plan was to define relatively small areas based on close interaction between regional towns and their rural environments.<sup>44</sup>

While the Planning Department planned the territory from a spatial viewpoint, the planning teams of the Israeli army designed the civilian space from a military perspective, providing civilian settlements with the territorial role of securing exposed borders and frontier areas. This strategy continued earlier Zionist civilian-military practices of militarized territorial civilian outposts, often surrounded with barbed-wire fences, which was adopted in other border-security enterprises worldwide during that period such as the 'frontier villages' in the Demilitarized Zone established between South and North Korea in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>45</sup>

For the Israeli military and civilian architects and planners, including Sharon, the *ma'abarot* camps were the perfect solution for both territorial and economic reasons. Before the *ma'abarot* were created, the state used large-scale closed camps to accommodate and feed the immigrants before referring them to available housing, yet these camps created political and economic pressure due to their density, horrid sanitary conditions and the need to pay for the immigrants' food and needs.<sup>46</sup> Differently, the *ma'abarot* were open camps and smaller in size, where the immigrants had to work to earn their living. The swift creation of the smaller *ma'abarot* camps have also enabled the spread of the immigrants to frontier areas in an aggressive population dispersal policy until the completion of the development towns; planner Eliezer Brutzkus, one of the National Plan's senior thinkers, reflected that this was accomplished "against the free will of the populating subjects."<sup>47</sup>

Tents and prefabricated shelters were used to temporarily accommodate the immigrants in the *ma'abarot* camps (Figure 11.1). These structures were often placed in a dense grid, preventing the immigrants from expanding their minimal temporary shelters. The dense grid also made it easier to provide the shared temporary infrastructures in the camps and to control the immigrants in a relatively small area. Control methods included surveillance on political insurgency of the immigrants in the camps<sup>48</sup> and the controlled provision of work permits and food rationing cards which were essential at that period and were also used to prevent immigrants' self-initiated relocation between *ma'abarot* camps across the country.<sup>49</sup> Thus, instead of becoming independent autonomous citizens in their new democratic state, the immigrants were controlled in the *ma'abarot* while being heavily dependent on Jewish and State institutions in all aspects of life.<sup>50</sup> These camps, therefore, and the unequal power relations in them, worked as an Agambenian exceptional "zone of indistinction" placed both within and outside the Israeli democratic order and civic society.<sup>51</sup>

Many of the immigrants were 'stored' in desolate frontier camps until the development towns were created, with the state making it very difficult for them to leave. As the immigrants had to work, but no work was to be found in such distant locations, they were confined to the manual labor of the initiated works provided by the state such as constructing new national infrastructures and new housing blocks in the development towns. Manual labor was not only a way to construct the new country while enabling the immigrants to make a living, but it was also seen as an educational and ideological mechanism through which they were forced to acquire a new identity while changing the occupational structure of Israel's new Jewish nation; from a middle-class urban people of merchants or other white-collar professions of the Jewish diaspora, immigrants were set to be turned to people accustomed to physical labor to construct the new state.<sup>52</sup>

The *ma'abarot* camps created the perfect mechanism for the state to place the immigrants in frontier regions while using them for the development town's modernist construction, and by 1952, a sixth of Israel's population, more than 250,000 people, lived in more than 200 *ma'abarot* camps, with roughly half of them in isolated frontier areas not far from the state's borders.<sup>53</sup> Some of these camps and towns were placed in areas where pre-war Palestinian villages existed, which were systematically erased by the state, and to which some Palestinian refugees have attempted to return from their spaces of exile on the other side of the border. Thus, the rapidly erected camps, and then the development towns with their modernist appearance of repetitive prefabricated

shelters, followed by repetitive housing blocks, were not only a settling mode preferred by the newly created state, but their modernist unified aesthetics also had a profound political role. With their new (Jewish) population and new modernist architecture, the *ma'abarot* and towns have replaced the native Palestinian population and space that existed there before, creating a new spatial and political Israeli reality as if the previous Palestinian one was never there.

The planners were not bothered by the physical reality in the *ma'abarot* of dense basic shelters, unpaved roads and shared water and hygiene facilities that quickly deteriorated to deplorable conditions.<sup>54</sup> For them, any additional investment might prolong their existence and turn them into slums rather than the desired well-calculated modernist aesthetics of the development towns.<sup>55</sup> They saw the camps as a sort of populated temporary scaffolding with which they could construct a new national spatial reality. For the immigrants, however, who lived in dangerously poor conditions in the desolated camps, the situation was very different. The high mortality rate in the camps, the uneven power relations with the camp's managers who belonged to the established Israeli society, the imposed manual labor and the temporary situation itself, all made the camps miserable spaces with which they had to cope, at a substantial personal and social price.<sup>56</sup>

Importantly, the *ma'abarot* camps and then the development towns had a core role in the internal ethnic division of the Jewish-Israeli society. The separation of the *ma'abarot* from the established society, composed of predominantly *Ashkenazi* (European) Jews, and the fact that *Mizrahi* Jews (coming from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa) formed the majority in the camps and towns, generated a process that ethnically divided the Israeli-Jewish society.<sup>57</sup> The extensive inequality was justified by a strong modern state ideology in which European modernism was part of an advanced culture that the new nation must adopt, while, at the same time the racialized *Mizrahi* culture was negated as primitive and underdeveloped.<sup>58</sup> This attitude led to the dehumanization of an entire population, which was perceived as a raw material that must be molded.

Until the early 1960s, most of the Jewish immigrants moved from their shacks in the camps to permanent dwellings, often tenement housing blocks in the development towns. These formed following an encompassing planning process to which the new residents were introduced only as the builders and final users. Rather than participating in forming their housing, it was the housing which was expected to *form* them. Public housing in the towns were designed by Israel's modernist architects and planners, such as Sharon, to shape both the Israeli urban space and the immigrants who now inhabited it – the national home (Israeli territory) and the personal home (the *Mizrahi* immigrant's identity) – who were both the subjects and the agents of the process.<sup>59</sup> The development towns and their tenement housing blocks, in their isolation from Israel's social, economic and political center, the uniformity of their housing environment and the block's repetitiveness which was disconnected from the landscape with no *genius loci* (pervading spirit of place), and the transience which was created by the tenement's temporary contracts and their attempts to move, have continued the camps' logic (Figure 11.3). These duplicated boxes have created disciplinary spaces of power into which primarily *Mizrahi* immigrants were molded as obedient political subjects with almost no agency in the name of modern efficiency, Israel's racialized population dispersal policy and a progressive lifestyle ideology. Similarly, to Agamben's perception, in these camp-like spaces, the political entity of the state has penetrated the private space of the home, making house, city and state indistinguishable. Yet, rather than being a pure Agambenian "space of exception" and de-subjectivization, these spaces, using significant methods of control and thin modernist design, had a profound political-aesthetic dimension which crafted Israel's new citizens and landscape over the emptied Palestinian lands.

The Israeli *ma'abarot* camps and development towns have together created a forceful spatial-political mechanism to territorially, socially and culturally engineer the Jewish immigrants,



Figure 11.3 Repetitive modernist housing blocks in Ramat Yosef, a residential district in Bat Yam, Israel. Photograph by Moshe Pridan (1964). © National Photo Collection of Israel, Government Press Office.

primarily the *Mizrahi* ones. Rather than being purely spaces of exception, the modernist camps and towns have created disciplinary spaces to shape *Mizrahi* immigrants into good modern self-regulating Zionist political subjects, morphing them as ‘natives’ of the new state while inhabiting and securing emptied frontier areas and their adjacent borders. The camp for these urban environments was, it seems to be, both the instrument and the inspiration for their creation, forming purified spaces in which control dictated practicalities, aesthetics and lived experiences of a weak population who could not object to its role in Israel’s national planning strategy. The Israeli development towns have continued for years to form peripheral spaces where *Mizrahi* immigrants reside away from the *Ashkenazi* establishing group. While the camps that preceded their establishment were long gone, these towns which became cities have carried the ‘gene’ of the camp deep in their spatial organization and sociopolitical logic.

### **The Palestinian refugee camps and their informalized urbanization**

During and after the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, displaced Palestinians beyond Israel’s armistice lines, which became the state’s de facto borders, were forced to seek refuge while accepting, quite unwillingly, the aid offered by various humanitarian organizations in the makeshift tent camps created outside the new state (Figure 11.2). From people who were native to Palestine and lived on their land which was colonized by Zionist settlers and then the State of Israel, they became refugees in other countries. Around one-third of the Palestinian refugees found themselves in refugee camps in neighboring countries and territories – that is, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan (including the West Bank) and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip – assuming their situation as refugees



was only temporary. The aid organizations which already worked in Palestine during the war, such as the Red Cross (ICRC), were joined in the camps by the newly created United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), which in 1949 became the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) who was responsible for all camps, following Israel's continued refusal to allow the refugees to return. With the word *work* added to *relief*, refugees immediately suspected UNRWA of attempting to resettle them in their places of refuge, worrying that the agency's interventionist projects, including housing, might damage their right of return.<sup>60</sup>

UNRWA's camps in the four hosting states were very different from one another; some were spontaneous, others preplanned; some were in rural areas, while others were in the outskirts of cities. All camps, however, worked as exterritorial, ever-changing spatial organisms through multifaceted material and spatial actions. These often echoed, or collided with, the transforming political situation around them, shifting under the mosaic of the multiple, hybrid, partial, overlapping and ambiguous sovereignties of UNRWA, the host states and other international, national and local powers.<sup>61</sup> The camps created an unstable spatial entity. They grew and changed while refugees ignored UNRWA's restrictions on mobility between camps to find refuge near friends and family. Refugees have also changed the internal composition of tents in the camps, moving them to form clusters with relatives while naming them after their original villages, recreating lost geographies with their own socio-spatial choreography. They have also redesigned their shelters, creating a hybrid between tents and houses, adding low walls from collected stones or cement blocks to their tents to keep out draughts and rainwater, bringing together the permanent construction methods of their past villages on the other side of the border and their ephemeral present in the fabric tent, which could be packed in an instant.<sup>62</sup> Such actions could be seen as spatial agency, as they engage with the camp's space in a transformative manner, while carrying a political meaning indicating the tight connection between the refugees and the places they left behind.<sup>63</sup> As such, these spaces move beyond the Agambenian perception of the camp as an apolitical space of bare life, indicating the refugees' capacity to act even in the most limited conditions.

By the early 1960s, UNRWA had replaced the tents with more permanent shelters, although restructuring the camps was politically explosive. Many refugees refused replacement of their dilapidating tents, worrying that improvement in their living conditions would risk repatriation. In turn, UNRWA named the shelters *malja* (*shelters* rather than *houses*), threatening to stop the rations of refugees who refused to move.<sup>64</sup> Within a few years, the chaotic tent camps were replanned by British and French architects appointed by UNRWA and built by Arab contractors from nearby villages and the refugees themselves, with simple modules of cubicle shelters organized in a grid layout, and with UNRWA forbidding refugees to expand, sell, rent or alter their shelters.<sup>65</sup> Yet this strictly designed controlled environment of the reconstructed camps was persistently resisted, and soon after the refugees moved to their new shelters, they had begun an ongoing substantial process of spatial transformation and informalization. The spatial language of grid and repetitive shelters was rapidly reshaped through an intricate mode of construction, with spaces incrementally being built-up until plots were almost fully constructed and built areas being often enlarged at the expense of the streets, creating a labyrinthian public space.

These spatial actions gradually transformed the camps, disintegrating the ordered grid through dense and cumulative construction built in different materials, heights and sizes, redefining refugees' private and public spaces, creating illegible and seemingly chaotic environments for outsiders while forming familiar environments for refugees. The spatial enactments of the refugees in the camps were created by their needs, resources, skills and social and political

identities, maintaining temporariness in other forms such as avoiding planting trees and leaving the minimal infrastructure and concrete walls exposed rather than covering them with render.<sup>66</sup> The increased use of cement-based concrete in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after their occupation by Israel in 1967, has further changed their materiality and spatiality, enabling the dense camps to grow vertically, rapidly urbanizing them. As Nasser Abourahme shows, these material changes are not only limited to the lived experience in the camp but also “spill over” to the symbolic-political in various ways, with the aesthetics of transience replaced with alternative spatial and material forms that frame the urban spatiality of *living in a refugee camp* which is constantly being reassembled (Figure 11.4).<sup>67</sup> Thus, the Palestinian refugees were not only contained in the camp as the Other in their hosting states, but were also Othering themselves through the camp environments they have created, as a marker to their unresolved political situation.

The assemblage of spaces and materials built and used by the refugees, along with their everyday activities such as food preparation, have regularly spilled out of the cramped shelters, while political activities were concealed within them. These have all reshaped the camp and transformed UNRWA’s institutional language, which aimed for an easily controlled humanitarian space of separated shelters and clear division of private–public space. In the camp, as Agamben notes, “city and house became indistinguishable,”<sup>68</sup> blurring the distinction between the private and public realms, and in the refugee camps also blurring the spaces where politics appear. These processes of urbanization are happening through the ever-changing assemblages of people, materials and disjointed institutions and urban planning policies. However, they are also based on improvised and hidden institutional urban planning, taking the shape of an “improvised *dispositif*” of state and non-state institutions.<sup>69</sup> *Dispositif*, also referred to as *apparatus*, is a term examined by Agamben, based on Foucault and other thinkers, as a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of institutions, forms, discourses, laws, regulations, moral



Figure 11.4 Rooftops of the urbanized Aida Palestinian refugee camp, the West Bank. Photograph by Irit Katz (2007).

propositions and statements, which strategically responds to a specific urgency and “has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings.”<sup>70</sup> In the Palestinian refugee camps, this *dispositif* balances between the temporary character of these spaces and the implementation of urban improvement practices that maintain them as livable environments.

The Palestinian camps have therefore created and still form, through their incremental, improvised and hybrid process of urbanization, a highly political space. This space maintains the camps as inhabitable spaces, while keeping their temporary nature, including their definition as *camps* rather than as *cities*, to preserve their political role as the materialization of the Palestinian right of return. This political role is core to the Israeli attempts, after occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war, including the Palestinian refugee camps located there, to liquidate the camps altogether through violent actions of destruction, or make them an inherent part of their adjacent Palestinian cities through ongoing actions of urban planning and developmental interventions of construction. By providing refugees with plots of land and new houses outside the camps in the Gaza Strip while promising them permanent jobs, under the terms that they will relinquish their UNRWA refugee card and demolish their shelters in the camp, Israel unsuccessfully tried to erase the Palestinian camps together with the refugees’ demand to return.<sup>71</sup> These and other initiatives to turn the urbanizing camps into cities, however, did not work, precisely because of the camps irreplaceable political meaning. While the camps spatially transformed into urbanized environments, their ‘campness’ has continued by their own refugees–dwellers as an embodied spatial-political action.

### Urbanized camps, *campized* cities

The Israeli *ma’abarot* immigrant transit camps and the Palestinian refugee camps formed similar campscapes in their initial days, where families and individuals were placed in transient tents and shelters until a permanent solution to their situation could be achieved. While Israel envisioned the creation of new modernist development towns and housing blocks for the Jewish immigrants to securitize its frontiers and borders, while pushing the Mizrahi immigrants away from the establishing Ashkenazi society, the Palestinians have envisioned their anticipated return to the homes, villages and towns they were forced to leave and were now separated from by the borders of the Israeli state. These two forms of camps, however, have evolved into very different political and urban landscapes. While these two camp typologies were created due to population changes in the same territory, their related urban landscapes and architectural form arguably have opposite political meanings which is also expressed in their aesthetics.

The Palestinian refugee camps went through a significant process of urbanization while maintaining their camp status as part of the Palestinian struggle for the right of return, which Israel consistently negates. Camp residents argue for what Dorota Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska describes as “the right to the camp,” aiming, similar to Lefebvre’s “right to the city,” to enable them to collectively reconfigure the social and political relations and powers that produce their everyday spaces.<sup>72</sup> While they keep the political-aesthetics of the camp as temporary, they also argue for their right for the camps’ dignified inhabitation, including supporting both their national and individual aspirations rather than living there in a continuous precarious situation. Geographically, physically, materially and spatially, these urbanized camps are produced as closer to the city as ever, some of them, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, forming enclaves in the Palestinian cities that grew around them, while keeping the status of the displaced Palestinian natives as refugees, deliberately remaining as camps to maintain their political role. Replacing UNRWA’s humanitarian modernist order, the camps have created a collective aesthetic of

incremental, ever-changing, unfinished, transient spaces while questioning and overriding clear categorical definitions such as permanent/temporary, past/present, private/public, or containment/emancipation in ways which are shaped, shaped by and express their distinct politics as core spaces of the Palestinians whose homeland is still being denied.

The *ma'abarot* camps, differently, have existed for a few years to absorb and disperse the Jewish immigrants and temporarily suspend them, until they moved to the development towns. In these modernist towns which later became cities, the immigrants were occupying Israel's frontiers and supporting the securitization of the Israeli border, while being 're-educated' to become adequate state subjects according to Israel's modernist ideology and racialized practices for which the camp-like spaces were essential. Indeed, the modern blocks of the development towns carried the genes of the camp in them: a unified and efficient design for the masses, an ideological modernist space detached from its specific place and inconvenient history, containing and educating its *Mizrahi* inhabitants and their 'unsuitable,' 'primitive' cultures through methods of tight state control. These *campized* cities have negated the immigrants' spatial agency. Looking and functioning in their early years in close resemblance to the camp, they have occupied the erased Palestinian landscape as if they have been there forever.

The Palestinian refugees and the Jewish immigrants break the naturalized connection between nativity and nationality, yet the concrete spaces of the Palestinian refugee camps and the *ma'abarot* complicate Agamben's paradigmatic idea of the camp as a topology of modern sovereignty and law which appears as a space of exception when the nation-state-territory nexus is in crisis. This is because these camps are not only exceptional spaces in the states in which they are located, excluding particular populations from those considered as 'natives' in a legal and cultural manner. Rather, when understanding them in relation to their political and urban forms as spaces which not only contain particular people but also use them to colonize the territory (in the case of the Israeli *ma'abarot* and development towns) or organize politically (in the case of the Palestinian refugee camps), their role in the *formation* of their associated body politic is revealed. The *ma'abarot* and the development towns were designed to transform the *Mizrahi* immigrants to culturally qualified 'native' subjects of the Israeli state. Differently, the urbanized Palestinian camps were and still are places where the refugees, who were displaced from their native lands, are struggling to return and establish a Palestinian state. These are therefore highly political spaces which have a core role in forming a political community rather than only excluding those contained in them from such a community. The conflation between these camps and their urban formations reveals their very spatial-political logic of spaces of emerging political subjectivities, whether these are imposed from above (such as in the *ma'abarot*) or generated from below (as in the Palestinian camps).

In the 21st Century, camps remain a form which is prevalent as ever, creating new spatial and urban formations based on the exclusion of noncitizens and the political struggles of those contained in them.<sup>73</sup> The understandings of the entanglements between the city and the camp in Israel-Palestine are relevant to further investigations of the political meaning of similar situations, in which the proper understanding of camps should not examine them as dichotomized to cities but as related to them in a variety of meaningful ways. This demands a situated approach to both camps and cities by delving deeply into their histories which might emerge from radical geopolitical transformations and colonial relations.

## Conclusion

The Palestinian urbanized camps and the Israeli *campized* cities both create tight yet very different camp-city entanglements with what could be read as opposing spatial-political expressions and

meaning. The city and the camp are exposed here not as an abstract dichotomy, as they are still often considered, but as situated entities with spatial relations which are inseparable from the politics that initially constructed them and continues to evolve with and through their spaces. The *ma'abarot* and development towns were created by overarching national political forces, which used the Jewish immigrants as peons that populate the state's frontier and securitize its borders while being molded as state subjects according to Israel's modernist agenda. The Palestinian camps, differently, on the other side of that border, have urbanized by the spatial agency of their residents and the hybrid forces working within and around them, evolving as assemblages which maintain *the camp* distinct from *the city* for political reasons. In these camp-city entanglements, both *camps* and *cities* – as metaphysical concepts and paradigms and as lived realities and material worlds used for both oppression and struggle – are stretched and wrapped around one another in very particular ways.

What brings these spaces together in a way which is inherently linked to the politics of Israel–Palestine and to the paradigmatic understanding of the camp, is that both the Palestinian and Israeli camps were formed as spaces of exception in their settings. These two camp formations have created zones of indistinction working both within and outside the political order and societies around them, with their residents administered *en masse* (as a whole) as Othered refugees or immigrants rather than as individual citizens. The private and public spaces in these camps, the *oikos/polis*, were also inseparable, as the power of the Israeli state has invaded the life of the immigrants in the camps' shelters and then in the modernist housing blocks to form them as qualified state subjects, while in the refugee camps both the shelter and the camp were recruited and politicized for the Palestinian struggle. While these camps were formed for those who were not yet or not anymore considered natives in their location, emplaced within or displaced outside the borders of the Israeli state, their specific relation to the city was and still is inherently connected to their political meaning.

Discussing city–camp entanglements, therefore, reveals not only specific spatial relations but also the political constellations that stand behind them, in which the border plays a significant role. While analyzing *the city* and *the camp* as paradigms is important for their theoretical understanding, their meaning as specific spaces should be examined through their situated relationships which are connected to both their historical and current realities.

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# 12

## ARCHITECTURES OF MOTION AT THE US–MEXICO BORDER

*Thomas Nail*

### Introduction

With the spread of Covid-19, there has been an explosion of newly reinforced and modified borders around the world. Between March 2020 and February 2021, nation-states have implemented over 100,000 movement restrictions.<sup>1</sup> The United States has rejected asylum seekers by claiming they pose a health risk.<sup>2</sup> Spain has required negative Covid-19 tests as a condition of entry,<sup>3</sup> and 91% of the world population live in countries with Covid-19-related travel restrictions.<sup>4</sup>

As the second longest and the most crossed border wall on the planet, the US–Mexico border has been especially affected by Covid-19. In this chapter, I want to use the US–Mexico border during Covid-19 as a case study for thinking about what I call *architectures of motion*. I define an architecture of motion as a pattern traced out by human and nonhuman bodies that shapes space. Architecture, in this definition, is a pattern-in-motion that shapes and is shaped by the bodies that move through it at various scales.

This idea is different than thinking about architecture as a ‘flow space’ that bodies move through.<sup>5</sup> It is also different than thinking about how human eyes move in response to looking at architectural forms.<sup>6</sup> Architectures of motion are not restricted to individual buildings but include the whole flow-path of human and nonhuman agents as they move across built environments and landscapes. If one imagines architectural space dilated in time, one can study the various flow-patterns as a *process-architecture*. In this view, one can think of buildings, fences and walls as relatively stable flow-patterns of concrete, wood and steel. One can also think of humans and animals as relatively less stable flow-patterns of flesh. The entangled structures of these more and less stable patterns can offer a different perspective on how the border wall between the US and Mexico works. But how?

In contrast to some border theorists who describe borders in primarily spatial terms,<sup>7</sup> as “the material form of support for flows,”<sup>8</sup> or whose mobility or fluidity is purely “metaphorical,”<sup>9</sup> I propose a movement-oriented analysis. I think this can help us see more clearly how border fences, walls and buildings change and move in response to the bodies that move through them. Wear and tear, weather and erosion are also flow-patterns that all play an important role in shaping border architectures. Looking at borders in this way can also help us identify larger patterns of structural weakness, ecological destruction and human dangers introduced by border patterns. This is the first point I want to show in this chapter.



Next, I argue that studying the *architecture of motion* at the US–Mexico border will help us see that borders are not static barriers that can *stop* human mobility. The border between the United States and the State of Mexico can funnel people into the middle of the desert, trap them inside the US, drive them under, above or through it, and even kill some of them, but it cannot stop the mass movement of people. My argument in this chapter is that borders can be usefully understood as kinetic patterns or *architectures of movement*. Toward the end of the chapter, I compare the function of the patterns of the US–Mexico border to what Karl Marx calls “primitive accumulation.”<sup>10</sup> That is, they are patterns or cycles that directly displace people in order to capture and mobilize them in various ways. Elsewhere, I call this process “expansion by expulsion.”<sup>11</sup>

Although my focus here is the US–Mexico border, I have shown elsewhere that these features are shared by many other kinds of borders as well.<sup>12</sup> For these reasons, this chapter argues that people should think of borders more as pathways and patterns than as places or things. In particular, I make this case by looking at four such patterns at work at the US–Mexico border. I show that they give us a better way of thinking about how the border works as a political architecture of motion.

### What is a border?

The history of the border has so far largely been a history of states.<sup>13</sup> In much of the scholarship and in popular discourse, borders tend to be defined with the outer territorial boundaries of a country.<sup>14</sup> This was not the case with many premodern borders and is still not the case with many modern borders.<sup>15</sup> For example, if one includes all the border enforcement that occurs in airports, checkpoints inside the country, immigration raids on workplaces and detention centers, one can see that immigration and border enforcement is spread out over many pathways in the US.<sup>16</sup> If an undocumented immigrant can be stopped by a police officer for jaywalking and asked to provide proof of citizenship status, then in some sense border enforcement occurs anywhere where someone can be asked for their status and deported as a result.<sup>17</sup> In this way, we can think about the border not only as a specific fence or building, but as a network of pathways traveled by deportable migrants. These pathways or patterns of bordering are what I am calling the *process-architecture*.

The border is difficult to localize in a single place. Elsewhere, I have argued for a much broader way of defining borders as practices or structures of social division.<sup>18</sup> This includes exclusion from a territory, but also political exclusion from the right to vote, legal exclusion from social services and economic exclusions from the means of production.<sup>19</sup> In short, I do not think we should think of the process of bordering as happening only at the territorial boundary or something only states do. As the English border theorist Chris Rumford points out:

Border studies now routinely address a wide range of complex “what, where, and who” questions. What constitutes a border (when the emphasis is on processes of bordering not borders as things)? Where are these borders to be found? Who is doing the bordering? It is still possible to ask these questions and receive a straightforward and predictable answer: “the state.” This is no longer a satisfactory answer. Seeing like a border involves the recognition that borders are woven into the fabric of society and are the routine business of all concerned. In this sense, borders are the key to understanding networked connectivity as well as questions of identity, belonging, political conflict and societal transformation.<sup>20</sup>

Accordingly, recent border theory has become significantly multidisciplinary.<sup>21</sup> The broader the phenomenon of bordering, the wider the overlap of border studies with other disciplines has

become. If we start studying civil borders inside states or looking at class, gender and racial borders enacted by non-state actors, then it is more important to bring sociologists, anthropologists, critical theorists, historians and lawyers together.<sup>22</sup>

However, as border theory has included new scales of analysis,<sup>23</sup> it has also, according to Newman, “experienced difficulties in fusing into a single set of recognizable parameters and concepts.”<sup>24</sup> In this chapter, I deploy the definition of the border I have developed elsewhere as a process and pattern of social division. In short, I argued in *Theory of the Border* that bordering is any process that introduces divisions or bifurcations in the ways that people move in the world. Instead of studying social exclusion theoretically, I have chosen to study it materially and structurally, looking at how it changes the circulation of bodies. In this chapter, I am calling this broader approach the study of *architectures of motion*.

My aim here is to show that even one of the largest and most expensive borders in the world does not function largely by stopping human and nonhuman mobility but by redirecting and shaping it into unique patterns of motion. For example, the official reason given by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in US for building the estimated US\$49 billion border wall was to ‘stop’ unwanted human migration from Mexico into the US. However, in addition to the fact that the US government’s own records indicate no conclusive reduction in non-status migration since the wall’s construction,<sup>25</sup> similar government reports have found that a variety of other ‘secondary’ phenomena have been much more pervasive. Since 1995 (the year after NAFTA and Operation Gatekeeper<sup>26</sup> went into effect) the number of border-crossing deaths increased and by 2005 had more than doubled.<sup>27</sup> Large numbers of immigrants with no criminal conviction have been detained, some up to a year.<sup>28</sup>

On top of these, the financial costs have been enormous but have made no contribution to deterring migrants.<sup>29</sup>

There is clear disjunction between the primary goal of the wall as the, “prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States,”<sup>30</sup> and the “secondary” effects of the wall (increased migrant deaths, incarceration, etc.). How, then, are people living in the US or Mexico supposed to understand the continued existence and function of the US–Mexico border wall? Is it a failure or a different kind of success? Furthermore, how are these people supposed to reconcile the failed strategic aims of the state to “stop migration” with the economic aims of those who employ non-status migrants and benefit from their precarious labor, which may further clash with the aims of the private security contractors whose aim is to make as much profit as possible from the efficient “catch and release”<sup>31</sup> of migrants? Immigration authorities ‘catch’ migrants in the US, and the US government pays private companies to transport and ‘release’ migrants 50 miles inside Mexico. The migrants frequently cross again and the catch and release cycle repeats.

Political discourse about the US–Mexico border wall is important to examine but cannot be fully understood without looking at the vast network of practical strategies and patterns of motion that support, and even clash with, the political rhetoric of ‘stopping’ migration. My point of analyzing the supposed aim of ‘stopping all unwanted migration’ is not to discover if this claim is true or false. Much of the critical work in border theory points to the demonstrable failure of the US–Mexico border wall to stop migration.<sup>32</sup>

The scholarly critique of the failure of the wall to stop migration misses the point. As long as government officials and the public keep thinking of the US–Mexico border in terms of success and failure, they can keep trying to fix it. However, if one flips the problem right-side-up, one can see that all the ‘secondary’ effects are actually the primary ones. This kind of study requires an analysis of the coexistent, intertwined and often-conflicting network of patterns that make up the concrete situation. By undertaking a study of the patterns of movement of people and things that do not presume the strictly repressive character of border power and thus the possibility of

its contradiction, it may be possible to study and resist the architectures of this power in a way that does not merely oppose power but can help construct a counter power.

To understand the concrete patterns of motion for the continued existence of the US–Mexico border wall, we should be careful not to merely react to the ‘failures’ and repressive techniques of the border wall. Critiquing this failure only presumes that borders and political power must be consistent or logical in order to function. The political power of governments, politicians and corporations function primarily in and through its breakdowns, conflicts and instabilities. If critique only locates the so-called “secondary” or “negative” effects that demonstrate the “failure” of the border wall, then it may not see how such “failures” function to keep borders working. My point in emphasizing the architectures of motion at the US–Mexico border is that its so-called *failures* are actually essential to its functioning. In other words, intended and unintended effects may not be the best way of thinking about how the US–Mexico border, or other borders, work. My question is, what kinds of patterns are at work, and how do they function? This chapter identifies four kinds of patterns at work at the US–Mexico border. I call them the funnel, the cage, the current and the pool and will discuss them in the next sections.

The US–Mexico border wall is not merely a physical barrier, or even just part of immigration enforcement, it is also part of a larger process of managing the relatively unpredictable movements of migrant populations. US border enforcement is trying to create environments at the territorial boundary and inside the country that shape the movement of immigrants. For example, the task of eliminating *all* unlawful entry, by *any* means necessary, as Michael Chertoff proposed during his six years as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, is as financially irresponsible as it is physically impossible.<sup>33</sup> The capitalist rationality of the private corporations that were contracted to build infrastructure, detain and deport migrants was different. Regardless of their rhetoric, capitalists knew total surveillance and control over human movement was impossible. Instead, they tried to achieve an optimal outcome in the most efficient way possible through the statistical control of the architectures of movement in the border environment.

The control over the border environment was attempted in the following ways by three major contractors hired by the US government to help secure the border in the last two decades. While the government agenda may have been to try and stop migration, the corporations likely knew this was not realistic, nor did that ultimately matter for them. The aim of private companies is profit. This is true even if it is not the psychological intention of any person or persons in the company. The function of private contractors is to *make money*, not to keep *all* migrants out of the US. Ending migration would destroy the security market. Therefore, the economic question is not how to stop migration but how to optimally (i.e. profitably) manage the security environment through the circulation of structurally unpredictable and unstoppable migrant mobility.

The Boeing Corporation was contracted to build a virtual fence for US\$850 million including vehicle barriers, radar, satellite phones, computer-equipped border control vehicles, underground sensors, 98 ft tall towers with high-powered cameras (including infrared cameras) and unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>34</sup> G4S/Wackenhut was contracted for five years at US\$250 million for the daily transport of thousands of migrants using 100 secure motor coach buses with state-of-the-art confinement systems, on-board digital/video surveillance, GPS tracking and over 270 armed security personnel.<sup>35</sup> Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and the GEO Group, Inc. two of the largest private prison corporations were contracted to build and house immigrant detainees, charging the government up to US\$200 a day per bed.<sup>36</sup>

The flourishing of these companies relies on and ensures the permanent circulation of migrant bodies from one side of the border to the other and back again, and from one institution to the next; each time extracting a profit. Undocumented migrants cross the border, are captured,

detained and transported to contracted prisons or detention centers, transported back across the border and released in a remote location, and then cross again. The death or permanent detention of migrants is not nearly as profitable or as possible as their optimal circulation through a secured environment/economy that profits from the perpetual catch and release of such “floating populations [*populations flottantes*].”<sup>37</sup>

### **What is kinetic architecture?**

I define kinetic architecture quite broadly as the patterns of moving bodies.<sup>38</sup> Using this lens to think about the US–Mexico border will help us see how it works much better than looking at how politicians say it works or how it was intended to work.

Kinetic architecture has a metastable structure. A metastable structure is a process that sustains a relative form of stability such as a whirlpool of water or smoke or an organism that consumes energy, uses some of it to reproduce itself, and expels the waste. The metabolic balance of input and output sustains an ever-renewed pattern. Kinetic architecture is not just a dynamic or mobile form, it is a metastable form. Building materials are in a continual process of decay and decomposition. For a building to remain in place, its materials must be continually supported, modified and repaired. Repair and reconstruction are deeply part of architectural practice and reveal its metastable nature.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the US–Mexico border is constantly being repaired by border officials because it is continually eroded by weather and damaged by migrants.

Erosion by wind, water and light act on and transform architectural structures. Some architects will even use erosion techniques in their building process.<sup>40</sup> If we were to watch a time-lapse video of an architectural structure and its landscape, we would see how human bodies circulate through and around it as water flows, pools and diffracts in a puddle around an eddy. Architecture is not solid, static or discrete.<sup>41</sup> It is processes and patterns of circulation that continually modify and mutate.

The French philosopher and founder of Actor-Network Theory, Bruno Latour, similarly, rejects the static view of objects, but instead proposes to replace it with a theory of “successive freeze-frames that could at last document the continuous flow that a building always is.”<sup>42</sup> A freeze-frame is the idea that reality is static like a photograph but only appears to move when the frames are run together as they are in a film strip. In my view, this “cinematic” approach is still a static one because each of the “freeze-frames” are still static. Border architecture is not static or a series of static freeze-frames but more like modulating waves in an ocean of microscopic and macroscopic movements.

In this sense, human bodies do not simply pass through architectural structures but help make them, break them and reshape them. For instance, migrants create trails through the desert across the border, burrowing under the US–Mexico border fence, and then repair the burrow so it will not be seen by the border patrol. This turns the border into a piece of Swiss cheese destabilizing and de-securitizing it to some degree. The border is a dialectical process of tunneling, patching and re-tunneling, ever-changing the infrastructure. Making tunnels creates holes and loosens dirt that makes the soil vulnerable to erosion. The ground becomes porous and vulnerable to flash flooding but has the outward appearance of being entirely stable because migrants often hide their holes.

### **The funnel**

The first pattern of motion at the US–Mexico border I want to look at is called the *funnel*. The border is almost 2000 miles long and consists of many different materials and constructions. The wires, posts and fences that imprisoned Japanese Americans during WWII were dug up from the deserts of Crystal City, California, and driven into the sands of the US–Mexico border.<sup>43</sup> The corrugated-steel panel material itself is made from metal landing mats used by helicopters

in Vietnam, fighter planes in the Gulf Wars,<sup>44</sup> and pontoon bridges and temporary bridges used by troops in WWII.<sup>45</sup>

The funnel is a kinetic shape that has emerged at several places along the border, including in the desert outside El Paso, Texas and San Diego, California. The “funnel” is the pattern of motion made by migrants moving away from urban areas that have higher immigration security, such as El Paso, and toward areas in the desert on both sides of the border that have much less immigration enforcement. Migrants are more likely to cross where they are less likely to be caught in the middle of the desert, but the desert is also extremely dangerous and many die trying to cross the ‘devil’s highway.’<sup>46</sup>

The location and precise structure of the funnel changes as border enforcement increases or decreases in certain locations. The shape and location of various funnel patterns can also occur due to natural alterations in the environment. Seasonal changes can make certain areas of the border fence hotter, colder or wetter to cross. Seasonal changes in the shape, depth and speed of the Rio Grande River that runs along the border can also funnel migrants toward more shallow areas. But if those areas become more securitized, migrants may be pushed into deeper, faster and more dangerous waters. The most remote areas of the US–Mexico border fence are the least frequently repaired from erosion and decay and thus create a funnel effect as well. Where there is harsher weather along the border, mortar crumbles faster. Rains and floods rot wooden fences, fires burn down buildings and towers, rust eats holes through fences and gates, and erosion removes dirt from underneath a building. All of these natural processes create little funnels and opportunities for migrants to cross. In Europe, similar seasonal weather patterns and security measures can create funnel effects driving migrants into dangerous waters.

Every physical border is subject to constant transformation, which has consequences for migrants who, for example, use these weak spots for crossing. The US government’s own reports found that the wall has been breached 9300 times between 2010 and 2015 and concluded that there was *no way* to determine whether the fence was helping to halt illegal immigration at all.<sup>47</sup> Another study showed that the success rate of illegal migration, on the second or third try, was up by 95%.<sup>48</sup>

It will cost taxpayers US\$6.5 billion over the next 20 years to maintain the fence along the US–Mexico border, according to a government audit.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the US government has spent US\$12.2 billion on border barrier construction between 2007 and 2019.<sup>50</sup> These repairs involve blocking animal migration corridors, destroying vegetation, obstructing waterways, filling in estuaries and increasing pollution and noise by forcing migrants and border patrol into more isolated wildlife habitats.<sup>51</sup> More recently, the Trump administration waived 41 environmental rules in order to allow for new border wall construction.<sup>52</sup>

The border is an architecture where many parties (migrants, animals, weather and border patrol) all negotiate the continual transformation of the pattern. Migrants dig holes under walls and fences or exploit natural erosion, and border patrol looks for the holes. Migrants try to cover up the holes, but if the border patrol find them, they will repair them until migrants, animals or erosion makes them again. Where the wall is least patrolled and most vulnerable to breaches is also where it is most dangerous for migrants to cross. This is what creates the funnel pattern that drives migrants into remote areas where they risk death.

The least patrolled area of the US–Mexico border is in the middle through the Sonoran Desert in Arizona (USA) and Sonora (Mexico). The nickname of this pathway is *El Camino del Diablo* (the Devil’s Highway) because it is notoriously dangerous to cross. In summer, temperatures soar to 120°F, and people require 2 US gallons of water a day to survive. Migrants die from dehydration, heat exhaustion, sunburn and hyperthermia. Human graves and the bleached skulls of animals litter the area.

By fortifying ports of entry around cities such as San Diego and El Paso and leaving open the desert, US–Mexico border patrol is effectively creating a giant architectural funnel. It is a giant death trap and a human rights atrocity. The US government has known about this since at least 1990 yet continually reproduces this structure.<sup>53</sup> During Donald Trump’s presidency, and still to some degree during Joe Biden’s presidency since January 2021, border patrol is turning away asylum seekers and migrants due to Covid-19. This pushes the most desperate migrants to try their luck crossing the most dangerous areas of the border. The more the ports of entry are restricted, the more the cities nearby are filled with rejected migrants. The more crowded the migrants are in these cities, the greater the danger of disease and violence. All this puts even more pressure on migrants to attempt the Devil’s Highway.

### **The cage**

The second border pattern I want to look at is the *cage*. The stated aim of the US–Mexico border is to prohibit unlawful entry and migration. However, the stricter the conditions for access become, the fewer migrants return to Mexico. Migrants worry, rightly, that if they go back to Mexico, they may not get back to the US again. This is why it is called the cage effect. The border funnels migrants into the US and then ‘cages’ them in.

Border architectures are maintained, reproduced, refueled, defended, started up, paid for and repaired. This is not a new phenomenon that applies only or mainly to contemporary borders. Management, in some form or another, has always been part of how borders work. The cage is not an accidental border pattern, but something that immigration enforcement continually reproduces and sustains. It functions to keep migrants inside the US, undocumented and available to be hyper-exploited by American companies. The cage pattern directly benefits the United States.<sup>54</sup> As Nick Vaughan–Williams writes:

None of these borders is in any sense given but (re)produced through modes of affirmation and contestation and is, above all, lived. In other words, borders are not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives.<sup>55</sup>

Paradoxically, the ‘tighter’ border security gets, the more flexible it becomes by increasing corruption, discrimination and bribery among border officials.<sup>56</sup> These, too, are part of the political architecture of the border and shape human flows. Even in US sanctuary cities, anyone can still report suspected migrants to federal immigration enforcement. If anyone can enforce a border, then one cannot limit it to a single wall. With the increasing Covid-19 restrictions at the border, migrants are even less likely to want to return to Mexico because they are now less likely to get back to the US again. This is an increased cage effect. Covid-19 borders may have also increased undocumented migration by leaving migrants fewer choices.<sup>57</sup>

### **The current**

The third type of pattern I want to look at is what I call the *current*. By the term current, I mean the way that border patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) work together to create an architectural *circulation* of human movement. The US–Mexico border is only one relay point along a path or current that works to criminalize migrants. The criminalization of migrants who have crossed the border without authorization allows private detention centers to incarcerate them and other private companies to deport them.<sup>58</sup>

Since the border is an architectural pattern, it is a continually changing process that alters who is included and excluded. Borders are never done including someone or something because borders are on the outskirts of society *and* within it. People also regularly change the selection process for deciding who gets included. In this way, the process of exclusion is also always being modulated by a variety of agents. Politicians pass laws, border patrol officers apply and bend them, but the material architecture and terrain also shape how migrants and border patrol can circulate.

Borders, both internal and external, cannot keep everyone in or out no matter what sovereign law decides. Migrant matter resists to varying degrees. The inability of borders to fully include or exclude is not just the contemporary waning sovereignty of post-national states;<sup>59</sup> borders have always leaked.<sup>60</sup> The so-called most outstanding examples of historical wall power such as Hadrian's Wall and the Great Wall of China were not meant to keep people out absolutely. Instead, their most successful and intended function was the social circulation of labor and taxes. This continues today with the US–Mexico border wall, and I will defend this argument later in the chapter. The success rate of illegally crossing is around 90%, according to several studies. Most of the traffic across the border is related to economic regulation. Thus, one of the main effects of borders is not keeping out but circulating bodies in a particular pattern: by criminalizing them, killing them or extracting a tax from them, as I discussed above.

But the circulation of bodies through borders is not just the ongoing process of dividing. Its architectures of division also have a direct effect on what is divided. The division is not a simple blockage – it is a redirection. What the border circulates does not stop after the division – it comes back again and again. Thus “it is the process of bordering,” as David Newman writes, “rather than the border line, per se, that has universal significance in the ordering of society.”<sup>61</sup> The border is the political architecture of reproducing the limit points, after which those who return can return again and under certain conditions as workers, criminals and commuters.

The border does not logically decide like a political sovereign who it includes or excludes, as the Italian philosopher Agamben says.<sup>62</sup> Instead, the border is a pattern-in-process that is continually redistributed by human, animal and environmental agents. Undocumented migrants, for example, are, for the most part, not stopped but rather redistributed as criminalized people into underground economies inside the US. Migrants are underpaid, overworked, nonunionized and hyper-exploited.

At some point, migrants are apprehended and detained by the private detention industrial complex. Private companies charge the government US\$200 per night per migrant, holding many migrants for more than a year. Eventually, migrants are deported by private deportation companies who profit from transporting migrants by bus and plane back to Mexico. Once officials release the migrants about 50 miles from the US border, migrants can cross the border again and repeat the process. This is the circulatory current of the deportation industrial complex. The spread of Covid-19 has added to the dangerous conditions inside detention centers and hastened deportation orders. As of 24 February 2021, 9569 ICE detainees have tested positive for Covid-19.<sup>63</sup> When officials deport infected migrants across the border, which is already happening, then they might infect others before crossing again. In which case, part of the circulation process is the circulation of disease.

## The pool

This brings us to the fourth architecture of motion at the border, the *pool*. The pool pattern emerges when groups of migrants and asylum seekers cannot legally cross the border and decide

to wait nearby. These groups of people are not static. They circulate in border towns that provide food, shelter and jobs while migrants wait for their asylum interviews.

The border does not necessarily stop people from moving but instead directs their circulation in an eddy or vortex pattern just outside the border. Border architectures concentrate prospective asylum seekers into “pools” at ports of entry in Tijuana and Brownsville. Asylum seekers have arrived at these destinations by the thousands between 2018 and 2021, fleeing political, climate and drug cartel violence in Central America. The reason for their pooling pattern at the US–Mexico border is that President Trump instituted a border program called Remain in Mexico, where migrants have to wait in Mexico while officials process their asylum cases. This process can take years. So far, only 0.1% of migrants out of the 47,000 in the program have been granted asylum since 2018.<sup>64</sup>

As I write this in 2021, 10,000 migrants are waiting in Tijuana. Now that Joe Biden has been elected, migrants and allies hope that he will change the “Remain in Mexico” policy put in place under Trump. Others without resources live in tent cities with limited access to clean drinking water, electricity, toilets, food and education. Drug cartels take advantage of this pooling up of bodies by kidnapping, extorting, raping and murdering migrants.

The concentration of migrant bodies in the border zone outside the port of entry in Tijuana is also polluting the environment and creating a health hazard. When there are heavy rains in Tijuana, they flood the migrant encampments, and the shallow sewage systems overflow everywhere. The *pool* is not a metaphor. These camps are literally pools of water and waste that are endangering migrants.<sup>65</sup> There is no drainage of water and no drainage of movement of migrants out of the camps. They have nowhere to go. Some may take their chances in the funnel or the cage. Others may get sucked into the deportation industrial current. However, most stay and wait in squalor and depend on aid organizations from the US to survive. Migrants in the camps in Tijuana are not static. There is a border architecture of movement that pools them and circulates them in a small region like a flow of water pools and spirals into an eddy when it hits a barrier.

Due to fears of Covid-19, Trump invoked a law called Title 42 that allows border officials to directly expel migrants without formal processing in cases of national health emergencies.<sup>66</sup> So far Biden has continued to use this law as well. However, the Center for Disease Control has publicly said that asylum seekers pose no health risk.<sup>67</sup> Officials have expelled more than 204,000 people under title 42.<sup>68</sup> Deported migrants are now pooling up and circulating in Tijuana and border towns during a global pandemic where disease could break out and spread through the cities and camps. Although asylum seekers do not pose a health hazard to the US, the US does pose a health hazard to asylum seekers, migrants and Mexican citizens living near ports of entry. Covid-19 cases are now on the rise in Tijuana migrant camps due to US policy.<sup>69</sup>

### **Political fluid dynamics**

Politics is not just about ideology, and architecture is not merely about buildings. Architecture is fluid dynamics. Fluid dynamics is the study of flows and fluids such as air and water. Social life comprises patterns of circulation that shape urban space and shapes people in return. These are what the study of architectures of motion look at.<sup>70</sup> In addition to analyzing what politicians say about borders or what borders are supposed to do, we need to see how they fit into larger landscapes and architectures of process and circulation.

Landscapes and architectures are fluid in ways similar to patterns in water and air. Humans are, after all, natural entities flowing along with the rest of the world. Why should landscape and architecture be any different? A dramatic example of this is the US government’s attempt to change the naturally ‘secure’ topology of the border outside San Diego. The government



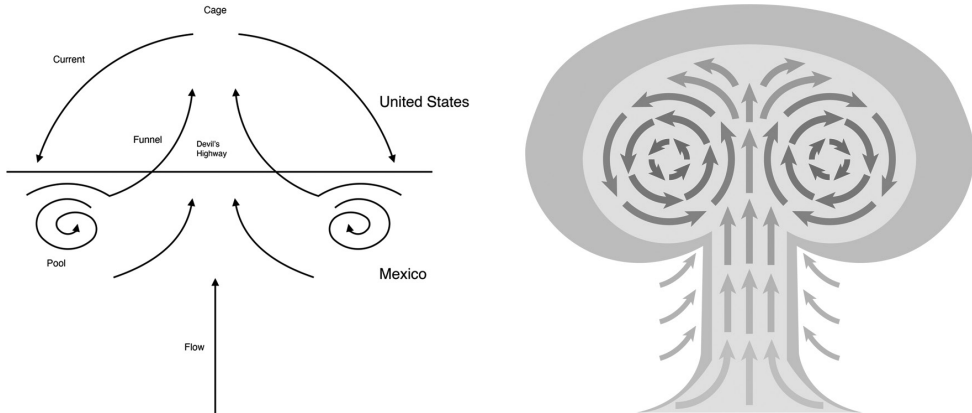


Figure 12.1 Left: migrants from Mexico “flow” toward the US. They are either “funneled” toward the Devil’s Highway or “pooled” up in border towns. If they make it into the US, they are “caged” by the risk of not being able to return. If they are apprehended in the US, they are deported by private contractors in a “current” back to Mexico where they circulate in “pools” around border towns. Diagram by Thomas Nail. Right: Mushroom Cloud. Inside a rising mushroom cloud: denser air rapidly forces itself into the bottom center of the toroidal fireball, which turbulently mixes into the familiar cloud appearance. Public domain. Source: “Mushroom cloud,” WikimediaCommons.

moved two million cubic yards of earth (enough dirt to fill the Empire State Building) from a nearby mountain top. Within a few months, the soil eroded and destroyed the new roads and the whole ecology.<sup>71</sup> If topsoil flows with the movement of rainwater and part of the border is its topsoil, then the border’s security is also ecological and fluid. The political security of the border is directly subject to fluid dynamic patterns. By ignoring this, border officials undermined the whole topology and fluid dynamics of that area of the border.

There is also a macroscopic fluid dynamics of the border patterns that I described above. By mapping them as patterns, we can see how the three architectures of motion I described above fit together as parts of a larger fluid dynamic pattern that involved the whole US–Mexico border, including inside the US.

In Figure 12.1, we can see how the patterns are not linear but vortical. Migrants can end up at any point in the vortical rings. They can be funneled, caged, detained, deported or end up circulating in a border pool. They might even go through every stage of the process more than once. The key idea is that the whole process is part of the political architecture of movement. Just as water runs downhill and pools, architectures of power shape the political landscape and topology to shape people’s movement.

### Borders as tools of primitive accumulation

What do these four patterns of motion do together in this larger pattern? Their function is similar to what the German philosopher Karl Marx called “primitive accumulation.”<sup>72</sup> They circulate dispossessed migrants for the purpose of social and economic exploitation just as borders have done throughout history.

Marx develops the concept of primitive accumulation from a passage in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, “[t]he accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labour.”<sup>73</sup> In other words, before humans can be divided into owners and workers, there

must have already been an accumulation such that those in power could enforce the division in the first place. The “superior” people of history naturally accumulate power and stock and then wield it to perpetuate the subordination of their inferiors. For Smith, this process is simply a natural phenomenon: powerful people always already have accumulated stock, as if from nowhere. For Marx, however, this quote is perfectly emblematic of the historical obfuscation of political economists regarding the violence and expulsion required for those in power to maintain and expand their stock. Instead of acknowledging this violence, political economy mythologizes and naturalizes it. For Marx, the concept of primitive accumulation has a material history. It is the precapitalist condition for capitalist production. In particular, Marx identifies this process with the expulsion of peasants and indigenous peoples from their land through the physical and legal borders of enclosure, colonial dispossession and anti-vagabond laws in 16th Century England. Marx’s thesis is that the condition of the social expansion of capitalism is the prior expulsion of people from their land and from their legal status under customary law. Without the expulsion of these people, there is no expansion of private property and thus no capitalism. Borders and enclosures are the material techniques for creating these expulsions and expanding various forms of power.

My thesis here is that we should think of borders as mobile tools not just of economic accumulation, but of social accumulation more broadly. This is what I call *expansion by expulsion*.<sup>74</sup> My idea of expansion by expulsion broadens Marx’s idea of primitive accumulation in two ways. First, the process of dispossessing people of their social status (expulsion) in order to further develop or advance a given form of social motion (expansion) is not at all unique to the capitalist regime of social motion. The same social process occurs in early human societies where the progressive cultivation of land and animals (territorial expansion) and the material technology of fencing also territorially expelled a part of the human population. This included hunter-gatherers whose territory was transformed into agricultural land, as well as surplus agriculturalists for whom there was no more arable land left to cultivate at a certain point.

In this way, social expulsion was the condition of social expansion in two ways: it was an internal condition that allowed for the removal of part of the population when certain internal limits had been reached such as the carrying capacity of a given territory. And it was an external condition that allowed for the removal of part of the population outside these limits when the territory was able to expand outward into the lands of other groups such as hunter-gatherers. In this case, territorial expansion was only possible on the condition that part of the population was expelled in the form of migratory nomads, forced into the surrounding mountains and deserts.

Later, the same logic of social expansion by expulsion occurred in the ancient world. There the dominant *political* form, the state, would not have been possible without the material technology of the border wall that fended out enemies and held some of them captive as political dispossessed barbarian slaves kidnapped from the mountains of the Middle East and Mediterranean. The social conditions for the expansion of a growing political order, including warfare, colonialism and massive public works, were the expulsion of a population of barbarians who had to be walled out and walled in by political power. This technique occurs again and again throughout history with different borders and distinct kinds of domination, as I have tried to show in my work.<sup>75</sup>

Another difference between Marx’s idea of primitive accumulation and my broader one here is that this process of prior expulsion or social deprivation noted by Marx is not only territorial or juridical, and its expansion is not only economic. Expulsion does not simply mean forcing people off their land, although in many cases it may include this. It also means depriving people of their political rights by walling off the city, criminalizing types of persons by the cellular techniques of enclosure and incarceration, or restricting their access to work by identification

and checkpoint techniques. Mexican migrants are similarly deprived of their political rights, criminalized for crossing the border and economically exploited.

In other words, expulsion is the degree to which a political subject is deprived or dispossessed of a certain status in the social order. Accordingly, societies also expand their power in several major ways: through territorial accumulation, political power, juridical order and economic profit. What is similar between the theory of *primitive accumulation* and my idea of borders as *architectural patterns of expansion by expulsion* is that most major expansions of social power also require a prior or primitive violence of social expulsion. The border is a pattern of movement and a social regime that directly enacts this expulsion. The concept of primitive accumulation, as Marx uses it, is merely one historical instance of a more general border logic at work in the emergence and reproduction of societies. In short, the expansion of societies uses borders such as fences, walls and checkpoints to produce a system of marginalized territorial, political, legal and economic minorities that can be more easily recirculated elsewhere as needed. In the case of the US–Mexico border pattern, migrants are circulated back and forth across the border as criminalized and depoliticized bodies. As I described above, each one of these patterns of circulation work together to keep migrants utterly vulnerable for the maximum extraction of profit from the detention-labor-deportation circuit. The larger logic at work is one of economic rationality.

## Conclusion

This chapter offered a movement-oriented analysis of the US–Mexico border’s political architecture. In particular, I emphasized how the US’s response to the coronavirus has intensified all these patterns. The results of this intensification have been devastating for migrants and asylum seekers. A large part of border architecture now operates in a zone of national and international legal suspension.

I have tried to show that if we want to see how the political architecture of borders works, we need to look at the bigger picture of interlocking circulation patterns and their function as mechanisms of primitive accumulation.

The following findings have emerged from my analysis. Despite political rhetoric to the contrary, I argued we should think of the US–Mexico border as a kinetic architecture made of patterns of motion including the funnel, the cage, the current and the pool. Borders are not good at stopping people but circulating them. In the case of the US–Mexico border, these circulatory patterns create an interlocking system similar to the well-known fluid dynamic pattern of the mushroom vortex. The political function of this interlocking set of patterns is to forcibly expel migrants from one place and redirect them to others where they can be optimally exploited by the capitalist process.

## Notes

- 1 International Organization on Migration, “Global Mobility Restriction Overview,” 25 February 2021. <https://migration.iom.int/reports/covid-19-travel-restrictions-output—22-february-2021?close=true>
- 2 See later in this chapter for more details on this issue.
- 3 “Portugal minister says Spain requiring COVID-19 test at border ‘a mistake’,” *Reuters*, June 7, 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugal-minister-says-spain-requiring-covid-19-test-border-a-mistake-2021-06-07/](http://www.reuters.com/world/europe/portugal-minister-says-spain-requiring-covid-19-test-border-a-mistake-2021-06-07/).
- 4 Phillip Connor, “More than Nine-in-Ten People Worldwide Live in Countries With Travel Restrictions Amid COVID-19,” *Pew Research Center*, April 1, 2020, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/01/more-than-nine-in-ten-people-worldwide-live-in-countries-with-travel-restrictions-amid-covid-19/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/01/more-than-nine-in-ten-people-worldwide-live-in-countries-with-travel-restrictions-amid-covid-19/).

- 5 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 376.
- 6 The way the eye moves in response to architectural forms is called *expressed movement* in the literature. For a review of the architectural literature on expressed movement, see: Adam Hardy, “The Expression of Movement in Architecture,” *Journal of Architecture* 16, no. 4 (2011): 471–97. August Schmarsow described expressed motion in the following way:

We cannot express its relation to ourselves in any way other than by imagining that we are in motion, measuring the length, width and depth or by attributing to the static lines, surfaces and volumes the movements that our eyes and our kinaesthetic sensations suggest to us, even though we survey the dimensions while standing still.

August Schmarsow, “The Essence of Architectural Creation (1893),” in *Empathy, Form and Space*, trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 291

Geoffrey Scott, in the first and most eloquent application of empathy theory to architecture in English, echoes Schmarsow, calling space “the very centre of architectural art” and observes that “we adapt ourselves instinctively to the spaces in which we stand, project ourselves into them, fill them ideally with our movements.” Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism* (London: Constable, 1914), 223. Scott evokes concepts of expressed movement already proposed by German writers.

- 7 For a full treatment of the spatial bias in border theory, see Linn Axelsson, “Temporalizing the Border,” *Dialogues in Human Geography* 3, no. 3 (2013): 324–326; 324: “There is a tendency to privilege space and spatialities in geographical analysis of borders.”
- 8 Castells, *Rise of the Network Society*, 376.
- 9 For examples of the metaphorical usage of concepts of mobility and fluidity, see: John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2. See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2013), 2: “to deploy ‘fluidity’ as the leading metaphor for the present stage of the modern era.”
- 10 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), Chapter 26.
- 11 Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); and Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 12 Nail, *Theory of the Border*.
- 13 Nail, *Theory of the Border*, Chapters 7–10.
- 14 Most of border theory before 1980 has been a history of state borders. For a review of this literature, see Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- 15 “As with the idea of ‘Neo-Medievalism,’ history may give us some clues as to what to expect [of the future of post-Westphalian borders].” John Williams, *The Ethics of Territorial Borders: Drawing Lines in the Shifting Sand* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 17–18.  
For modern borders, see: Nail, *Theory of the Border*, 165–202.
- 16 Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London and New York: Verso, 2011).
- 17 Nicholas Genova, “Migrant ‘Illegality’ and Deportability in Everyday Life,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 419–47.
- 18 Nail, *Theory of the Border*.
- 19 Nail, *Theory of the Border*.
- 20 Chris Rumford, “Seeing like a border” in Corey Johnson, Reece Jones, Anssi Paasi, et al, “Interventions on Rethinking ‘the Border’,” *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 68.
- 21 For an excellent review and bibliography of multidisciplinary border scholarship please see Chris Rumford, “Seeing like a border” in Corey Johnson, Reece Jones, Anssi Paasi, et al, “Interventions on Rethinking ‘the Border’,” *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 68.
- 22 David Newman, “On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no. 1 (2003): 16.
- 23 Borders often happen far away from territorial limits and fluctuate based on risk assessments. As Alison Mountz writes:

processes of searching and scanning, detention and deportation that are located far away from the visible policing of the border line. In effect, within these global and data-driven systems, border lines are drawn via the association rules between items of data.

Alison Mountz, "Border Politics: Spatial Provision and Geographical Precision," in Corey Johnson, Reece Jones, Anssi Paasi, et al, "Interventions on Rethinking 'the Border' in Border Studies." *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 61–69; 64.

See also Didier Bigo, "When Two Become One: Internal and External Securitizations in Europe," in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, Security, and Community*, eds. Morten Kelstrup and Michael Williams (London: Routledge, 2000), 171–204; and Mathew Coleman, "Immigration Geopolitics Beyond the Mexico–US Border," *Antipode* 39, no. 1 (2007): 54–76.

24 Newman, "On Borders and Power," 16.

25 US Government Accountability Office, "Secure Border Initiative: Technology Deployment Delays Persist and the Impact of Border Fencing Has Not Been Assessed," September 17, 2009, [www.gao.gov/products/gao-09-1013t](http://www.gao.gov/products/gao-09-1013t).

26 The US government under President Bill Clinton dramatically increased border security in 1994 with Operation Gatekeeper and the first stretch of fence between San Diego and Tijuana.

27 US Government Accountability Office, "Illegal Immigration: Border-Crossing Deaths Have Doubled Since 1995; Border Patrol's Efforts to Prevent Deaths Have Not Been Fully Evaluated," August 15, 2006, [www.gao.gov/products/gao-06-770](http://www.gao.gov/products/gao-06-770):

The Border Patrol's policy of *prevention through deterrence* has resulted in the purposeful displacement and diversion of migrants into more treacherous and dangerous zones to cross, such as deserts, rivers, canals and rugged terrain, which from 1993 to 2008 resulted in more than 5000 deaths along the US–Mexico border, a doubling in the number of deaths of border crossers.

See also: Maria Jimenez, "Humanitarian Crisis: Migrant Deaths at the US–Mexico Border," *The ACLU of San Diego*, October 1, 2009, [www.aclu.org/legal-document/humanitarian-crisis-migrant-deaths-us-mexico-border](http://www.aclu.org/legal-document/humanitarian-crisis-migrant-deaths-us-mexico-border), 5.

28 "[O]f the detainee population of 32,000, 18,690 immigrants have no criminal conviction. More than 400 of those with no criminal record have been incarcerated for at least a year."

US Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, "Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Tracking and Transfers of Detainees," March 2009, <https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/library/P3676.pdf>, 2.

29 "[D]espite a \$2.6 billion investment, it cannot account separately for the impact of tactical infrastructure." US Government Accountability Office, "Secure Border Initiative: DHS Has Faced Challenges Deploying Technology and Fencing Along the Southwest Border," May 4, 2010, [www.gao.gov/assets/gao-10-651t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-10-651t.pdf), 1.

30 H.R.6061 - Secure Fence Act of 2006, [www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/6061/text?overview=closed](http://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/6061/text?overview=closed)

31 "Chertoff: End 'Catch and Release' at Borders." *Associated Press via Fox News*. October 18, 2005. Last modified July 18, 2015.

32 See Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (London: Verso, 2017); and John Washington, "What Would an Open–Borders World Actually Look Like?" *The Nation*, April 24, 2019, [www.thenation.com/article/archive/open-borders-immigration-asylum-refugees/](http://www.thenation.com/article/archive/open-borders-immigration-asylum-refugees/).

33 Chertoff said he would "Return every single illegal entrant – no exceptions." "Chertoff: End 'Catch and Release' at Borders." *Associated Press via Fox News*. October 18, 2005. Last modified July 18, 2015. [www.foxnews.com/story/chertoff-end-catch-and-release-at-borders](http://www.foxnews.com/story/chertoff-end-catch-and-release-at-borders).

34 Brian Bennett, "Government Pulls Plug on Virtual Border Fence: High-tech Boeing Project Beseet with Problems," *The Spokesman-Review*, October 22, 2010, [www.spokesman.com/stories/2010/oct/22/government-pulls-plug-on-virtual-border-fence/](http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2010/oct/22/government-pulls-plug-on-virtual-border-fence/).

35 Brenda Norrell, "Privatizing Misery, Deporting and Imprisoning Migrants for Profit: The Hidden Agenda of the Border Hype: Security Guards and Prisons in the Dollars-For-Migrants Industry," *The Narco News Bulletin*, August 25, 2007, [www.narconews.com/Issue46/article2769.html](http://www.narconews.com/Issue46/article2769.html).

36 Detention Watch Network, "Immigration Detention 101," accessed May 23, 2011, <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/detention-101>

37 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France*, ed. Michel Senellart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 18.

38 For a history of art and architecture as patterns of motion, see Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

39 Hilary Sample, *Maintenance Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).

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# 13

## BELFAST'S 'PEACE WALLS'

### How the politics and policy of 1969–1971 shaped the city's contemporary 'interface areas'

*James O'Leary*

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the political and policy circumstances that led to the construction of the first contemporary 'peace wall' in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It outlines the escalation of political tensions in the key time frame between 1969 and 1971, resulting in the policy response in the form of the (then) secret Taylor Report (1971) which aimed to address problems arising in areas of confrontation in the city. Through a close reading of the Taylor Report and a survey of the contemporary landscape of the Falls-Shankill area of the city, I argue that this policy document effectively engendered a new class of defensive spaces in Belfast, one that we now recognize as 'interface areas.' Responding to the thematic section of *Security and Borders* in this handbook, I highlight how an overly narrow focus on security issues framing this policy document ultimately led to further separation and polarization of communities in Belfast, concretizing border conditions that had previously been fluid and amorphous.

#### **Unplanned opening**

On 7 April 2021, following a series of protests against the 'Northern Ireland Protocol' of the UK Brexit Withdrawal Agreement, gangs of young people met on either side of a metal barrier in Belfast and started a riot. The specific location was at Lanark Way, a road connecting the Springfield Road to the Shankill Road in the west of the city. The riots were focused on a set of solid sheet-metal gates which form part of a 'peace line,' an ad-hoc linear construction of 'peace walls,' barriers, gates and control points, which together separate the Catholic, Nationalist, Republican (CNR) Falls area of the city from the Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) Shankill area. The Lanark Way gates are open during the day (Figure 13.1), but close regularly at night or, as in this case, when violence erupts on the streets. News footage broadcast on the day following the riot shows people on both sides of the gate throwing stones, bricks and petrol bombs. The gates were then set alight and rammed with a hijacked vehicle, forcing the gates open and thereby forming an unplanned opening in the 'peace line' for the first time in many years. Normally considered more than robust, the Falls-Shankill 'peace line' has been comprehensively dividing these adjacent areas for over 50 years. Built primarily of concrete and steel, this structure





Figure 13.1 The condition of the Falls-Shankill 'peace line' at the Lanark Way gates, Belfast. Photograph by James O'Leary (2020).

is currently approximately 1.6 km long and up to 14 m high in places.<sup>1</sup> It is one of many major security barriers or 'peace walls' in Belfast currently in existence.

The idea of these barriers, that is, the imposition of control over movement through the construction of divisive architectural structures is not a new one. Indeed, the separation walls of Belfast share many characteristics with numerous counterparts all over the world, where walls and barriers are built between countries as well as within cities, with the aim of controlling immigration, reducing crime, minimizing violence, increasing a sense of security, restriction of movement and the exclusion of the unwanted.<sup>2</sup> Similar material divisions can be observed at the neighborhood level in ethnically or politically divided cities such as Belfast, Baghdad, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia, where inter-communal rivalry over the years has led to physical urban segregation.<sup>3</sup> This chapter examines a single Belfast 'peace wall' which separates the predominant CNR and PUL ethno-religious groups in this part of the city. These constructions are an ongoing attempt by the British and Northern Irish governments to create a constructed urban solution to the armed conflict in Northern Ireland known as 'the Troubles,' and its contentious aftermath. The peace walls operate as a static part of a wider control system that includes video surveillance systems, deployable blocking structures, gates, vehicles and human agents of the state, tasked with the management of public order in contested areas of the city.<sup>4</sup>

The peace walls can therefore be understood as a material residue of 'the Troubles,' a 30-year period of civil unrest and armed conflict across Northern Ireland – and, occasionally, in the Republic of Ireland and mainland Britain – which left thousands dead or severely injured. The Belfast peace walls are unique in strategies of post-war city division in that they do not construct a more or less continuous line of demarcation between two opposing forces or communities, such as in Berlin (1961), Nicosia (1974) and Beirut (1975) for example. Instead, the Belfast peace walls are an accumulation of multiple, local divisions and barriers scattered throughout

the north, west and eastern parts of the city that only rarely coalesce to form a continuous linear barrier.<sup>5</sup> As such, they are scattered, multifarious, inconsistent, porous and, sometimes, intangible. Peace walls occur almost exclusively in less affluent parts of the city, and they generally follow established boundary lines between residential enclaves that have developed over the periods before and during the Troubles. In the most comprehensive mapping of these structures to date, the Belfast Interface Project in 2017 identified 99 individual structures across the city that form a highly visible and material evidence of conflict in the city, despite the attempts to rebrand itself as a post-conflict 'new Belfast,' open to the latest forms of capital investment, restructuring and tourism.<sup>6</sup>

Peace walls are brutal, and they offer a brutal simplicity – they reduce potential complexity. By their nature they tend to construct opposing sides, offering up a clarity of perimeter conditions and demarcating a 'place of control' or a 'place of sanctuary,' depending on your point of view. Peace walls have multiple functions, depending on their location and condition. While mainly performing the role of a simple barrier between residential areas to prevent pedestrian incursion and the passage of thrown projectiles, some function as roadblocks that completely stop all traffic flows between enclaves. Where there are through-roads between areas, gates, such as those at Lanark Way, are strategically located to regulate both pedestrian and vehicular traffic during specific daylight hours of operation. These gates generally close completely at night, forming an impermeable barrier throughout their length. The peace walls thus have an inbuilt porosity that can be controlled directly by the security forces and managed in response to perceived security threats. In periods of anticipated unrest, many openings are shut and locked to reduce the likelihood of spontaneous riots. All the while, such threats can be observed in real-time by an extensive, remotely monitored video surveillance system. Within minutes of the breach being detected on Lanark Way on 7 April 2021, a tight line of Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) vehicles formed an interim barrier between the opposing groups and rammed the gates back into their closed position, reforming the physical barrier between the two communities that has existed, in one form or another, since at least 1969.

This chapter further examines the sequence of events from which grew the strange urban conditions that now exist in this part of Belfast, which, due to the unprecedented levels of urban unrest in a hugely challenging political context, engendered the very first contemporary peace wall constructed in Northern Ireland. It further outlines the escalation of political tensions in Belfast in the key time frame between 1969 and 1971, resulting in the policy response in the form of the (then) secret Taylor Report that aimed to address the problems of rioting and confrontation in areas of the city.<sup>7</sup> Responding to the thematic section of Security and Borders in this publication, I highlight how an overly narrow focus on security issues framing this policy document ultimately led to further separation and polarization of communities in Belfast, concretizing border conditions that had previously been fluid and amorphous. Through a close reading of the Taylor Report and a survey of its outcomes on the contemporary urban grain of West Belfast, I explain how 'temporary' partitions in Northern Ireland constructed to contain escalating sectarian violence at the time quickly expanded from simple lines to complex zones of permanently fractured urban geography now known as 'interface areas.' I argue that rather than addressing the key factors leading to the sectarian strife and division at the time, the Taylor Report set in train principles of policy that activated further processes of separation and division – exacerbating the very problems it was trying to address. Through the construction of physical walls and barriers, the closing off of roads and the construction of gated access between areas and the making of 'cordon sanitaires' between conflicted areas of the city, the urban fabric of Belfast was reorganized, destroying its permeability and capacity for interconnection and effectively constructing parallel 'single identity' enclave communities that rarely interact with



Figure 13.2 The Falls-Shankill 'peace line' along Cupar Way (formerly Cupar Street), Belfast. Photograph by James O'Leary (2020).

one another. Ironically, the peace walls are now magnets for riots at times of unrest, most recently in 2021, in reaction to the Northern Ireland Protocol of the UK Brexit Withdrawal Agreement. The evidence of this process is clearly marked in contemporary Belfast by the current length, height and reach of the Cupar Way peace wall (Figure 13.2), which snakes through West Belfast, dividing the broadly CNR community of the Falls from their predominantly PUL neighbors in the Shankill.<sup>8</sup> This chapter focuses tightly on the policy decisions taken at this time, rather than examine these events from a wider 'communities' point of view.

### August 1969

It was rioting in another city in Northern Ireland – specifically 'the Bogside' area of Derry/Londonderry from 12 to 14 August – that was the major catalyst for a breakdown in social order across Northern Ireland in 1969, with specific ramifications for Belfast, more specifically, the Falls-Shankill area.<sup>9</sup> During these riots, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) used tear gas for the first time in their history to try to bring the rioting under control.<sup>10</sup> As news spread of the violence and the police response, Nationalists throughout Northern Ireland began to engage in civil disorder in an attempt to weaken local policing resources, and the conflict spread quickly across Northern Ireland.<sup>11</sup> As the rioting continued, and with the unrest becoming more unmanageable, the Northern Ireland (NI) government felt that they did not have sufficient resources to address the scale of the unfolding situation. The NI Prime Minister of the time, James Chichester-Clark, officially requested that the British Labour Government commit the British Army to the streets of Northern Ireland to assist the RUC,<sup>12</sup> and on 14 August 1969 the army duly arrived in the province, while the Battle of the Bogside was still raging.<sup>13</sup> Although it

was considered a limited operation to restore law and order, they could not have known that this deployment, which became known as Operation Banner, would become the longest continuous deployment in British military history.<sup>14</sup>

Partly in response to the Battle of the Bogside, rioting subsequently broke out in Belfast along the Shankill, Divis and Crumlin Roads. An official deployment of British troops throughout Belfast took place during the latter part of 15 August, when the British Army began to patrol the streets with the sole aim of keeping the peace and maintaining order and to support the existing civic authority.<sup>15</sup> According to a *Belfast Telegraph* special newspaper report entitled 'Peace on the Peace Lines,'

[t]he first 'peace line' was made up of a human chain of soldiers from the Third Battalion of the Light Infantry, who took up positions between Loyalist and Republican crowds on Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969 – the day the Army was sent onto the streets of Belfast.<sup>16</sup>

On the same day, many houses on Bombay Street in West Belfast were set on fire – an event that would become known as the Bombay Street Burnings, where 44 of 65 houses on the street were 'burned out.' In the following three days of riots across Belfast, ten people were killed, 1500 families fled their homes, 600 houses were badly damaged, of which 170 were beyond repair.<sup>17</sup> The following day, Saturday, 16 August, a meeting of the Cabinet Security Committee at Stormont recorded the following minutes: "the possibility of sealing-off access to the Falls from the Shankill to prevent infiltration was also to be investigated."<sup>18</sup>

### **Informal barricades**

Throughout the late summer of 1969, communities in Belfast responded to the increased sectarian violence by constructing their own informal barricades along the entrances and exits of their areas.<sup>19</sup> This tendency started in CNR communities and consisted of informal and ad-hoc barriers made of available materials including burned out cars and buses, paving stones, household furniture and barbed wire.<sup>20</sup> These tactics were quickly adopted by PUL communities, which ultimately resulted in large areas of working-class Belfast being inaccessible to police or army intervention.<sup>21</sup> This inaccessibility may have led to an increased level of attacks on housing, with many families burned out of their homes, which continued the ratcheting up of increased population segregation in these areas. Attacks occurred on both sides, with the resulting housing evictions leaving Belfast Corporation with "8000 families on its housing list."<sup>22</sup> The extent of the damage was recorded three years later when a commission of enquiry led by Lord Scarman concluded that "1.6 percent of all households in Belfast had been forced to move between July and September 1969 [...] the biggest recorded population movement in Europe since the Second World War."<sup>23</sup>

### **Perimeter definition**

The construction of temporary street barriers renewed an ongoing process of definition of ethno-religious boundaries in Belfast. Paul Doherty and Michael Poole assert that residential segregation patterns have been in existence in Belfast since the birth of the city.<sup>24</sup> Brendan Murtagh describes an ongoing *ethnic sorting process* that has been proceeding for centuries in Belfast and suggests that the current peace lines and interfaces in Belfast are the consequences of what he describes as "an incomplete ethnic sorting process."<sup>25</sup> Frederick Boal and David Livingstone state that "territorial purification occurred where Roman Catholics and Protestants

living outside their respective territorial cores retreated into them for safety.”<sup>26</sup> While locals retreated into their own areas in search of security, physical barricades constructed by anxious residents appeared along the perimeters of enclave areas. These barricades grew organically and combined to form a series of linked perimeter barricades, which delineated the edges of what became *single identity* residential enclaves, defined as ‘no go areas’ for anyone other than local residents, who monitored and checked access at the perimeter.

### Policy action

By early September 1969 it was clear to Chichester-Clarke that the barricades would need to be removed. Realizing that access to these conflict zones was essential to enact strategic control over the rival areas, the Stormont Government proposed to remove the community-constructed barricades and formalize the divisions with a newly constructed peace line, over which they had complete control, particularly around interface areas where sectarian violence was concentrated. On 9 September 1969, Chichester-Clarke met with the Joint Security Committee to discuss measures to be announced at a television broadcast that evening, in which he directly addressed the citizenry of Northern Ireland. The Army General Officer Commanding (GOC) Ian Freeland provided details of the new measures to be introduced to deal with the civil unrest, including that a peace line was to be established in West Belfast. Conclusions from the meeting noted:

A peace line was to be established to separate physically the Falls and the Shankill communities. Initially this would take the form of a temporary barbed wire fence which would be manned by the Army and the Police. [...] It was agreed that there should be no question of the peace line becoming permanent although it was acknowledged that the barriers might have to be strengthened in some locations.<sup>27</sup>

Chichester-Clarke’s television broadcast also stated how the peace line between the Falls Road and the Shankill Road was to be drawn “along a line agreed by a representative body from City Hall”<sup>28</sup> and that the local barricades must be removed:

Come down they must, because law and order must now be assured again, not in parts of our city, but throughout. There is no political justification for barricades, whether in Roman Catholic or Protestant streets. Nor need there be a fear of their removal provided this is coupled with an absolute guarantee that a massive operation will be mounted under the GOC as commander of all security forces, to give the people now behind them an assurance of protection.<sup>29</sup>

### Peace line construction

The following day, at 4.30 pm on Wednesday, 10 September 1969, British Army Engineers, escorted by Grenadier Guards, started work on what became known as the peace line in two locations in West Belfast. Working from either end of a line on a map drawn up at City Hall, the engineers emplaced steel posts drilled into the road surface, and then unrolled coils of barbed wire between the posts to create a linear barrier and thereby sever connections between the opposing areas. This was how the first of Belfast’s many contemporary peace walls came into being. The initial peace line was 0.9 km in length and was consistent as an obstacle in order to ensure no incursions of residents between the Falls Road and the Shankill Road. It was

described as a “barrier, 5ft. high, consisting of two lines of barbed wire strung between solid steel posts embedded in the ground. Down the middle more barbed wire is strewn in coils.”<sup>30</sup> The line was drawn “from Cupar Street [...] to Coates Street.”<sup>31</sup> British troops manned the construction 24 hours a day. At this point, the construction was considered a temporary measure. Chichester-Clark and the Joint Secretary had agreed in their meeting on the 9 September that “there should be no question of the peace line becoming permanent.”<sup>32</sup> Reporters asked GOC Ian Freeland during a press meeting whether the construction could be comparable to the Berlin Wall separating East and West Berlin. He responded that the “peace line had been very carefully drawn. It would be very, very temporary and consist mainly of barbed wire.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Barricade removal**

After some initial reluctance on the part of both PUL and CNR communities to remove the barricades, a week of negotiations saw an agreement reached on 17 September when residents groups, the British Army and the Northern Ireland government all agreed to barricade removal and full implementation of the peace wall construction process. This agreement meant that the peace line could be completed as planned.<sup>34</sup> Following the construction of the first peace wall of ‘the Troubles’ era, there was general consensus from the military that the initial peace line would be removed by Christmas, and the city would return to a degree of normality in a couple of months.<sup>35</sup> However, as the following New Year passed, the ‘temporary measure’ of the peace wall was already starting to look like a fiction.<sup>36</sup> In late January 1970, a journalist from the Irish Press questioned Prime Minister Chichester-Clark about the timeline for dismantling the peace line:

*Journalist:* When do you anticipate the so-called ‘peace line’ will be removed and the British Troops will withdraw from patrol duty in Belfast and Derry?

*Chichester-Clark:* It is very difficult to be specific about a relaxation of general security measures. The dismantling of the ‘peace line’ and the withdrawal of troops must be a gradual process, but I would hope that the general easing of tension in the community might enable some relaxation to be made in the not-too-distant future.<sup>37</sup>

### **Tentative expansion**

Subsequent events reflect how naively optimistic Chichester-Clark’s assessment of the situation was. Less than a few months later, as violent gangs targeted increasingly segregated neighborhoods, the army took the decision to construct another peace wall in North Belfast.<sup>38</sup> On 3 July 1970 a second peace line was constructed by the British Army consisting of barriers which were “eight feet high and [...] built of tubular steel scaffold poles and corrugated iron”<sup>39</sup> at the Hooker Street, Herbert Street and Disraeli Street areas, close to the intersection of the Crumlin Road.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, as well as this new construction, they also extended the original Cupar Street wall “east to close Millfield [...] to prevent crowds from each faction closing in on each other’s territories.”<sup>41</sup> While this erection of a more materially substantive and visually opaque barrier might have been a cause for concern locally, the construction of this second peace wall was somewhat overshadowed by events just further south in West Belfast. Between the 3rd and 5th of July, the British Army changed their tactics, with GOC Sir Ian Freeland announcing a local curfew, which placed approximately 20,000 members of the CNR community in the Lower Falls area of West Belfast under ‘movement restriction.’<sup>42</sup> Over the course of three days, five civilians were killed, a further 60 were injured,<sup>43</sup> while the army suffered few casualties.<sup>44</sup> In military terms, the ‘curfew’ was considered a success, as the army produced a haul of weapons in

house-to-house searches of the area, but in political terms it was a disaster, alienating the CNR community and embedding a more active resentment of the military authority.

These events led to the definitive end of the British Army 'honeymoon period,' which was replaced with an increasing sense of animosity and, in some cases, open hostility in CNR communities across Belfast in relation to the army forces on the ground.<sup>45</sup> The ensuing public disorder over the summer of 1970 led to further division of communities resulting in increased "targeting of the adjacent community."<sup>46</sup> By October, in an indication of acknowledgment of the longer than anticipated time frame required to ease tensions in the communities, Minister of Home Affairs John D. Taylor was asked by the Stormont Government to chair a Joint Working Party to consider future policy approaches to areas of confrontation across the region.<sup>47</sup> The recommendations of the Report of the Joint Working Party on Processions, etc., entitled 'Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation' (Taylor Report), had major and long-term implications for future peace wall policy.

### **Politics and policy: Context to the development of the Taylor Report**

The Taylor Report was delivered in a unique political context, considering the escalation of violence and questionable systems of governance in Northern Ireland at that time. In January 1971 there were major riots in the Ballymurphy area of Belfast, followed by riots in Ardoyne and Shankill Road, where buses were hijacked, and the army were showered with missiles.<sup>48</sup> On 6 February, the killing of Gunner Robert Curtis (the first British soldier to be killed in 'the Troubles') by the IRA sent shock waves through the Northern Ireland political system. On 2 March, Lieutenant-General Harry Tuzo took over as British Army *General Officer Commanding*, following the announcement that the former GOC Sir Ian Freeland needed to step down due to extreme stress.<sup>49</sup> Although the Stormont Government had responsibility for the (now disarmed) RUC, the army was taking direct orders from the Ministry of Defence and the Westminster Government in London. Chichester-Clark flew to London on 18 March 1971 to ask for more troops, a total curfew in Catholic areas, saturation raids, searches and a much bigger role for the Ulster Defence Regiment.<sup>50</sup> Edward Heath rejected these demands and Chichester-Clarke resigned on 20 March 1971. Three days later, Brian Faulkner was elected leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and was appointed Prime Minister on the same day.<sup>51</sup>

It is in this unprecedentedly chaotic context that the Taylor Report is published on 19 April 1971, with the terms of reference "to consider ... the existing areas of confrontation and peace lines and to advise as to future policy."<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that there seems to have been some tensions in the working party, which had representation from the Stormont administration, the British Government, the RUC and the British Army.<sup>53</sup> Taylor notes in his covering letter of the report to Faulkner that "the United Kingdom office's representative (Mr. Anthony Hewins) was unable to agree with some of our conclusions affecting the longer-term issues and thus submitted a Minority Report."<sup>54</sup> It is worth looking at the report in some detail, as it remains the key piece of governmental thinking that articulates the proposals to deal with areas of confrontation at that time. The repercussions of the recommendations of this document would be felt throughout the city, impacting on road construction proposals, placement of industrial zones, construction of 'cordon sanitaires' between communities, all of which contributed to the further congealing of the ongoing segregation patterns across the city. The document is broken down into two sections, the Majority Report, which totals 26 pages, and the Minority Report, to which two pages are allocated.

### **'Future policy on areas of confrontation' – Majority Report**

In defining the approach to the problem, Taylor states that “we have thought it right to consider the problem first and foremost in the security context and in the relatively short-term” but cautions the consideration of “problems of security in isolation from a whole complex of issues which bear upon them.”<sup>55</sup> Of the then-current security control measures, he states that the most “spectacular and controversial” was the peace line in Belfast.<sup>56</sup> He suggests that “the popular concept of the peace line as a continuous physical structure, a kind of Ulster ‘Berlin Wall’ is wide of the mark,” stating that “we are satisfied that these physical structures have on the whole served their purpose of preventing major sorties by hostile crowds from one area to another and preserving Security Forces’s (sic) manpower.”<sup>57</sup> However, the following paragraph contains a caveat and a warning:

we must point to the grave disadvantages of being forced to rely upon such measures much longer. It is an ugly thing to see a barrier of this kind in a city in the United Kingdom. While it helped to reduce tension, its continued existence one moment longer than necessary creates an atmosphere of abnormality which is psychologically damaging.<sup>58</sup>

The threat of violence of the upcoming Loyalist Marching Season was pressing heavily on the working party, and they recommended that “the peace lines (...) should remain in place for the time being but that the situation should be reviewed after 1 September 1971.”<sup>59</sup> Taylor further suggests that everything possible should be done to create an atmosphere in which it might be possible thereafter to contemplate some change, citing “facilitating discussion between communities” as something that should be encouraged.<sup>60</sup> However, a formal structured process of inter-community dialogue does not form part of the report recommendations. He also sees the redevelopment of large areas of housing planned for these areas as a potential solution to the problem. While initially toying with the idea of integrative housing and education proposals, he deems them to be “premature in the current context.”<sup>61</sup> Instead, Taylor asks for the (then-current) redevelopment plans for the city to be reexamined “from a security standpoint,” stating:

We would consider it essential to provide in the re-development for the maximum natural separation between the opposing areas. By this we mean that if the areas are to keep essentially their present characters, and if the ugly and psychologically damaging features of the peace line are not to be retained, prudence would point to the wisdom of some sort of physical ‘*cordon sanitaire*’.<sup>62</sup>

Taylor continues by suggesting that the major sensitive areas of Belfast need to be separated from each other with effective buffer zones.<sup>63</sup> He proposes that housing schemes should be revised to provide more open space, particularly on either side of the new natural barrier. In relation to the area between the Falls and the Shankill, he also calls for reducing the number of open routes between them.<sup>64</sup> Looking ahead to the longer term, Taylor concludes that the solving of the various issues in confrontation areas will take some time:

while allowing time for the healing effects of political, social and economic advance to become apparent – there may be no alternative to increasing, rather than discouraging segregation through the creation of ‘natural’ barriers. This may sound like a rather negative approach, but we believe it is a realistic one.<sup>65</sup>





Figure 13.3 The current condition of the Falls-Shankill 'peace line' at the junction of Kashmir Road and Cupar Way, Belfast. Kashmir Street formerly connected the Falls and the Shankill, but is now a truncated road. Photograph by James O'Leary (2020).

As Taylor summarizes the main recommendations, it is possible to identify multiple prongs of a strategy defined by the need to command and control public space in Belfast, using extensive high-level planning initiatives that encompass major road engineering design, urban planning and separation measures. The major decision of the report related to the peace walls is to keep them in place. Increasing segregation through further separation and buffering of communities is considered paramount. Curiously, the construction of new walls is not addressed. What the Taylor Report thus instigated was a change in spatial emphasis from the 'line' of the 'peace line' to the 'zone' of the 'cordon sanitaire.' *This effectively engendered a new class of defensive and separatist spaces in Belfast, one that we now recognize as 'interface areas.'* This urban condition – a kind of 'no man's land' adjacent to the peace lines – instigated a pattern that proliferated across north, west and east Belfast over the next decades: a pattern of division on an urban infrastructural scale.

This strategy had a profound impact on the areas concerned (Figure 13.3), sundering the natural connectivity of the built urban environment and reinforcing territorial enclave mentalities. While much of the recommendations are urban planning-related, there appears to be no urban planners in the working party, just a single representative from the Ministry of Development. This reinforces how strongly security-focused the working party is, to the exclusion of other factors which may give a more holistic view. In the report, Taylor recommends the work of Prof. Burton, who at the time is Director of the (now defunct) Centre for the Analysis of Conflict at University College London. In 1983, Burton would write about the dangers of making policy decisions with a limited range of input:

[People] tend to perceive situations in a limited context, to seek limited remedies for problems and generally to reduce seemingly complex variables to simple proposition

[...] This lack of a holistic view obviously leads to superficial, false and often damaging policy decisions.<sup>66</sup>

### **Minority report**

What is fascinating to see is that this obvious limitation in the process is identified in the report itself, in the form of the Minority Report by A. Hewins Esq. In this damning two-page section Hewins takes issue with the recommendations, suggesting that in certain respects the working party had “exceeded its brief.”<sup>67</sup> Having addressed what he perceives as the lack of specific development expertise of the working party, Hewitt then takes aim at the specific proposals:

I find myself in disagreement on the proposals that the divisions in the community should be accepted as a feature of life which must inevitably persist for a hundred years or more. This seems a counsel of despair. A despair which, it is proposed, should be expressed in terms of bricks and mortar.<sup>68</sup>

In summing up, Hewitt acknowledges the temporary usefulness of the peace line but cautions its prolonged use, suggesting that the resultant separated communities might transform into “sources of major discontent.”<sup>69</sup> This insightful and far-reaching prediction closes the report, and it is difficult to argue with its wisdom in hindsight. Although not enshrined in any official policy or legislation, the impact of the ‘Taylor Report’ was profound for Belfast and Northern Ireland, generally. It set in train a policy of reinforcing community division and separation that is visible to this day (Figure 13.4).



*Figure 13.4* The current condition of the Falls-Shankill ‘peace line’ at the junction of Kashmir Road and Cupar Way, Belfast. Photograph by James O’Leary (2020).

## Breakdown

The working party's decision to wait until 1 September 1971 to reexamine the question of peace walls had some merit. Following the reintroduction of 'Internment without trial' in August 1971, and the events of Bloody Sunday in January 1972, there was a persistent upsurge of violence across Northern Ireland. In response, the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, announced the dissolution of Stormont and the introduction of direct rule from London on 24 March 1972.<sup>70</sup> From this point onwards, policy and decision-making for Northern Ireland became the sole responsibility of the British Government based in Westminster, with a commensurate lack of local representative participation and accountability.<sup>71</sup> All policy decisions regarding peace walls were, from this point forward, taken by the newly established Northern Ireland Office (NIO) supervised by a new Secretary of State for NI, in consultation with the RUC and British Army. The local community and politicians were only informed about the proposed construction of a peace wall after the decision had been taken.<sup>72</sup> With a wearying regularity, the pattern of peace wall construction would repeat, so that by the end of the 1970s, there would be a total of 18 major security barriers across north, west and east Belfast, and the peace walls would form a part in a wider system of defensive and separatist architecture throughout Belfast.

## Contemporary Belfast: A city of walls

On 10 September 2019, on the 50th anniversary of the start of construction of the Falls-Shankill peace line, I led a walk along its 1.6 km length, passing through a vast semiotic field of flags, graffiti and murals as we moved between the CNR and PUL sides of the wall. The 'peace line' that started as a human chain of soldiers, and materialized as a line of barbed wire in September 1969, is now a giant linear structure of numerous connected walls in concrete and steel that continue to slowly accrete and change over time. Although mute, these walls communicate through their opacity, scale and material condition. Massive in scale, they generate 'shadow spaces' and voids marked by dereliction and abandonment (Figure 13.5), generating nervous looks from the audience as we walk through them.<sup>73</sup> As we move along, we sense how the walls, through their opacity, eliminate any sense of a visual connection to the adjacent local landscape. This quality is an important aspect of why these areas are selected for sites of protest in the recent 2021 anti Northern Ireland Protocol rioting. Throwing a brick over a wall is easier if one cannot see the faces on the other side.

In this contemporary urban condition of Belfast, Victorian cottages sit 'cheek by jowl' with large industrial units. Walled-off merchant's suppliers and scaffolding companies form strange and unexpected cul-de-sacs in the road network. The once-integrated urban grain and street pattern, so legible on historical maps, is torn asunder. As we walk, we realize that we are in the '*cordon sanitaire*.' In what we now recognize as an 'interface area' we see the material remains of things burned, structures fallen, alignments disconnected and communities separated. During the walk we discuss how, in May 2013, the office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the NI Assembly announced its Together: Building a United Community Strategy (T:BUC), in which it outlined its goal to "Create a 10-year programme to reduce and remove, by 2023, all interface barriers" in Northern Ireland.<sup>74</sup> We discuss the difficulties of this process from the various communities points of view and the difficulties embedded in such a strict timeline. We finish the walk at the Lanark Way gates, upon which is spray-painted the legend, "THERE WAS NEVER A GOOD WAR OR A BAD PEACE."

This large format text formed the backdrop to the recent (2021) anti NI Protocol rioting, providing a less than subtle reminder that a lasting peace is no certainty in this place, particularly in the wake of Brexit, where the NI Protocol has created a new trade border between Northern



Figure 13.5 The current condition of dereliction adjacent to the Falls-Shankill 'peace line' at Cupar Way, Belfast. Photograph by James O'Leary (2020).

Ireland and the rest of the UK. This imposition has angered some in the PUL community, who feel that this change has eroded the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom and draws it closer to the Republic of Ireland, making eventual Irish unification more likely. In other words, the issue has united the Unionist political parties in a common point of grievance, with the peace walls performing the role of symbolic perimeter within which these new political subjectivities are constituted and enclosed. This points to the manifold functionality of the peace walls in the contemporary time frame. No longer acting simply as brutal territorial barriers, they increasingly play the role of performative backdrop for the events, images and videos required for 21st Century strategic communications targeting the overload of the 24-hour news cycle. In this context, the material solidity of the peace walls can gesture toward the nostalgic certainties of a 'hard' border, in an era of increasingly digitized and porous border conditions.

Over 50 years on from the Taylor Report and nine years into the ten-year T:BUC program of barrier removal at the time of writing, only a few peace walls have been removed.<sup>75</sup> The majority of the peace walls continue to perform their role as state-sanctioned system of division and control that demarcates and reinforces the territorial segregation of ethnic groups in various 'pockets' across the city (Figure 13.6).

Peace walls are a cheap solution to a difficult problem. Unarguably, they prevent damage to property and probably saved lives during the conflict. They offer a sense of boundary clarity for these communities and undoubtedly contribute to a sense of security and, increasingly, a benefit through tourism.<sup>76</sup> However, they are visual and material proof of the ongoing lack of reconciliation in the wake of the NI 'Peace Process.' They act as magnets for clashes and riots in times of unrest, completely mask any visual connection to 'other' communities and close off a grid of natural road connections, thereby furthering and reinforcing division. They have a detrimental impact on the health and social well-being of the inhabitants of the interface areas



Figure 13.6 The Falls-Shankill 'peace line' in its urban context in West Belfast. Composite drawing by James O'Leary, based on Google Maps satellite information (2019).

in which they are sited, hampering any redevelopment initiatives. Although initially relatively cheap to construct, maintenance costs are expensive, as is the doubling up of services that the walls necessitate. The cost of division in Northern Ireland has been estimated at £1.5 billion a year, but what is the cost of a potentially 'shared future'?<sup>77</sup> Physical partitions are often presented by authorities as temporary solutions to immediate problems of security or unrest, but as Hastings Donnan and Neil Jarman claim, barriers "institutionalize distinctions and divisions, [...] and often exacerbate the very tensions they were intended to alleviate or prevent."<sup>78</sup>

So, why do divisive architectural systems with a history of replicating the very thing they seek to resolve continue to be built? The answer lies in the expediency of immediate intervention trumping the often-prolonged difficulty of dealing with these issues by other means – through dialogue, negotiation and formal political processes. As Calame and Charlesworth conclude, divided cities are "not aberrations. Instead, they are the unlucky vanguard of a large and growing class of cities" where inter-communal rivalry has led to physical segregation.<sup>79</sup> Unless these difficult 'other means' of dialogue and negotiation are embraced, the situation in Belfast is likely to become a pattern all too easily replicated elsewhere, with predictably similar consequences.

## Notes

- 1 "Annual Report, 2014," International Fund for Ireland, accessed 12 January 2022, [www.internationalfundforireland.com/annual-report](http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/annual-report).
- 2 Peter Marcuse, "Walls as Metaphor and Reality," in *Managing Divided Cities*, ed. Seamus Dunn (Keele: Ryburn Publishing, 1994), 41–52.
- 3 For in depth studies of each of these cities, see: Jon Calame, and Esther Charlesworth, *Divided Cities: Beirut, Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
- 4 For an immersive reading of the conditions across multiple interface clusters, see: James O'Leary, "The Interface: Peace Walls, Belfast, Northern Ireland," *FOOTPRINT* (2016): 137–44.
- 5 I am referring here to the imposed divisions of the Berlin Wall (1961–1989), Beirut Demarcation (or Green Line) (1975–1990) and the Nicosia Green Line (1974–present day).
- 6 "Interface Barriers, Peace Lines and Defensive Architecture, Belfast, 2017," *Belfast Interface Project*, accessed 3 March 2022, [www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/interfaces-map](http://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/interfaces-map).

- 7 This document was finally released into the public domain by the Public Records Office in Northern Ireland (PRONI) only in 2017, after a 46-year embargo.
- 8 This chapter can further be read in conjunction with the 'Peacewall Archive' [www.peacewall-archive.net] which examines the architectural and urban impact of 'peace wall' development in Belfast more widely, using maps, photography and a media library to examine the full proliferation of 'peace walls' and separation barriers throughout the city. *Peacewall Archive* www.peacewall-archive.net. Curated by James O'Leary.
- 9 I am grateful to Dr Martin Melaugh and the team at CAIN for their invaluable 'Chronology of the Conflict' section of the CAIN website, against which the events in this section were cross-checked. "A Chronology of the Conflict – 1968 to the Present," *CAIN Archive*, accessed 7 May 2021, <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/chron.htm>.
- 10 Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland, 1969–1985* (London: Methuen, 1986).
- 11 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*.
- 12 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*.
- 13 Shortly after 1700 hours local time, 300 troops from the first Battalion, Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, occupied the center of Derry-Londonderry, replacing the exhausted police officers who had been patrolling the cordons around the Bogside.
- 14 Andrew Sanders, *Times of Troubles: Britain's War in Northern Ireland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
- 15 Michael Dewar, *The British Army in Northern Ireland* (London: Arms & Armour Press, 1985).
- 16 Emily Ravenscroft, "The Meaning of the Peacelines of Belfast," *Peace Review* 21, no. 2 (2009): 213–21.
- 17 Ciarán Mackel, "Documenting Belfast's Peace Walls," Video presentation at 'Your Place or Mine' Conference, April 18 2012, RIA Dublin. Retrieved from YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoAoPSk\\_Kk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoAoPSk_Kk). Accessed 26 November 2019.
- 18 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland – HA/32/2/55.
- 19 I am grateful to Ruairi Small and Jonny Byrne, for detailed accounts of the development of the 'peace walls' outlined in their M. Res and PhD work, respectively, from which this sequence is abridged. See: Ruairi Small, "Belfast 'Peacelines' 1969–1994," (M. Res diss. (unpublished), Queens University Belfast, 2015); and Jonny Byrne, "The Belfast Peace Walls: Problems, Politics and Policies of the Troubles Architecture" (PhD diss. (unpublished), University of Ulster, Belfast 2011).
- 20 Calame and Charlesworth, *Divided Cities*.
- 21 John Darby, *Intimidation and the Control of Conflict Northern Ireland* (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).
- 22 John Clare, "Chichester-Clark to see Callaghan on Ulster Riots," *The Times*, August 8, 1969, 2.
- 23 Ed Maloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (London: Penguin, 2003), 68.
- 24 Paul Doherty and Michael Poole, *Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast*, (Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict 1995).
- 25 Brendan Murtagh, *The Politics of Territory: Policy and Segregation in Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
- 26 Frederick W. Boal and David N. Livingstone, "The Frontier in the City: Ethnonationalism in Belfast," *International Political Science Review* 5, no. 2 (1984): 171.
- 27 Transcript of Prime Minister Chichester-Clarke's television broadcast of 9th September 1969.
- 28 John Clare and David Wilsworth, "Army 'peace line' to replace barricades across Belfast," *The Times*, August 10, 1969, 1.
- 29 Irish Times, September 11, 1969. The full installation is described as: "from Cupar Street on the Springfield Road and goes from David Street, Conway Street, First Street, Howard Street, Northumberland Street and Percy Street – with a final line to be decided by the Corporation by there – to Coates Street."
- 30 John Clare, "Army 'Protestants dismantling barricades,'" *The Times*, September 11, 1969, 1.
- 31 Irish Times, September 11, 1969.
- 32 Conclusions of a meeting of Joint Security committee held at Stormont Castle on Tuesday, 19 August 1969 at 12 noon. 19 August 1969 (P.R.O.N.I. HA/32/3/2).
- 33 Clare, "Army 'Protestants dismantling barricades,'" 1.
- 34 For a more detailed description of the barricade removal process and the actors involved, please see: Ruairi Small, "Belfast 'Peacelines' 1969–1994," M. Res Thesis (unpublished) Queens University Belfast, 2015.
- 35 Byrne, "The Belfast Peace Walls," 31.

- 36 It is worth speculating here as to whether the narrative of the 'peace line' as a 'temporary' solution was something that was genuinely believed by the GOC, the Army and the Stormont Government or whether this narrative was 'sold' to the public in order to lessen the psychological impact of the imposition of the 'peace line' and thereby lessen potential resistance to it. I have found nothing in my research to suggest a 'long-term' plan for the 'peace line.' Equally, there was never any publicly stated timeline for removal until 2013.
- 37 Irish Press, 21 January 1970.
- 38 David Barzilay, *The British Army in Ulster, Vol. 3* (Belfast: Century Books, 1978).
- 39 Irish Times, 4 July 1970.
- 40 Location identified in map in *Irish Times*, 7 April 1972.
- 41 The second 'peace wall' and the extension to the first were erected just before the 12th of July Orange Order 'marching season.' *The Times*, 13 July 1970.
- 42 It is indicative of the lack of governmental oversight of the army's operations that this decision was taken by Freeland without consultation with any Stormont Government minister. Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 37.
- 43 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 37.
- 44 Patrick Buckland, *A History of Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981).
- 45 Buckland, *A History of Northern Ireland*.
- 46 Peter Shirlow and Brenden Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 72.
- 47 Byrne, "The Belfast Peace Walls," 34.
- 48 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 44.
- 49 "Sir Ian Freeland—Testing time in Ulster." Obituaries. *The Times* (60482). London. November 23, 1979. col F p. IV.
- 50 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 50.
- 51 Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 50.
- 52 John Taylor, 'Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation,' Second (and final) Report of the Joint Working Party on Processions, etc, 1971 (1971 PRONI:CAB/1634/3 P.1).
- 53 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 5.
- 54 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 3.
- 55 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 9.
- 56 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 9.
- 57 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 10.
- 58 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 11.
- 59 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 12.
- 60 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 12.
- 61 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 12.
- 62 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 18.
- 63 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 20.
- 64 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 21.
- 65 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 23.
- 66 John Wear Burton, *Resolving Deep-Rooted Conflict: A Handbook* (Lanham, MD: University Press of Amer, 1987), 130.
- 67 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 27.
- 68 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 28.
- 69 Taylor, "Future Policy on Areas of Confrontation," 28.
- 70 Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon, and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland, 1921–1996: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London: Serif Publishing, 1996).
- 71 Brigid Hadfield, ed., *Northern Ireland: Politics and the Constitution* (Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 1992).
- 72 Byrne, *The Belfast Peace Walls*, 38.
- 73 The term 'shadow spaces' was first suggested to me by Ciarán Mackel, at the presentation "Documenting Belfast's Peace Walls," Video presentation at 'Your Place or Mine' Conference, April 18 2012, RIA Dublin. Accessed 26 November 2019. Retrieved from YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoAoPSk\\_Kk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoAoPSk_Kk).
- 74 Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister, "Together: Building a United Community Strategy," 23 May 2013. Accessed 10 February 2016, [www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/publications).

Belfast's 'peace walls'

- 75 For a catalogue of 'peace wall' removals, see: Peacewall Archive, Curated by James O'Leary. Accessed 7 May 2021, [www.peacewall-archive.net](http://www.peacewall-archive.net).
- 76 There are 350,000 visits to Cupar Way each year. As noted in Byrne, "The Belfast Peace Walls," 123.
- 77 For an outline of the 'shared future' narrative and policy in Northern Ireland, see: Brian Graham and Catherine Nash, "A Shared Future: Territoriality, Pluralism and Public Policy in Northern Ireland." *Political Geography* 25, no. 3 (2006): 253–78.
- 78 Donnan Hastings and Neil Jarman, "Ordinary Everyday Walls: Normalising Exception in Segregated Belfast," in *The Walls Between Conflict and Peace*, ed. Alberto Gasparin (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 238–60.
- 79 Calame and Charlesworth, *Divided Cities*.





## PART IV

# Race, identity and ideology



# INTRODUCTION TO RACE, IDENTITY AND IDEOLOGY

*Stephen F. Gray and Anne Lin*

The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 prompted a massive global reckoning – including within design disciplines – to understand, grapple with and acknowledge the need to subvert systems and practices of oppression, reorienting the world from a ‘color-blind’ ideology which views race as incidental toward one of explicit anti-racism.<sup>1</sup> Tapping into long-standing traditions of Black activism and liberation,<sup>2</sup> the momentum gained by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the US has also materialized internationally, exposing the complex transnational apparatuses by which identity and race operate.<sup>3</sup> This global response of solidarity with Black Americans has highlighted a broad and pervasive familiarity with race- and identity-based oppressions experienced by marginalized people across political and cultural geographies. These public displays of empathy, expressed in and beyond Anglophone contexts such as the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and France, have served to highlight how deeply the intertwined roots of colonial power and oppression run.<sup>4</sup>

As protests, marches and demonstrations ignited across the globe, design institutions – representing both professional practice and higher learning – have also turned their attention to issues of race, acknowledging the fraught relationship of racial ideology to the production of space, positioning designers to finally address their contributions to, and complicity with, structural and infrastructural racism.<sup>5</sup> This ideological turn has nudged spatially oriented disciplines away from good intentions and toward *intentionality* in identifying ways to dismantle the politically constructed, geographically inscribed practices and cultures of design that reproduce the control and uneven deployment of physical space in service of colonialism, imperialism, racism, capitalism and a suite of interconnected forms of political ordering.<sup>6</sup>

The chapters in this section examine the various ways in which ideologies of power manifest and endure through the design, construction, oversight and readaptation of physical infrastructures, with a specific focus on the interplay between race, identity, ideology and the production of space. The wide-ranging geographic and cultural contexts within the “Race, identity and ideology” section together highlight common themes such as identity-based subordination, cultural erasure and narrative control, as well as more place-specific and heterogeneous processes in contexts as diverse as industrial landscapes (Mirjana Lozanovska); mass housing in Eastern Europe (Maroš Krivý); Western Europe (Tahl Kaminer) and the US (Lawrence Vale); and public spaces featuring monuments or other physical icons of identity (Catherine D’Ignazio, Wonyoung So and Nicole Ntim-Addae). While divergent in focus, each

chapter parses apart both the externalities and individual actors implicated in the politicization of space and of design practices. The authors evaluate specific examples and sites to consider the ways in which the work of architects and planners intersects with ideologies of identity and oppression. The designers and academics in this section unpack the role and influence of built environments as well as those responsible for designing and shaping them. By examining various territories and scales of politicization, this introduction specifically considers how historic structures of global oppression have informed the articulation of sociopolitical identities as well as various supremacies of space.

Architecture and urban space are generally treated as neutral backdrops to the actions of explicitly political actors, ignoring their instrumentality in the promotion and imposition of normative values.<sup>7</sup> Considering the political and cultural agency of built infrastructures – and the designers involved in constructing them – this introduction pushes back on the fallacy that architectural edifices operate as passive scenery to societal flash points and moments of collective agitation. Whether demanding racial justice on the National Mall – arguably the quintessential intersection of political identity and public space in the US, as the site of landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial – in 1963 Washington DC, or protesting for democracy, free speech and a free press at Tiananmen Square in 1989 Beijing, or human rights at Tahrir Square in 2011 Cairo – architecture and urban spaces have been symbolic platforms for both ideologies of oppression and of people-powered resistance. The influence of racial and ideological hierarchies on the development of physical landscapes bears out across time and space, positioning built environments to be the mediators between political agendas and the social arrangements fashioned to realize, maintain and justify them.

Foundational to these areas of inquiry is an understanding of race and identity as social constructs – products of the political milieu from which categories of aggregation and difference are created – and, as relevant to this volume, the same context within which planners and designers operate. Architecture and physical infrastructures reflect – and in some cases bolster – underlying social hierarchies, sometimes in overlapping and intersecting ways. Kimberle Crenshaw, pioneering scholar of critical race theory and Black feminist legal theory, introduced the concept of “intersectionality,” which explains the erroneousness in treating political identities as mutually exclusive analytical categories, particularly considering the mutability of those categories in social life and institutions.<sup>8</sup> Crenshaw uses the example of discrimination against a Black woman whose identity is both racialized and gendered – two intersecting characteristics which are experienced and thus operate in the aggregate and in often-compounding ways. Beyond the legal context in which the concept of intersectionality was first introduced, the design disciplines are part and parcel of the institutional machinations that maintain forms of systemic oppression.

This introduction provides an overview of the ways in which architecture and planning are involved, through the following sections. “Racialized spaces and spatialized identities” analyzes specific buildings and monuments, outlining their relation to normative values and to forms of collective identity. This section also introduces American Studies scholar and professor of Black Studies George Lipsitz’s notion of the “white spatial imaginary” (as reflected in many of the sites and spaces discussed therein) as well as the conceptual counterpoint and potentially radical point of departure represented by the “Black spatial imaginary.”<sup>9</sup> Lipsitz’s seminal idea of the “spatial imaginary” is then expanded to imperialist and post-colonial contexts around the world which have also imbued physical spaces with the supremacies of identity-based ideologies. The next section, “Ideologies of the ‘spatial imaginary’ and mechanisms of oppression and control,” explores the interplay between broader ideologies of place and the cultural and physical imprints of the mechanics of oppression, including the material consequences of racialization

and spatial inequality and the specific mechanics through which the design disciplines inform and perpetuate various supremacies of space.

### **Racialized spaces and spatialized identities**

Physical space operates as the primary site of intervention – and inquiry – for designers and planners. By examining the specific geographic domains of planning and design, the driving motivations for shaping physical spaces can be unpacked, in addition to the cultural values and hierarchies embedded within those underlying assumptions.

Some of the most enduring sites of oppression operate on the smallest of scales. Monuments offer a particular view into the ways in which political institutions can define public value and meaning – that is, which histories and whose legacies deserve to be made visible. In analyzing the historic, geographic and cultural contexts in which these public objects are constructed, it becomes possible to see how ostensibly celebratory sites can be wielded as emblems of state-sponsored suppression and control. In the US, for example, more than 1500 Confederate monuments and memorials were erected in public spaces between 1860 and 2015 – in parks, trails, schools, courthouses and even US military bases.<sup>10</sup> Beginning during Reconstruction, a period of time following the end of the US Civil War, and continuing into the Jim Crow era, which legalized racial segregation decades later, white Southerners embarked on a centuries-long campaign to rewrite history.<sup>11</sup> To obscure and justify the racialized dimensions of the Civil War conflict, Confederate allies conjured up notions of a Lost Cause based on ‘state sovereignty’ and ‘national heritage’ – that is, they deliberately and disingenuously recast historical narratives and cultural identities to reframe slavery as an unfortunate by-product of the war, rather than the explicit aim. In their chapter, “The audit: perils and possibilities for contesting oppression in the heritage landscape” about US monuments, the urban planning and data science research team of Catherine D’Ignazio, Wonyoung So and Nicole Ntim-Addae evaluate the assumptions and implications laden in the symbolic transformation of public spaces to ‘heritage’ landscapes and the sociopolitical dynamics under which these landscapes can become spaces of contestation. Their chapter introduces the idea of “auditing heritage landscapes,” and documenting and holding society to account for the extent to which settler colonialism, white supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy have dominated and erased alt-histories and identities – a phenomenon so commonplace in US physical landscapes as to evade critical discussion in many situations.

A similar, albeit dramatically grander monument-making campaign of *statuomania* – a term coined by political, cultural and social scholar of French history, Maurice Agulhon, to describe a 19th and early 20th Century uptick in European monument-making – was epitomized by the French following the end of WWI.<sup>12</sup> Erecting more than 36,000 commemorative monuments both domestically and within colonized territories, particularly in Algeria, French colonizers took part in a much larger European campaign of spatial expropriation and cultural branding to impose both physical and cultural dominance in colonial territories.<sup>13</sup> To be clear, physical monuments did not create the cultural and institutional forces of white supremacy. However, the fact that the vast majority of these sites were constructed through state sponsorship, on public lands, reflects the deep entanglements between an ideology of race and the creation and reproduction of institutional power in space.<sup>14</sup>

The intermingled logics of heritage and architecture were also at play in Europe during the former Eastern Bloc, albeit in very different scales and contexts. Battling ideologies of communism and democratic capitalism were not only contending for political dominance, they were also made spatially legible in the built environment where simplified forms and a decidedly stripped-down architectural aesthetic became ideological short-hand for socialist ideals. In

this section, urbanist and historian Maroš Krivý in his chapter, entitled “The socialist past is a foreign country: mass housing and uses of heritage in contemporary Eastern Europe,” provides a compelling analysis of the interwoven processes of historicization and celebration of socialist mass housing in Eastern Europe from the perspectives of architects, historians and heritage professionals. It positions architecture as a significant yet underestimated “conduit for power and contestation,” focusing on a struggle between the past and present-day or future progress and examining the rationale for designating ‘heritage’ landmarks through the prism of socialist Central and Eastern Europe. Krivý’s chapter serves as a warning against the exoticization of form at the cost of social marginalization and, in a move against prevailing capitalist notions which would lend to the commodification and gentrification of the city, he instead presents a way forward calling for the introduction of power and principles of social justice into both heritage discourse and practice.

In both geographic contexts – US and European – the aforementioned chapter authors (D’Ignazio, So, and Ntim-Addae; Krivý) recognize contemporary efforts to remove and/or recontextualize physical vestiges of problematic or otherwise contestable ‘heritage’ landscapes, but the fact remains that once these sites were enshrined in physical space, they were conferred with markers of historic significance and distinction to be met with either pride or prejudice. The question of whether to remove or reframe these markers of political hierarchy is then often reduced to one of cost-benefit: does the potential for education or raising historic awareness outweigh the risk of continued harm to those whose histories and narratives are *not* represented, or those whose identities are in fact actively diminished by the presence of such monuments? And as an oft-overlooked but no less critical procedural question: under whose authority can these tensions begin to be managed or resolved?

Tellingly, the aesthetic lineages of city-planning and architecture movements in the US, as with much of the colonized world, were *not* derived from indigenous cultures of domestic origin – perhaps the only justifiably ‘heritage’ cultures in any society – nor, in the US, from those of Black Americans, East Asian migrant workers and other nonwhite communities found throughout the growing industrial hubs of the country. Instead, sites of national celebration and power were modeled after the cultural and aesthetic values of Western Europe – essentially equating spaces of value with spaces of whiteness. According to Mabel O. Wilson, architect, scholar and Black Studies professor, these acts of “literally constructing whiteness create[d] a narrative about the history of culture through building that consolidates a European worldview.”<sup>15</sup> In essence, monuments and buildings, the literal fabric of nations, underscored that national identity was, in effect, white identity. In the same way as their colonial predecessors, 20th Century designers of cities, spaces and buildings continued to fashion places of regional and national significance in the US in an image of whiteness to the exclusion of all others. In more recent history: in April 2020, the Trump administration considered an executive order (titled “Make American Beautiful Again”) that would require classical architecture as the only acceptable aesthetic for federal buildings.<sup>16</sup>

The references to “whiteness” here do not refer to the mere phenotype of lighter skin, but to whiteness as a social construction – as a particular form of identity-based chauvinism whose exact legal and cultural definitions shift over time, yet perennially function as the lynchpin to broader systems of oppression and inequity.<sup>17</sup> These physical icons to whiteness are perhaps the most obvious manifestations of what Lipsitz refers to as the “white spatial imaginary,” normative beliefs that render geographic exclusion and disinvestment as not only legitimate, but inevitable – enabled by an arsenal of exclusionary policies, incentives and development patterns.<sup>18</sup> As an ideological counter, the “Black spatial imaginary” operates from alternative political logics, centering the perspectives and dignity of those normatively relegated to the margins of power.

In the essay “Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness,” author, professor, feminist and social activist bell hooks writes in support of centering focus on those at the margins,<sup>19</sup> as a contrast to the hegemonic white spatial imaginary and its maintenance of “hostile privatism and defensive localism.”<sup>20</sup> The Black spatial imaginary instead refers to physical spaces and governing processes that embrace democratic, collective ideals and uses of public landscapes.

While Lipsitz primarily focuses on US cultural and political histories, adopting the lens of a “black/white” dichotomy, the concept of the “spatial imaginary” also applies across historical and geographic contexts. Among the most explicit examples of intentional exclusion was the establishment of the colonial capital for the Philippines in the 16th Century. Spanish colonizers built walls around a grid of streets, plazas and churches, government buildings and houses defined by the Law of the Indies, thus distinguishing the Spanish elite living *intramuros* (inside the city walls) from those living *extramuros* (outside the city walls) – primarily Chinese, Japanese and Filipino residents.<sup>21</sup> The colonial-era design and demarcation of the *intramuros* from the *extramuros* carry through to present-day metro Manila: contemporary development is concentrated within gated communities walled off from the broader public, once again relegating the urban poor to the outer edges of society and space.<sup>22</sup>

Exclusionary development, planning and design manifest both through intent and through forms of collective inertia. Examining infrastructure through the analytical lens of the ‘imaginary’ reveals narratives and motivations behind development patterns and how seemingly intangible ideals are translated into physical space. In the chapter “Housing, collectivity and ideology,” architectural design and theory scholar Tahl Kaminer examines the promise and potential trappings of utopian-leaning collectivist housing. Specifically, Kaminer asks if co-housing in *laissez-faire* (allowing people to choose) contexts, such as Britain, contribute to new norms, as based around smaller individual housing units which indirectly contribute to lower, not higher, living standards; arguably, these modernized, upscaled Single Room Occupancies (SROs) simultaneously increase corporate profits while absolving the market and the state from having to address their broader social responsibilities. The success of Dutch examples that Kaminer cites are attributable, at least in part, to that nation’s small size and socialist ideology that supports higher taxes and shared resources, as well as a comparatively homogeneous cultural landscape. In larger, more neoliberal contexts – particularly those which are also more multi-ethnic such as Britain or the US – social and economic heterogeneity risks further alienating, isolating or excluding communities already experiencing deeply entrenched racial divisions and socio-spatial disparities. On the other hand, co-housing could offer an affordable and culturally supportive alternative for those facing the negative material consequences of a racially stratified society. It largely depends, however, on the intent; whether it is for stratification and profit, or for inclusion and support.

### **Ideologies of the “spatial imaginary” and mechanisms of oppression and control**

Planners and designers have long played critical roles in translating normative values of space into buildings and infrastructure. A classic example, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, was a Christian Church constructed on the footings of a demolished temple – the physical *and* ideological foundations of Pagan religion. It was later converted to an Islamic mosque during the Ottoman Empire, and, in a 20th Century nod to modern secularism, designated as a museum, until resuming its role as a mosque in 2020.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, albeit in reverse order, the identity of the Spanish Cathedral of Córdoba also oscillated between Islamic Mosque and Catholic Cathedral in response to the same regionally fluctuating political and ideological power centers.



At an even larger scale, the emergence of desert metropolises in oil-rich counties like Qatar rely heavily on melanin-rich labor from primarily South Asian and North African countries, as examined in Wilson's "Who builds your architecture? (WBYA?)." <sup>24</sup> In this example of architectural activist research, Wilson draws our attention to the fact that while migrant workers represent a majority of the workforce, and population, which is literally building nations, laborers are neither counted nor conferred with basic human rights, much less citizenship, for their contributions. In "The space of labor: racialization and ethnicization of Port Kembla, Australia," architect and design educator Mirjana Lozanovska writes in a different context of ethnic exploitation to document how global migration flows create ethnicized and racialized development patterns in the industrial port city of Port Kembla, Australia – and how the ethnicization and racialization of space are fundamentally intertwined with broader economic systems and oppressive economies of human labor. This chapter provides several examples to demonstrate the ways in which spatial dominance is fundamentally linked to cultural and political power, where those who control the narrative can also maintain exclusionary relational networks of 'us' and 'them' that inform the material stratification of resources by location and in accordance with identity and privilege. Over time, these relations can seemingly become naturalized through both state-backed sponsorship as well as through cultural consensus. As a result, seemingly intangible factors, such as race and identity, can manifest in broader political ideologies, which ultimately steer material patterns of investment and socio-spatial organization.

Ideology – that is, the control and dissemination of dominant beliefs – drives oppressive spatial imaginaries and informs how we assess and assign value, positionality and power in the ordering of society and space. Social historian and scholar of racial ideology in the US Barbara Fields submits that "ideology is best described as the descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence, through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live and create from day to day." <sup>25</sup> Challenging ideology thus involves disputing 'truth' and arguing against ostensible and commonly held beliefs. Implicit in this analysis of ideology as a social construction, and as daily performance, is the understanding that ideology can in fact be dismantled.

The signifiers of race are also implicated in the ideologies of economic models – systems that both symbolize and mobilize resources and knowledge as well as the cultural and physical structures of society. The material consequences of racial ideology, as with any ideology of identity, are matters of structured disadvantage for racialized groups across society to the benefit of a cultural elite. The infrastructural imprints of difference, both ideological and architectural, evince broader structures of power, identity and control such that the act of exerting ones identity exists in tandem with the act of creating *otherized* spaces and classes of citizens. <sup>26</sup> More broadly speaking, infrastructural receipts raise questions about who benefits from the design of space, who has the full "right to the city," <sup>27</sup> and how values can be promoted – or rendered subordinate – by the exercise of design.

Sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist Stuart Hall describes the production of race as "the interplay between the representation of difference, the production of knowledge and the inscription of power on the body." <sup>28</sup> In the US, the idea of racial difference was not only inscribed on Black bodies to rationalize slavery but has since justified exclusionary planning and development patterns (neighborhood segregation and federally cosponsored redlining), public and privately mediated racial terrorism (Jim Crow laws and community massacres enacted through informal neighborhood patrols), land and property theft (blockbusting and predatory lending), targeted community destruction (urban renewal and federal highway programs), racially and ethnically tinged criminalization and disenfranchisement (mass incarceration and deportation) or simply exclusionary policies to create stratified benefits and disadvantages by race, class and identity. <sup>29</sup>

Early- and mid-20th Century US policies were enforced by encoding racial meaning within everyday common spaces – in white vs. Black drinking fountains and restrooms, in “colored” sections of restaurants and buses – upholding exclusion even through the mundane and using signage to differentiate how bodies were allowed to move through space. Post-nationalist writer, activist and Black feminist Adrienne Brown’s reading of W.E.B. Du Bois’s seminal *The Souls of Black Folk* underscores the enduring nature of racialized architectural phenomenology (that is, how places appear and are experienced).<sup>30</sup> Brown centers the built environment in Du Bois’s study of southern landscapes, and examines its role in communicating and upholding racial oppression – framing the “ugly one-room cabins,” “naked dirt and penury” and “falling homes” as evidence of the layered forms of disinvestment and disenfranchisement in the wake of Reconstruction.<sup>31</sup> In present day, the signs of racialization are perhaps less explicit, yet no less racially coded in experience, meaning and impact.<sup>32</sup> From the cultural and social stigmas attached to US public housing developments, to dog-whistle references to ‘failed’ inner-city neighborhoods, the phenomenology of space continues to be mediated through race and identity.<sup>33</sup>

In “The persistent design-politics of race: power and ideology in American public housing redevelopment,” renowned urban planning and design scholar Lawrence Vale further expounds upon the ways in which racially and ethnically laden development ideals of the past can continue to influence 21st Century urban redevelopment and planning goals. Writing about the history of public housing in the US, Vale connects the ways in which the designers and administrators of such programs explicitly embraced the mid-20th Century paradigm of the white, heteronormative nuclear family in assumptions and dominant racial politics present in current day low-income and mixed-income public housing construction and maintenance. While rooted in the past, the material and cultural consequences of planning and design histories persist today, constraining and disadvantaging racialized communities – referred to variously in the US as “minority,” “Black and brown,” “people of color (POC)” and “Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)” – as a socially, economically, politically and ideologically *spatialized* underclass.<sup>34</sup>

Across timescales and geographies, planners and designers have reified the political logics of spatial oppression, thus reinforcing normative cultures and institutions of control. These spatial mechanisms of oppression and control function in overlapping and often self-reinforcing ways: through exclusionary and otherwise segregationist patterns of development and planning, and through reactionary campaigns against broader social progress or change. But these areas of reflection also carry relevance for the future. Adrienne Brown’s reading of W.E.B. Du Bois has expounded on this idea thusly: “Considering architecture’s role in shaping the materialization of race is all the more important, given the specific relationship of race to phenomenal experience.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, by clearly outlining the motivations for and mechanisms of oppression, it becomes possible to imagine modes of design and development which no longer center on logics of difference and exclusion, but instead on equality and liberation.

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## Conclusion

The chapters in the “Race, identity and ideology” section engage historic and relational contexts through which systems and actors of inherited practices and beliefs impart physical imprints on the landscape, as well as impacting society’s hegemonic and alt-identities alike. As a whole, this thematic section offers a global overview of how built environments are linked to systems of oppression, in ways both overt and through unquestioning adherences to the status quo, as well as how design presents possibilities for action.

Political identities are created and reinforced over time through institutional practices and dominant belief systems, but despite their broad-ranging and sustained impacts, these social categories remain dynamic and susceptible to people-based, organized pushback and renegotiation. The seeming permanence of built forms and landscapes belies the ways in which the identity and experience of space are continually shaped and informed by broader social, cultural and political forces. Physical spaces and infrastructures can similarly shift in meaning, perception and use, even if they undergo relatively minor changes in form.

The Minneapolis street intersection where George Floyd was murdered by now-former police officer Derek Chauvin – 38th and Chicago – presents a compelling example of the ways in which space can be transformed and reflect potentially new meanings through collective action. In the intervening months between Floyd’s murder and Chauvin’s homicide trial, the corner of Cup Foods became both an autonomous zone – free from police presence and influence – and a public memorial site for George Floyd. Community members, activists and other allied citizens erected temporary artwork and signage, re-labeling the area as the “free state of George Floyd.” As Minneapolis considered removing the physical blockades around the area and returning the intersection to public use, local community members, organizations and elected officials engaged in a series of discussions to determine how to appropriately memorialize George Floyd.

The city ultimately responded to public pressure and sentiment, and formally announced that the site would be reopened as George Floyd Square. The City of Minneapolis website describes George Floyd Square as a “sacred space for racial reckoning, healing, and justice,” and follows with a series of public commitments and investments in racial justice.<sup>36</sup> This memorialization of space continues to be transformed in present day, both through the creation of new monuments and artifacts to honor his life and mourn his death and through the reinvigorated investment in processes of dialogue and communal action to reform not only the physical appearance of the Square but also the broader narrative and assumptions surrounding safety, police and the dignity and rights of Black people.<sup>37</sup>

That is not to say that the process in Minneapolis has been linear – nor has it been rooted in universal consensus or respect. Planning and design, particularly in response to broader social changes and pressures, are inherently and preferably heterogeneous practices that encompass – and often actively invite – divergent assumptions and goals. Tensions manifest throughout the process of planning and design and are continually informed by local contexts, histories and spatial imaginaries. By the same coin, these tensions also introduce the possibility of productive conflict and transformation.

Across geographies and political landscapes, the chapters in this thematic section offer frameworks for considering how architects and planners can either align with or against oppressive ideologies of identity and race. Admittedly, the bent of this section (and the volume as a whole) is to unpack and focus on design’s complicity and harm in creating hierarchies of space, as well as more universal forms of institutional oppression. Yet by revealing the ways in which planners and designers create and reproduce structures of inequality, they also allow the design disciplines to consider how those same practices can be redirected toward liberation.

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# THE SPACE OF LABOR

## Racialization and ethnicization of Port Kembla, Australia

*Mirjana Lozanovska*

### Introduction

Port Kembla is a suburb of the town of Wollongong, located on the scenic Illawarra eastern coastline of Australia, 80 kilometers south of Sydney (Figure 15.1). In 1956, postwar labor migrants made up 41% of the workforce at the Broken Hill Propriety Limited (BHP) Steelworks industry in Port Kembla, Australia. By 1959, the BHP Steelworks at Port Kembla comprised three new blast furnaces (four in total), a new hot strip mill and iron-ore sintering plant; and the size of the workforce had grown to 22,884.<sup>1</sup> Coal mining cemented Port Kembla's identity as one of Australia's heavy industrial sites in the early 20th Century, but in 1947, a decade after BHP acquired Australian Iron and Steel (AIS), an era of new manufacturing industry was built on migrant industrial labor.<sup>2</sup> This chapter examines a multi-ethnic basis for industrialization revealed through focus on regional towns that have been neglected in accounts of multiculturalism and diversity in Australia which tend to focus on major cities. The aim of this chapter is to extend the perspectives and tools developed in the critical study of the politics of race, ethnicity and architecture, which have previously tended to focus on expressions of ethnicity in architectural and urban spaces of the city, street, cultural and worship institutions and dwellings.<sup>3</sup> Its attempt to reapprhend the industrial landscape of the site of Port Kembla as *spaces of labor* examines the role of transnational migrants of non-Anglophone backgrounds in the postwar national economic growth and production of BHP Steelworks.

This focus on the spatialization of the industrial assemblage will draw upon Michel Foucault's theory of power, especially the interlocking history of spaces with a history of power – that is, how the materiality of power operates on and through the very bodies of individuals, producing what he has termed “docile bodies.”<sup>4</sup> The chapter is invested in a question: what does an intersection of space–power analysis of the BHP Steelworks site in Port Kembla and the scale and diversity of immigrant labor reveal? A focus on the spatial strategies of industrial power will assist in understanding the deployment of racially and ethnically classified labor forces in the workplace as a process grounded in the physical landscapes of industry.

The underlying context for this focus is related to fields of colonization, labor history and immigration policy. In the mid-1800s, British colonial power combined territorial and extractive strategies, exploiting the coal measures which “dip under Sydney but outcrop along the Illawarra escarpment beneath which many coal mines were founded from the late nineteenth century.”<sup>5</sup>

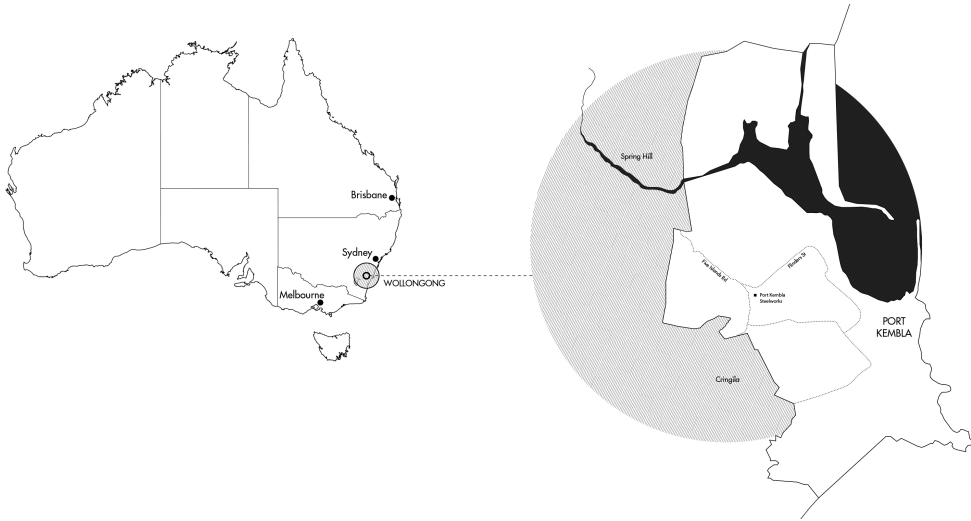


Figure 15.1 Map of Australia showing the location of Port Kembla. Drawing concept by Mirjana Lozanovska, technical assistance by Voon Yiann Low, 2021. © M. Lozanovska.

Yet waterways and creeks emanating from that same escarpment, and flowing east across the plane into coastal lakes or into the sea sustained the thriving Indigenous communities and population for tens of thousands of years prior to colonization.<sup>6</sup> Technics of space rendered the land into a colonial territory through spatial strategies, including: the 1817 Land Grants made to five colonists; cedar cutters that cleared the forests; dairy farming that drained the land of its fertile abundance; fences, borders, roads and railway that carved up the topography; and tunneling, dredging and draining that obliterated the flora and habitats of fauna (Figure 15.2).<sup>7</sup> Colonial political power depended on the control and agenda to eradicate the Indigenous peoples, and the dispossession of enormous areas of their land became the basis of its profitable economy.<sup>8</sup>

Hoskins Iron & Steel (HI&S) and Australian Iron and Steel (AIS), purchased two major portions of land in the mid-1800s on which the Port Kembla Steelworks was built. By 1883, industrious operations materialized into networks of tunnels, chimney stacks and hoisting machinery. Tension between industrialists and workers was cemented by such events as the 1902 explosion which killed 96 miners, wheelers and clippers trapped in the labyrinthian industrial space underground.<sup>9</sup> Australian labor history espousing a strengthened union organization supported workers but was constitutionally entangled with racist exclusions. Simultaneous with the federal proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 implemented the exclusion of non-British subjects from Australia as well as British subjects of color. It is well known as the White Australia Policy because race, sparked by the arrival of many thousands of Chinese on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s was at its core.<sup>10</sup> Alongside mechanisms for the eradication of the Aboriginal population, exploitation of Indigenous labor cut across the tiered labor histories of Australia.<sup>11</sup> By 1947, 98% of the population were Anglo-Celtic Australian, 1.9% other including 0.12% Indigenous.<sup>12</sup> This hegemony of Australian society is as much British (ethnicity) as it is white (race). Sneja Gunew in *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalism* contextualizes the Australian multicultural *evasion* of the race discourse within the entangled, and yet obstinately separated fields of multiculturalism, postcolonial theory and colonialism.<sup>13</sup> The question of a decolonizing historiography is raised

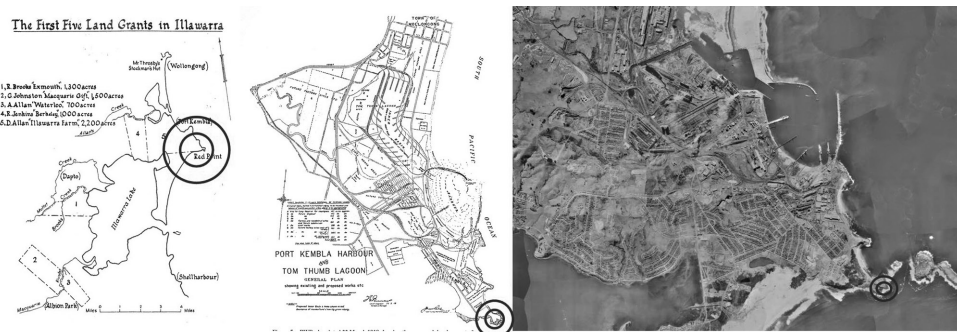


Figure 15.2 Maps showing the spatial sequence of the production of the place as a site of industry, with the significant Indigenous site of Illawarra (Red Point) marked by a circle. This sequence, from left to right, comprises (1) Map showing the five land grants in Illawarra in 1817. Source: Dowd. The first five land grantees. © Illawarra Historical Society. (2) Public Works Department (PWD) plan dated 22 Mach 1918, showing the proposed development of Port Kembla Harbour, including the Inner Basin. The lagoon and adjacent lands had been the sites of Indigenous industriousness and livelihoods. Source: Reynolds, *A History of the Land*, 11); and (3) Aerial photographs (1961) showing the site of BHP Steelworks and its expansion. Aerial photographs, like maps, also serve as instruments of power. Source: Wollongong City Libraries website. © Spatial Services, Department of Customer Service.

in Gunew’s approach toward a situated knowledge, which, along with recent studies, is an important trajectory for this chapter.<sup>14</sup>

Histories of space *as* histories of power underpin the history of transnational labor but operate through hierarchies of race and ethnicity. Specific histories of immigrant labor are drawn from interviews and workshops, with ethnic-minority citizens who worked at BHP Port Kembla in the period 1945–1979, conducted in 2020 and 2021. These comprised 14 individual semi-structured interviews conducted digitally off-site, two group workshops comprising seven participants in each conducted on-site in Port Kembla, and one tour of the BHP Steelworks with 20 participants.<sup>15</sup> The interviews were recorded digitally, the workshops and the tour were documented by a professional film crew. Findings are analyzed in conjunction with archival data on postwar migration policy, archival data about Port Kembla and Wollongong and key studies of immigrant labor history and postwar immigration in Australia. These build on an *archi-textual* methodological model, a method that identifies the points of intersection between ethnographic data and discourse analysis methods with architectural tools including plans, maps and photography.<sup>16</sup> The aim is to build a picture of spaces of labor with voices of workers, distinct but coexisting with the power made visible in the data of production and profit, and in the spatial mapping of industrial structures. This method raises questions about the analysis and interpretation of ‘data’ which is assumed to be impartial if archival, further contested by the varied or missing empirical evidence of immigrant labor. The tour was developed toward a collective accounting of the contribution of immigrant workers; and it also aimed to offer the participants an alternative position from which to view their relation to the BHP Steelworks, one from which they can speak and tell their story in contrast to the silencing of their history.<sup>17</sup>

### Foucault’s ‘spatialization of power’

Foucault’s theory of power overturned analytical methods with a reconceptualization: firstly, of power integral to discourse highlighting all authorial and legal texts as discursive practices;



secondly, power as a material force, operative in the systemic organization of society; and thirdly, power functioning without the necessity of a source, a center as visualized in Bentham's Panopticon.<sup>18</sup> Two major trajectories of thought inform this analysis of the BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla: the first is the link between a history of spaces *as* a history of powers; and the second is the thinking that the human body is the object of power:

A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers (both these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat, institutional architecture from the classroom to the design of hospitals, passing via economic and political installations. It is surprising how long the problem of space took to emerge as a historico-political problem.<sup>19</sup>

In “Spatialization of Power,” Wright and Rabinow explain that through – the clinic, the factory, the prison, the school – architecture typologies emerging in the late 18th Century, space becomes a means for both economic and political strategies.<sup>20</sup> Foucault's focus on space is different from the tendency of architecture as discipline to focus on walls, and yet he argues that these two – space and walls – are indivisible.<sup>21</sup> Formal geometries are only inert and passive as abstracted object, but the genius of Bentham's Panopticon lies in its combination of geometry and a spatial schema that operates via the organization of people, functions and procedures.<sup>22</sup> The 18th Century factory operated via partition and individualization as outlined in a summary of Foucault's note about the Oberkampf manufacturing plant at Jouy:

The factory was divided into a series of specialized workshops separated by functions (printers, handlers, colorists and engravers in different buildings). The largest structure, which was erected in 1791, was enormous: it was 110 meters long and three stories high. On its ground floor were 132 tables arranged in two rows. Each printer worked at a table with his assistant, and the finished products were carefully stacked at the end of the tables. Supervision was continual as the foreman walked up the central aisle between the two rows, watching the entire operation and the specific production of each pair of workers.<sup>23</sup>

In the 18th Century, a set of new strategies made power visible and evident as architecture turned its gaze to the interior and the individual.<sup>24</sup> Industrial architecture organizes a division of labor and a separation of tasks, the spatial technologies toward creating efficient, rationalized, laboratory economies of space. A new distribution of power is underpinned by surveillance and control; human labor is divided and allocated, regulated and aligned to mechanical processes to increase capacity, such that the space is organized into sites of productivity.<sup>25</sup> This factory was the precursor to the detailed specifics of the manufacturing process with ‘Taylorism,’ its super-efficiency of supervision, production and precision formulated one hundred years later, and then again reformed in ‘Fordism.’<sup>26</sup>

The materiality of power operates on and through the very bodies of individuals, and “nothing is more material, physical and corporeal than the exercise of power.”<sup>27</sup> Two basic forms of the body facilitated new techniques of power: (i) the body as machine – this measures the efficiency of movement, internal and external optimization, coercing the body's usefulness, with procedures of the body that are characterized via the disciplines and an anatomo-politics of the human body; and (ii) the species body – attends to the body as a basis for biological processes, propagation, with supervision effected by an entire series of regulatory controls, a bio-politics of the population. Foucault calls *disciplines* those techniques which meticulously control and

manipulate the operations, gestures, behaviors of the body, describing them as “a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement,” and “a policy of coercions that act upon the body.”<sup>28</sup> It is in this way that the discipline “produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies.”<sup>29</sup> Integral to Taylorism’s logistics of production flow is the ever-effective rendering of the docile body necessary to service the functioning of the industrial revolution and its new agenda of progress.

BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla, like other major postwar nation-building industries, was both instrumental in the postwar politics of migration in Australia *and* it forged a significant space for new modes of production, economies of labor and new managerial methods. A plan for the steelworks is an instrument of power as it speculates this new use (Figure 15.3). Sequential plans illustrate the implementation of a spatial strategy of power as a continual process – the *making* of an industrial site out of existing land (Figure 15.2). Like a laboratory, the space of the postwar factory is operative and operational as spatio-technico apparatus. In its line of production, the workers, the supervisors, the machinery and equipment, the line of process and production as well as the organization of waste are generated and produced as are the marketable products of steel. The Steelworks comprised a manufacturing plant, a dock, a harbor port and a transportation site. It also reconstructed the site and changed the urban configuration of Port Kembla. Port Kembla has been redefined by the construction and development of the port as necessary spatio-technology for the steelworks. A closer analysis of maps exposes its effect – the erasure of the land’s topography and waterways, flora and fauna, which had previously been food sources for the Indigenous population. Michael Organ’s compilation of 1000 pages of fractious

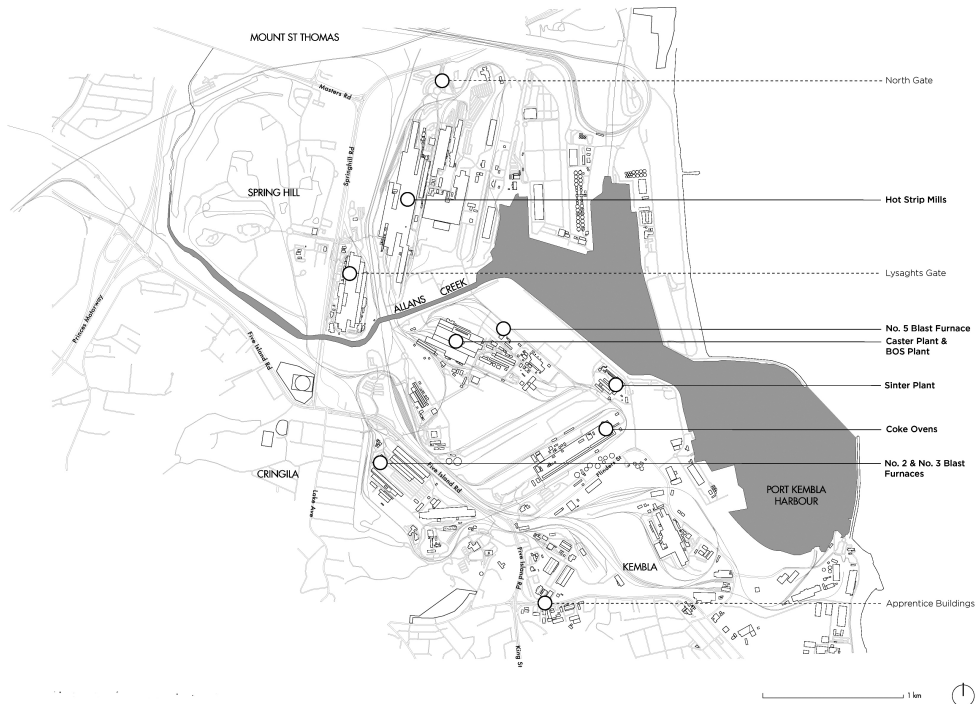


Figure 15.3 Plan of the BHP Steelworks compilation of current locations and information from early plans. Drawing concept by Mirjana Lozanovska, technical assistance by Voon Yiann Low, 2021. © M. Lozanovska.

events, conflicts, battles, murders, resistance and numerous incidents provides the accompanying evidence of the impact of this spatial strategy and begins to make evident the ways in which progress and productivity may be intolerable and unacceptable.<sup>30</sup>

### **The spatial politics of postwar migrant labor**

Postwar growth economies were inextricably linked to the politics of international labor migration. Southern European nations – Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal and former Yugoslavia – were the sources of immigrant labor for the advancement of industrial Northern European nations. Australia competed with the recruitment campaigns of Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Canada, which started in approximately 1945 and escalated and expanded in the 1950s and 1960s (with, for example, 400 West German recruitment offices *located in* southern Europe) and stopped in the early 1970s.<sup>31</sup> Following four decades of severe racial and ethnic immigration restriction, Australia's mass immigration at the end of WWII became a turning point into a period of economic growth, industrial expansion and modernization.<sup>32</sup> Labor history scholars, Lever-Tracy and Quinlan argue that “[i]t is difficult to exaggerate the significance of international immigrant labor to postwar development of the Australian industry.”<sup>33</sup>

Industrial expansion as a spatialization of power depended on the strengthened alliances between government politics and policy, corporate strategy and local protectionism offered by the unions. Intersecting the space–power nexus of maps, plans and aerial photographs which chart the economic growth and industrial expansion of BHP Steelworks in Port Kembla is transnational labor. What of postwar immigrant labor make the Australian immigration policy, combined with BHP industrialist strategy and role of unions, and the resulting economic growth, production and modernization, intolerable operations of power?

### ***Postwar immigration policy – Australia***

The first strategy of power was Australia's pendulum swing to mass immigration in the postwar period. Anxiety created by the first Minister of Immigration, Arthur Calwell's plans for a mass immigration policy at the end of WWII is appeased by strategies which combine racial and ethnic exclusions and hierarchies. As part of British-first policy, 7500 British-born immigrants were working in Port Kembla by 1947. The Department of Interior consistently notes, in the early 1940s, “desirable types” – Dutch, Scandinavian – for expansion of sources.<sup>34</sup> BHP, as the biggest industrial corporation, gained membership on the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (CIPC) and actively participated in immigration programs in the postwar period.<sup>35</sup> By 1949, the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA) union joined the strategy for mass immigration when Calwell negotiated with BHP and extracted the union plan to employ immigrants in the least attractive jobs and to ensure all new employees joined the union.<sup>36</sup> This was particular to right-wing-led FIA but influential on immigrant labor nationwide.

Andrew Johnston's brilliant study, *Mercury and the Making of California*, argues that race and ethnicity were central factors in the hierarchy of industrial labor in the US in the mid-19th Century: “an ethnic group's power and influence in the state determined how the group was racialized and fit into the hierarchies” of work.<sup>37</sup> Johnston details the hierarchy of groups in the quicksilver (mercury) industry: Californios, Mexican and Spanish-speakers; blacks and Indians.<sup>38</sup> Ethnic groups lower in the hierarchy always did lower-status and higher-risk jobs; new groups arrived and were slotted into their place while the structure of the hierarchy continued.<sup>39</sup> Stratification was not a simple race opposition but hierarchical and tiered through ethnicity, and

it dictated the working conditions and the working relationships as evidenced by the allocation of work and the spaces in which they worked. Johnston's argument is particular to US industrial history of the 1800s and diverges from the unionization of labor in Australia at the end of the 1800s. Nonetheless, the White Australia Policy which was operative up to 1973 implemented both a racial (against Aborigines and Asian immigration) and ethnic (the superiority of British culture) restriction of immigration. Overlap of labor relations between the US and Australia increased from WWII due to Australia's corporate industrialization, *free market* models and escalation of transnational immigrant labor.<sup>40</sup>

Alongside preference for British immigrants, the first of Australia's mass migration policy effective up to 1953 was to recruit displaced persons (DP) and assisted migrants directed to work in industry for minimum of two years. In 1954 with a total of 20,566 immigrants from Europe in Wollongong, more than half are from UK and Ireland, with Germany (1217), Holland (1677) and Italy (1466), and smaller numbers from former Yugoslavia, Poland, Greece, the Baltic countries, Malta and USSR.<sup>41</sup> Formal transnational arrangements were made with Malta (1948), The Netherlands (1951), Italy (1951), West Germany (1952); much later with former Yugoslavia (1967) and with Turkey (1967). Following a decade of falling operation, an increase in the 1950s was directly dependent on additional labor of which 70% were immigrant workers.<sup>42</sup> A report by the general manager of BHP of June 1957 states "Australia's two integrated steelworks at Newcastle and Port Kembla employ 6580 immigrants," with 35% from the UK, and 65% a combination of displaced persons (DP) and assisted immigrants.<sup>43</sup>

This tiered hierarchy was compounded by a most effective strategy which divided the immigrant workforce into skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. Correspondence between BHP management and the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (CIPC) in the 1950s sets the plan for a mass immigration of *unskilled* laborers from southern European countries, and this was based on the view that they were readily available, eager to migrate and less reluctant to undertake hazardous, dirty and enervating jobs. As a result of the language and recognition difficulties, including limited job market knowledge of recent non-British immigrants, the company anticipated greater stability from such workers.<sup>44</sup>

The biggest problem for BHP was labor shortage and labor instability. Prior to the end of WWII, strikes and the Communist leadership strengthened the FIA and led to a discussion for better working conditions.<sup>45</sup> The policy for a migration workforce from southern Europe effectively sidestepped the activism of the workers and union and implemented a racialized strategy of restriction combined with an ethnicized strategy for a silenced workforce. Statistical tables illustrate the growth of steel production, and sequential maps illustrate the expansion of the Port Kembla BHP Steelworks. Unrecorded is the fact that "[b]etween 1947 and 1975, total employment at this steelworks rose from 3665 to 20,715 while steel production grew almost tenfold. By 1966 immigrants constituted 61.7% of all waged employees."<sup>46</sup> As outlined by the CIPC, this planned ethnicized strategy was updated in the late 1960s.<sup>47</sup> Also invisible is the separation and individualization of tasks, the allocation of unskilled labor which could not "have been attained without a new distribution of power on the plan of management of the forces of production."<sup>48</sup> The recollection of participant, Michel Saliba describes how allocation of *unskilled* workers was implemented at the onset on arrival:

There would be a stack of envelopes in the hands of a staff member, and these were handed individually to each of the 'skilled' employees. A different style roll-call of job allocation for 'unskilled laborers' immediately inscribed power on this site of arrival: "coke ovens" (would be announced) and a list of names read out; then "sinter plant" and a list of names read out.<sup>49</sup>

The breakdown of country of origin of the Port Kembla workforce comprises: in 1966, out of a total workforce of 14,879, 9191 were overseas-born, and the largest groups in order, Yugoslavia (2608), the UK (1624) and Italy (1226); in 1973, with 9800 overseas-born, in a total workforce of 15,054, with the largest increase from former Yugoslavia (3400).

The BHP purchase of the Port Kembla Steelworks in 1935 was a strategy of power dependent on the spatial advantage of the port and the adjacent flatlands.<sup>50</sup> Spatial expansion – the building of open-hearth furnaces, blooming and hot rolling mills and the Flat Products Division – integrated operational processes on the one site (Figure 15.3). One large organization controlled and managed production and its spatial logistics and dominated long-term contracts with auxiliary companies. It produced a new form of capital dominance and network. The Port Kembla operation became, by far, the largest steelworks with the most numerous and diverse non-Anglophone workforce.

Port Kembla and Wollongong also “became the most cosmopolitan non-capital city in Australia” in the mid-1960s.<sup>51</sup> At the center of this vast change was the implementation of a hierarchical ethnicization of immigrant labor implemented via the classification of *unskilled* labor. Germans and Dutch were employed in *skilled* trades and white collar or supervisory work.<sup>52</sup> British migrants, were *skilled* tradesmen and professionals. Labor immigrants directed toward heavy industry were sourced from Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain and Portugal. Participant findings speak of unions that did not adequately, fairly or humanely address work conditions and safety in the postwar period; accidents of immigrant workers were not recorded or examined, and immigrants were coerced into avoiding fair work claims.<sup>53</sup> Pages of the *Port Kembla Ironworker*, the FIA union journal, in the early neoliberal period of the 1980s are translated into Vietnamese, Turkish, Chilean, in addition to Macedonian and Italian, illustrating the insertion of new immigrants into the racial-ethnic hierarchy of Australia’s immigration plan.<sup>54</sup>

While Australian postwar immigration policy was formalized and legislated by the government, major industries, especially BHP, and local conditional biases of the unions were integral to its development, manifestation and implementation. This type of alliance produced the contractual arrangements between immigrant workers and new industrial methods of management and production. It is better explained by Foucault’s concept of power rather than power conceptualized only as a state apparatus which, Foucault argues, diminishes its complexity and pervasiveness.<sup>55</sup> The surveillance technology of Bentham’s Panopticon enters the factory via a new type of space, instituting both a political technology and a scientific practice.<sup>56</sup> Further, Taylorism, a system invented to combat anything that slows down production intersects the spatial division of labor with time schedules as an additional apparatus to render the worker a docile body (discussed below).<sup>57</sup> Such power within the space of industry is distributed to industrial society as a whole, instilling the panoptic system into urban space as order, surveillance and functionalism.<sup>58</sup>

### *Docile bodies*

The second strategy of power can be understood via Foucault’s theory of *docile bodies*, the ways the disciplines, as methods and forces that implement changes produce “subjected and practiced bodies.”<sup>59</sup> Changes to the use of power on bodies in the 18th Century detail exercising coercion at the level of mechanism (movements, rapidity) and control, targeting the economy and efficiency of movements. The *individualizing partitioning* is articulated firstly via the spatial isolation and distribution of workers, and secondly via the machinery and process of productivity. Division and fragmentation into *as many sections as individuals* produced the nature of *disciplinary space* as the location and control of individuals; and each space of a worker was a functional site that was coded by the infinite detail of its operation. This unit of the individual was not

related to territory or place but to *rank* in a system of classification. Two systems of classification produced the postwar immigrant worker at the Port Kembla Steelworks as a docile body. Firstly, with direct links to the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (CIPC), BHP argued against family migration policy (1954) and thereby shaped immigration as single, young able-bodied men.<sup>60</sup> Participants recall the entire immigrant workforce was under 40 years old and recall Wentworth Street (the main street in Port Kembla) as a place of gambling, alcoholism and “prostitution” [sic] – one of the many casualties of the progress and modernization agenda. Second, the immigration policy that ranked immigrants from southern Europe as *unskilled*, legitimated the allocation of these workers in the most arduous and dangerous operations.<sup>61</sup> Able-bodied young men participated in new scientific experiments of efficiency and the industrial space as echoed by earlier 19th Century work conditions:

[...] industrial maze of towering chimneys and giant furnaces, mountains of coal and scrap iron, overhead skip cars, mobile cranes, convergers, rail lines [...] which, to give a sense of dimension, were themselves dwarfed beneath the rust-brown horizon of the plant. The environment assailed the senses: noxious gases, billowing mushrooms of steam, the cacophonous crashing of metal [...] searing heat and molten flames beneath clouds of grit and fine coal dust particles [...] which carried across the Works on Westerly winds.<sup>62</sup>

BHP’s demand for southern European immigrants, the 1967 transnational agreement between Australia and former Yugoslavia and chain migration resulted in large numbers of workers in these spaces from former Yugoslavia. By 1981, the largest group in Wollongong were assisted immigrants from former Yugoslavia (9000 in total). The majority of these 9000 workers were from Macedonia, one of the former Yugoslavian republics; and Macedonian was the major language spoken at home other than English in Wollongong.<sup>63</sup> Statistics reinforce participant findings that describe whole sections of these areas deployed to Macedonian workers.

*Docile bodies* are not to be mistaken with passive human subjects. Foucault’s emphasis is on how management techniques, physical labor, low pay and fear of losing work, produce docility as necessary to progress and growth. Foucault’s theory of docile bodies is elucidated by the *body-object articulation* which outlines functionality as the use of different body parts fastened to the machine, a body-machine complex as a coercive link with the apparatus of production.<sup>64</sup> Workers executed functions as an *anatomo-chronological schema of behavior*, and this necessity for an automated functionality of the body may be understood as the very management and production method that turns citizens and workers into overworked laborers, their silencing reinforced by the representation of the production processes that omits the workers (See Figure 15.5).<sup>65</sup> - for consistency

Power also operates along the axis of time, in addition to space. Time is stretched through new management methods to maintain productivity 24 hours/day, seven days/week and new ways of administering this discipline.<sup>66</sup> Labor workers at BHP Steelworks were required to work three shifts, comprising 7.20 am–3.20 pm, 3.20 pm–11.20 pm, 11.20 pm–7.20 am, whereby the worker rotated from one shift to the next on a weekly basis. Instead of a weekend, workers were given one day off at the end of a three-week rotation. Workers were offered *overtime* comprising two continuous shifts whereby the worker was allocated to work anywhere in the plant; induction and safety practice was not in question. Implementation of the timetable – rhythm, occupation, cycles of repetition – produces a collective but obligatory program imposed from the outside but implemented as a totality of the worker’s practice.<sup>67</sup> This division, extension and microscopic measure of time was achieved through management of the worker’s body – increasing use and intensifying each moment. The *efficient machinery* of postwar industry apparatus effected spatial and temporal division, fragmentation and dispersal across the population of workers and the

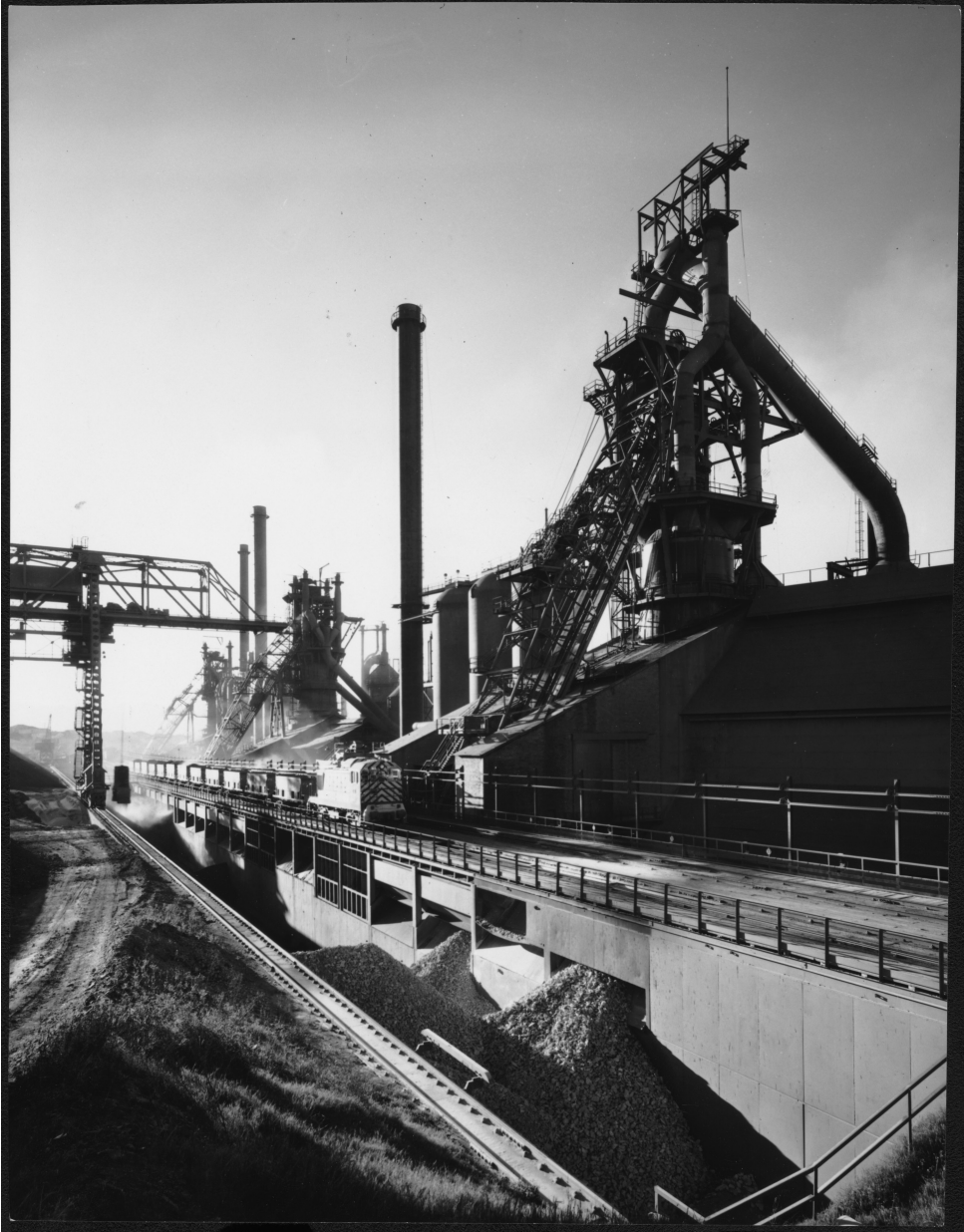
24-hour day. In addition, immigrants started work the day after arrival following the one-month travel on ship, transported from Sydney directly to Port Kembla. Many remained separated from their family for years.

Immigrants carried copies of their trade certificates which were deemed unacceptable due to the source country of trade qualifications. English language skills also influenced pre-migration rank of *skilled or unskilled*. Michel Saliba, who arrived with a teacher's diploma from Lebanon and could speak English, did not attain a teaching position in Australia. At BHP, he was upgraded to the Maintenance Component, following the first six months of work at the coke ovens (description will follow). Nonetheless, like others who undertook numerous training courses, he was not upgraded to *staff* (the nonlabor) rank, and needed to maintain shift work for 20 years. He recalls that many resisted and left – “laborers were leaving BHP as quick[ly] as they could.”<sup>68</sup> A major effect of postwar industrial strategy was the abolition of the power of the *skilled* worker. BHP struggled to replenish the laborers. One young man from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kliment Krstevski, was sent to the sinter plant. He recalls being homesick, distant from family and continuously crying, and his weight dropped down to 52 kilos. He left and did not give notice. Shift work and its rotation made planning for other daily activities impossible, and management implemented new ways that prevented workers even to attend English classes, given that in the 1970s the government introduced English classes for immigrants.<sup>69</sup>

### *Space of labor*

Power is spatialized in industry by “organizing ‘cells,’ ‘places’ and ‘ranks,’ the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical.”<sup>70</sup> Following the discussion of fragmentation, individualization and distribution of workers, the third strategy to examine is the actual spaces in which labor was situated and embedded in Port Kembla. Visual representation of the Port Kembla Steelworks comprises two types: distant and aerial views representing the exterior and photographs of the interior operations. Émigré photographer Mark Strizic was appointed by BHP to take photographs of Port Kembla BHP Steelworks, which he collated as a part of his Architectural and Industrial series. His photographs taken in the 1950s resonate with a progressive modernism, the allure of the engineering and the equipment, and present a visual beauty to these environments (Figure 15.4). Their black and white stillness and precision invoke a pause in the speed and efficiency of production in a chaotic, noisy environment of machinery and workers.<sup>71</sup> And yet the photographs also allude to the space of work with a focus on the interior, the human worker and internal scale of the human body and space. Participant descriptions of these spaces contaminate their black and white precision with visual blurriness, an experiential lack of visibility due to smoke, flames, steam, dust. Very rarely is the interior of the blast furnaces that once dominated Port Kembla skyline described in a publication:

On the cast house floor of the furnace, workers are subject to extreme heat, with radiant heat levels near the tapholes between 80-100 degrees Celsius, high levels of noise, coke and iron ore dust, metal fume and choking sulphur gases from large slag pits below the furnace. When the metal is cast, it runs across the length of the furnace floor, in open sand-lined channels, and pours into waiting brick lined railway ladle wagons. This snaking river of molten metal poses a danger of burns from sparks and splashes. Workers must remain constantly wary while they are tending to the cast. The patterns of work, rest, eating and drinking are determined by the often unpredictable casting schedules of furnaces which are operated 24 hours a day. The rest breaks represent a respite from burning throats, stinging eyes, coughing, searing heat and hard work.<sup>72</sup>



*Figure 15.4* Port Kembla BHP Steelworks showing the blast furnaces with locomotive and train of hopper wagons. Mark Strizic, 1959. Source: National Library of Australia, P861/5485; © The Estate of Mark Strizic.

A Wollongong historian, Henry Lee, has stated that workers were given salt tablets due to the severe dehydration that occurred.<sup>73</sup>

Interwoven with technical descriptions of the production processes, as shown in the diagram, are participant descriptions of the sinter plant, the coke ovens, the blast furnaces



# THE STEEL PRODUCTION PROCESS

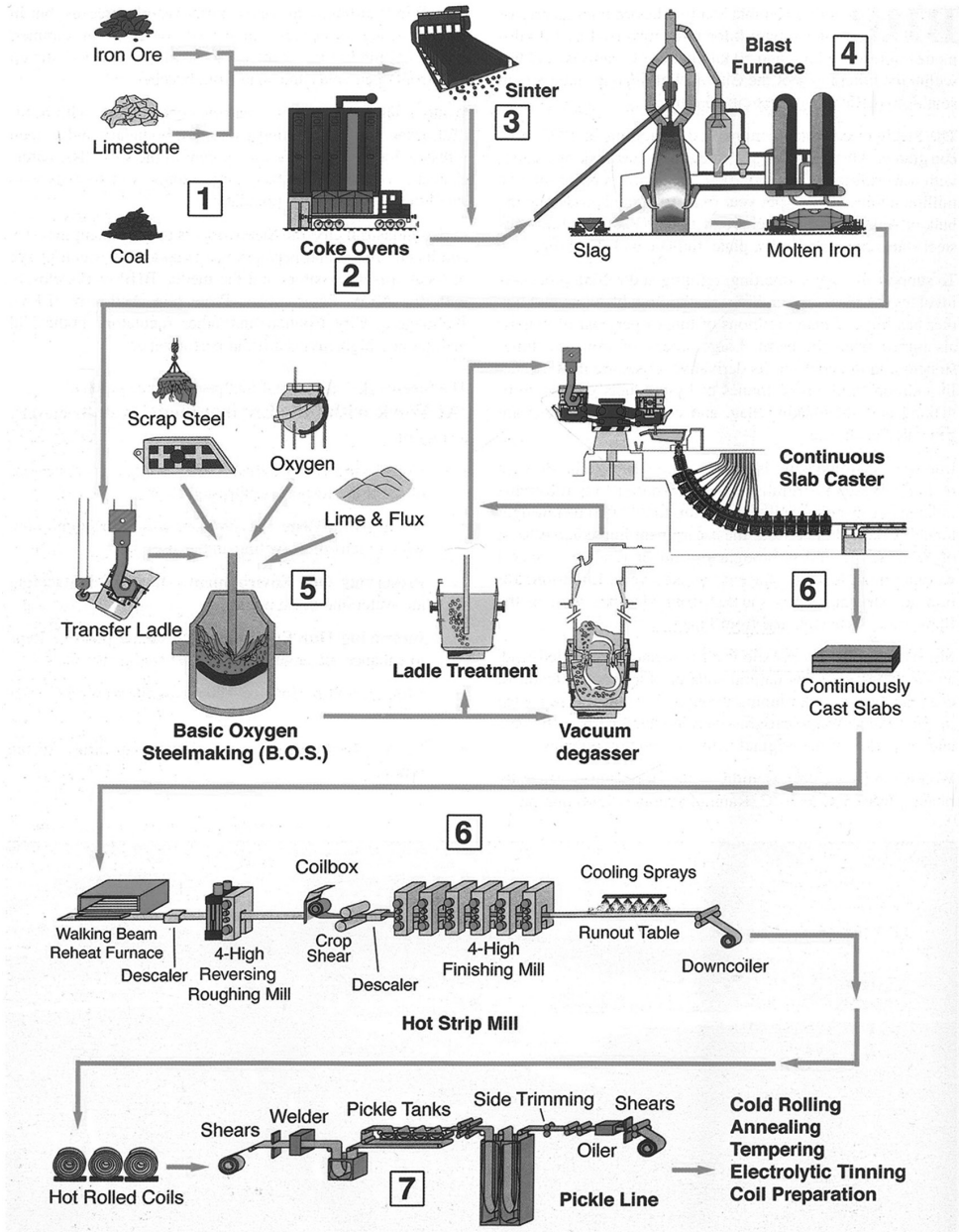


Figure 15.5 The Steel Production Process diagram. Like the map, such a diagram is an instrument of power, as it also casts into oblivion all the labor of the workers who are integral to this process and perform the tasks toward the production of steel. This mode of representing production processes contributes to the history of industrialist strategy. A 1953 AI & S (Australian Iron and Steel) publication outlines a “Description of plant and operations.” It provides detail after detail of the machinery in 63 pages. Human labor is outlined on pp. 59–68 (9 out of 63 pages). Source: BHP, At work with our environment. © BHP.

(Figure 15.5). Iskra Ruževska describes the sinter plant as smoky, noisy and very dusty with red dust. The red dust stuck to worker's clothing, and solidified into a layer, and was difficult to wash off. The role of sinter was to be used in the conversion of iron into steel. A conveyor transports the sinter – an agglomerate of iron ore fines (dust) with other fine materials at high temperature, to create a product that can be used in a blast furnace. The process, called sintering, causes the constituent materials to fuse to make a single porous mass with little change in the chemical properties of the ingredients. Kliment Krstevski and other workers described the sinter as red-hot rocks. With pick and shovel the worker collects fallen sinter from the floor and places it back on the moving conveyor.

Coke ovens are also dusty, and work there is in very steamy hot conditions infused with a pungent smell of coke, says Bogdan Bogdanovski. Coke ovens had to run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, workers had to wear wooden clogs due to the heat of the floor. The heat was extreme, and many lost their eyelashes, eyebrows and had their hair burned. Participants recollect, but briefly out of shame and sorrow, co-workers who suffered serious illnesses. Michel Saliba and Kliment Krstevski see the blast furnaces as *gas chambers*: a plastic sheet is pulled over the face of a worker to protect it, yet the worker can be hit by a sudden flame, as workers' tasks brought them into close proximity to heat, and torches of flames would escape into their work space. The intensities of the industrial environment raise questions about the traditional understanding of architectural space as geometric and structural and its emphasis of architecture as a static and bordered environment. The floor is a hot plate, and workers wear wooden clogs. It is very dangerous, each participant in the study repeats. In 1959, Jovan Jovanovski, who had just arrived from former Yugoslavia, was directed to work at the furnace, and resisted, stating, "no I will not work at the furnace, my cousin got killed there."<sup>74</sup> Jovanovski indicates that an entire "pallet of steel" fell and killed his cousin. For three-and-a-half decades after 1945, the provision of safety instruction and a safe environment was "cheap," paternalistic and demonstrated a "carelessness on the part of the employers."<sup>75</sup>

The new postwar distribution of power and plan of management incurred injury, illness and death. At the site of the furnaces, the most serious life-threatening of all the many hazards is carbon monoxide, an asphyxiant gas to which thousands of workers from 1945–1979 were exposed. But this is an invisible illness, early symptoms include headaches, dizziness and nausea,<sup>76</sup> joining the many "slowly developing work-related diseases and illness that eventually cripple and kill workers."<sup>77</sup> The dark and murky interiors, buried in the chaotic guts of the plant, draw attention to this condition of space as environment and atmosphere that affect the operative role of the human worker, their internal body parts tied to machinic processes, servicing spaces of labor. This interiority contrasts distant images of the Port Kembla Steelworks industry which in the period 1945–1979 presented power as progressive. The emergence of a discourse on *progress* as correlative with new techniques of power in the 18th Century is updated in the postwar period; BHP's current 'greening' brochures and industry's turn toward environmental agendas is evidence of recent neoliberal strategies.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

In the postwar period, BHP demanded immigrants from southern Europe, who were seen as easily malleable into docile bodies, to service its economic growth and the expansion of the Port Kembla BHP Steelworks. Strategies demonstrate firstly, industry's influence and shaping of the government's mass immigration policy; secondly, the division of immigrants into skilled and unskilled implemented as an ethnic tiered division of non-Anglophone immigrants. In the postwar period of 1945–1979 southern Europeans were classified as *unskilled*, and, with minimal

or no English language skills, occupied the lowest places in the hierarchy. Thirdly, immigrants were subjected to new methods of management – intensified labor, shift work, overtime and hostile and dangerous conditions; and fourthly, management’s aggressive industrial practices were enabled by the FIA union’s support for mass immigration as a strategy to fill jobs unwanted by Anglo-Celtic Australians. Race and ethnicity in the industrial space were not officially recorded in the log books but are an explicit agenda in the alliance between the government’s White Australia Policy and industry’s demand for cheap labor. The implementation of management strategies resulted in a hierarchical classification of *rank* whereby immigrant workers were allocated to the coke ovens, the sinter plant and the blast furnaces, among the most oppressive and dangerous environments in the steelworks industry. Locating these sites of production on the plan of the Port Kembla Steelworks, and in the production process diagram, substantiates the distribution of immigrant labor within the economies of production and growth. Visual methods accompanied by textual descriptions of the oppressive spatiality of these sites, and immigrant experience detailing the modes in which the human body is fastened to the production machinery, further illustrate industrial space conditioned by labor. Viewing industrial architecture from this perspective of space of labor draws attention to the environmental conditions of space – dust, heat, noise, toxic fumes, machinery – and to the human body servicing that space. These interiors reference the unrepresented conditions of architecture dependent on transnational labor. The space of labor thus locates, and makes visible, power as spatialized and demonstrates the ways in which the migrant experience is a contingent part of Australian history of growth and modernization.

What made this power possible and what makes it an intolerable truth as it continues?<sup>79</sup> Postwar immigration policy for mass immigration was to supply exploitable labor but was integrated into optimistic narratives of economic growth and nation-building. BHP strongly depended on newly arrived immigrants due to their problems of retention, as management at BHP Port Kembla Steelworks in the 1960s found more than 60% were leaving within a year.<sup>80</sup> Power always comes at a cost, argues Foucault: “If you are too violent, you risk provoking revolts.”<sup>81</sup> Immigrant workers also departed from Australia – Italian and Dutch immigrants departed in the 1960s; and immigrant arrival numbers dramatically reduced from the more desirable Northern European countries.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, immigrant labor serviced the Australian economy for four decades since the end of WWII. Australian immigration is a planned strategy, including: in the 1880s when large numbers of Pacific Islanders were recruited for sugar plantations, and before that, for tropical plantations.<sup>83</sup> Indigenous stockmen and domestic servant labor points to ways the race-ethnic tiered labor histories of Australia are also tied to a colonial apparatus. Growth, productivity and modernization, the visible materializations of this power, render society’s complicity and enjoyment of it. Spaces of labor, the oppressive, dirty environments and dangerous conditions of work, are not only less visible but are only given to be seen as necessary components of this power.

This chapter demonstrates that a space-power analysis contests evolutionary and chronological narratives of progress and history. History serves to detail the space of labor by looking at the particularity of the contracts of labor, but the method of analysis can be transferred to the ways in which the Australian economy is as contingent on immigrant labor in the 21st Century as it was in the 1880s. In 2021, agricultural industrialists demanded concessions for temporary migrant workers against the travel restrictions imposed by the government in response to the global pandemic in 2020.<sup>84</sup> Pacific Islander fruit-pickers may be one of the first to enter Australia’s island nation of quarantine. Race and ethnicity were major factors in the space-power history of the 19th Century and the mid-20th Century in Australia and speak directly to current flows of transnational non-Anglophone migrant labor workers globally.

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# 16

## THE AUDIT

### Perils and possibilities for contesting oppression in the heritage landscape

*Catherine D'Ignazio, Wonyoung So and Nicole Ntim-Addae*

#### Introduction

The killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota (US), led to sustained protests, rallies and public outcry against systemic racism. People gathered in the streets and around monuments and held up those same streets and monuments as objects of contestation. Contestations have been simmering for decades and more, as Mitchell points out in her history of grassroots monument organizing in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Before 25 May, the most recent national flash point was in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, when counterprotester Heather Heyer was killed by white supremacists protesting a statue removal. In the wake of this tragic event, New Orleans, Baltimore and Lexington all removed statues.<sup>2</sup> US cities ranging from Atlanta to Dallas to New Orleans and Richmond formed committees to evaluate the heritage landscape. New York City initiated a commission on monuments and public art which called for “comprehensive assessment of its current collection of public art, monuments and markers in order to gain an understanding of what and who are represented and left out; and consider making such an assessment publicly accessible.”<sup>3</sup>

What these institutional responses have in common is that they are treating the *heritage landscape* as a collection of sites to be assessed, reviewed, contested and possibly transformed in the process. Following Derek Alderman, Owen J. Dwyer and Jordan P. Brasher, the heritage landscape is a spatially bounded collection of material cultural elements. It includes all those sites associated with *collective memory*: “street signs, historical markers, landmarks, statuary, preserved sites and parks.”<sup>4</sup> Together, the heritage landscape represents a kind of “memorial infrastructure” which is “designed to facilitate remembering and forgetting of the past.”<sup>5</sup> But whose past is remembered and whose is forgotten? Because of their elevation and legitimization of official, hegemonic history – the values and worldviews of the dominant social groups – heritage landscapes tend to exclude marginal and minoritized histories. Yet, Alderman et al. caution against concluding that the heritage landscape is static and determined. Instead, they say that “[h]eritage is inherently dissonant or open to discord or disagreement.”<sup>6</sup> It is an open-ended symbolic system, one that has roots in the present as much as it does in the past, and one that is constantly being challenged and transformed by struggles over public history and power.

In this chapter, we focus more on the collection of commemorative place names in a given geography, and less on the collection of monuments, memorials and statuary in a given place.

Commemorative place names – places named for ‘great’ people or events – are ubiquitous in European colonial societies and constitute a layer of public history overlaid onto space. For this reason, Azaryahu and Rose-Redwood et al. assert commemorative place names that convert *history* into *geography*.<sup>7</sup> To analyze questions of gendered and racialized power, we offer concepts from Black and Indigenous feminisms that bring precise taxonomies for how forces of settler colonialism, white supremacy and cisheteropatriarchy (hereafter referred to as simply “patriarchy”<sup>8</sup>) surface in land and property regimes in the United States, and consequently, in US heritage landscapes. Specifically, we draw from Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang to show how land acquisition through theft, displacement and dispossession is the central driving force of settler colonialism. We situate the heritage landscape as part of the “hegemonic domain” – the domain of culture and ideology – of Patricia Hill Collins’s matrix of domination. The heritage landscape is but one aspect of a deeper settler-colonial apparatus that systematically works to deny, disrupt and erase Black and Indigenous people’s relations to land.

We are a team at an elite institution on unceded Wampanoag, Nipmuc and Massachusetts land in a department of urban planning. D’Ignazio is descended from settlers and Italian immigrants to the US. So and Ntim-Addae bring lived experiences of other postcolonial contexts (Korea, Ghana) to the study of the US heritage landscape. Because we are writing about nation-, race- and gender-based oppression, we believe our own identities and lived experiences matter in our study – we identify as a white cisgender settler woman, an Asian cisgender man from Korea who has emigrated to the US as a student, and a Black cisgender woman who is a first-generation Ghanaian immigrant.

When reckoning with forces of structural oppression in the landscape, it is important to note that minoritized groups are reckoning with these forces all the time, in ways both large and small. These might include toppling monuments, campaigning to change place names, refusing to use an institutionally given name for a place, collecting oral histories of a shared experience of a place and more. In this chapter, we are interested in exploring a particular form of reckoning: *the audit of the heritage landscape*. Audits create accountings, lists, databases and visualizations which reckon with official commemorative names in the landscape, *as a collection*, and seek to demonstrate, through quantification and aggregation, the extent of the public celebration of perpetrators of violence as well as the extent of the public erasures of minoritized groups.

We introduce three case studies to demonstrate the wide variation in existing auditing practices: a call by a city councilor to review ties to slavery in the heritage landscape of Cambridge, MA; the work of a nonprofit group, the Southern Poverty Law Center, to catalogue the iconography of the Confederacy in the American South; and our own emerging effort from academia to provide a public data portal for auditing commemorative names and places in the US. In our synthesis of these cases, we raise critical questions about the feasibility of audits, their means and ends, as well as what they hope to achieve and for whom. We end by synthesizing these case studies into reflective questions, challenges and tensions for future instigators of audits of public space.

### **Critical toponymies**

Toponymy is the study of toponyms, the origin of place names and meanings. It has been traditionally understood as a subfield of linguistics.<sup>9</sup> Since the late 1990s, scholars in cultural geography have turned their attention to the political struggles surrounding naming in order to understand naming practices as a spatialization of power.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have investigated how place names interrelate with systems of hegemonic power, particularly in regard to the role that naming has played as a “strategy of nation building and state formation.”<sup>11</sup>



Naming is a powerful mechanism for colonial nations to assert ownership and dominance over others' land. Naming *places* for *people* is itself a cultural practice imported to North America by European colonists,<sup>12</sup> intimately intertwined with land theft, settler nation-building and regimes of private property. Scholars have also demonstrated how *Indian* names in the US are indeed products of the settler-colonial gaze on the landscape in which Indigenous people and their names were rendered invisible, romanticized and commodified.<sup>13</sup> However, scholars and practitioners have also highlighted the importance of naming as a battlefield for symbolic resistance, studying the history of the contestation of naming practices and renaming campaigns that originate outside of institutions. Nondominant groups have challenged the notion that naming can be only exercised by powerful entities. Their projects and campaigns show how naming can be “a political strategy for addressing their exclusion and misrepresentation within traditional, white-dominated constructions of heritage.”<sup>14</sup> Through utilizing various methods from collective and critical cartography to tactical intervention in urban space, the contestations from outside institutions suggest the possibility of opening up *closed* questions within the settler-colonial symbols that dominate the heritage landscape of US and Canadian cities.<sup>15</sup>

### **Black feminist and Indigenous feminist theories of land and power**

While critical toponymies engage with commemorative names and their relationship to hegemonic power, particularly state power, this literature does not fully tease out the specifics of how that power works or what it consists of, especially in relation to place-based histories of domination and resistance. For example, in Cambridge, MA, white, English-speaking, heterosexual, Christian, landowning, cisgendered men represent an estimated 6–10% of the current population.<sup>16</sup> So how does it come to be that 95% of the commemorative names in Cambridge, MA, honor white people and 86% of names honor men?<sup>17</sup> Or how does it come to be that only three percent of the designated US National Landmarks represent people of color and/or women and/or members of the LGBTQ+ community?<sup>18</sup>

In this section, we weave together the work of scholars coming from Black and Indigenous feminisms to analyze the heritage landscape in relation to three intertwined forces of domination at work in the US context: settler colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy. These forms of domination have operated differently, and with differing effects, for Black and Indigenous people, but nevertheless reveal connections between the ways in which slavery and dispossession have operated together to reinforce white ownership over land as well as white, masculine hegemony over the heritage landscape. This is similar in spirit to Lisa Lowe's project to trace colonial connections across continents and time spans to “focus on relation across differences rather than equivalence.”<sup>19</sup>

We begin with the rise of European colonial power in 1492 and the desire of the colonial powers for land as a form of wealth above all others. Tuck and Yang assert that settler colonialism combines internal colonialism – which happens within the domestic borders of a nation-state – and external colonialism – in which a foreign power dominates and exploits another nation for land, goods and/or labor. In settler societies like the United States, the settlers come to stay permanently, and the most important concern of the domestic, permanently colonizing power is *land acquisition and control*:

Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence.<sup>20</sup>

European settlers imported a foreign conception of land as private property – as a *resource* that could be possessed. Harris, for instance, explains how white settlers were unable to recognize the way that Native people related to their land – they did not till it and farm it and carve it into plots in the conventional European way. Harris asserts that it is at this moment that white supremacy and land (as property) begin to intertwine, because colonial governments only recognized white land practices as legitimate acts of land possession/relation and upheld these relationships in laws, courts and settler governance. Race, before it is even quite solidified as a category,<sup>21</sup> becomes the defining factor in who may claim and retain their relationship to land, and whose relationship to land is disrupted through dispossession, expropriation and exile. At the same time, European settlers required large amounts of labor to work the newly “owned” land, particularly as the landed class struggled to maintain control of the white labor population.<sup>22</sup> This led to the intensifying demand for the forced labor via chattel slavery and the specific linking of that labor to race, color and white supremacy.<sup>23</sup> In this case, the labor of human beings becomes property, but the human part of the being is an excess: “the slave’s very presence on the land is already an excess that must be dislocated.”<sup>24</sup>

White supremacy thus evolved as a tool for settler-colonial plunder. As Silva states, “racism is an invention of colonialism,”<sup>25</sup> but it operates differently on the populations that it seeks to exclude based on their different relations to the land. For Indigenous people, who obstruct white access to land, it works by logic of elimination – to eliminate and erase and invisibilize the population. This is reflected in the settler “fantasy of emptiness,”<sup>26</sup> a fantasy that Wolfe points out was self-fulfilled through genocide and assimilation, as well as settler challenges to Indigenous claims to ancestry.<sup>27</sup> Thus, stolen land and infringed sovereignty are the primary areas of contestation for Indigenous peoples. By contrast, with enslaved people, settler colonialism works by logic of reproduction – hypervisibilization, surveillance and multiplication – because the reproduction of enslaved people augmented white land wealth.<sup>28</sup> McKittrick shows how the introduction of the plantation economy served as another form of restructuring of space, especially in the Deep South. Black people’s visibility was rendered as the plantation owners’ property. In the plantation, Black people were those *without* having land or home and thus forced to be located/dislocated within the plantation economy and geography.<sup>29</sup> Black people are also forced into a relationship to Indigenous land that is structured by settler colonialism – while not the perpetrators of plunder, they are nonetheless thrust non-consensually into land relations structured by theft and plunder. Thus, the legacy of slavery and its enduring effects are the primary areas of contestation for Black Americans. While these treatments and contestations are different, the result is that relations to land are profoundly disrupted for both Indigenous people and Black people. “Enforced placelessness”<sup>30</sup> is manufactured to secure land for white men.

The colonial encounter was not only the beginning of white supremacist and settler logics of elimination. It was also a site for enacting and enforcing patriarchal norms, including the gender binary (which is really a hierarchy), the erasure or pathologization of LGBTQ and Two Spirit people, women as ‘belonging’ to men and the normalization of sexual violence. These norms are deployed as tools specifically for securing land through the disruption of land relations for all non-white populations. Sarah Deer<sup>31</sup> and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson,<sup>32</sup> among others,<sup>33</sup> assert that patriarchy must be theorized as central to all discussions of colonial dispossession and locates attacks on Indigenous body sovereignty as central to attacks on Indigenous land sovereignty:

Gender violence is part of a long history of white men working strategically and persistently to make allies out of straight, cisgendered Indigenous men, with clear rewards for those who come into white masculinity imbued with patriarchy and

violence, in order to infiltrate our communities and nations with patriarchy and then to replicate it through the generations, with the purpose of destroying our nations and gaining easy access to land.<sup>34</sup>

Patriarchy, like white supremacy, is an ideological tool that accompanies and aids the expansion of settler-colonial land acquisition.

Settler colonialism is not in the past. As Patrick Wolfe has pointed out, it is “a structure not an event,”<sup>35</sup> and Lowe asserts that the intertwined forces of “settler seizure and native removal, slavery and racial dispossession ... are ongoing and continuous in our contemporary moment, not temporally distinct nor as yet concluded.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, these forces are alive and at work, daily, maintaining our present heritage landscape. Here we introduce *the matrix of domination* – a Black feminist conceptual model that describes how oppression works at multiple scales. Developed by sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, there are four domains of power to be considered: the structural domain – consisting of laws and policies that codify oppression; the disciplinary domain – consisting of the bureaucratic management of oppression; the hegemonic domain – which circulates oppressive ideas, stereotypes and culture; and the interpersonal domain – how the individual experiences the effects of structural oppression.<sup>37</sup>

We can locate the overrepresentation of landed, white, settler men in names and statues as part of the hegemonic domain. This is where cultural expressions of dominance, exclusion and erasure are sited. In her history of US preservation organizations, McLean demonstrates how heritage and preservation fields are dominated by landed, white interests and prioritize the preservation of (white) land, buildings and properties over other forms of memory.<sup>38</sup> This bias toward property constitutes a form of racialized memory violence. Those who were denied land through exclusion, forced labor and erasure are denied history and memory through preservation. In relation to the dramatically unequal heritage landscape of Cambridge, MA, surrounding 90% of the population with symbols of the dominance and violence of 10% of the population symbolically demonstrates the ongoing strength and enduring persistence of the settler-colonial project to sever all other groups' relations to the land.

This oppression would not be possible without the other apparatus from the other domains of the matrix that has been disrupting Black and Indigenous people's relations to land, and women's and LGBTQ+ persons' experiences within that. In the *structural domain*, centuries of legislation worked to deny land to Black people through legalized chattel slavery and to Native people by ruling against them or by forcibly removing them from their land,<sup>39</sup> and enshrined the rights of white people to possess property. Primarily, this legislation upheld property rights for men. Under the *doctrine of coverture* imported by English colonists, women became property of men upon marriage. Likewise, inheritance of assets was almost always ruled to be patrilineal except in cases where one was inheriting status as an enslaved person – this came from the mother so that white enslavers could sexually exploit Black women and profit from it – again, the patriarchal settler-colonial logic of reproduction at work.<sup>40</sup>

In the *disciplinary domain*, land is tied to whiteness and patriarchy through practices of redlining and racial covenants<sup>41</sup> and later, through practices of credit scoring, loan granting and undervaluing the land of Black owners.<sup>42</sup> Today, these are accelerated by “big data” approaches which seek to include all individual data available as an input into credit scores.<sup>43</sup> Centuries of white supremacist, patriarchal actions in the structural and disciplinary domains have led to extensively documented intergenerational wealth and wage gaps in the United States.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, in the *interpersonal domain*, there is the well-documented risk and danger for Black and Indigenous people to do everyday activities such as: drive their cars (Philando Castile, Olivia Lone Bear), jog in their neighborhood (Ahmaud Arbury), hang out in a park (Rekia Boyd), rent

a hotel room (Amanda Webster) or to simply be at home (Breonna Taylor, Jessica Alva). Even these most mundane, temporary ways of inhabiting space, place and land use are surveilled, policed and infused with state violence.

As Tuck and Yang explain, “[t]he settler’s wealth is land,”<sup>45</sup> so the present structural gaps in wealth and wages literally quantify the impact of the centuries-old settler-colonial, patriarchal project to hoard privately owned land for a small elite by disrupting land relations for all others. This is the settler-colonial logic of elimination in operation in all four domains of the matrix, eliminating: attachments to land, memory and history, wealth and wages, individual people and whole nations. The logic is historic, and the logic is present. It is this apparatus that explains why we are surrounded by virile, white military men on horses, a heritage landscape that trans activist and philosopher Paul B. Preciado has called “a patriarchal-colonial amusement park.”<sup>46</sup>

### **The audit as applied to the landscape**

The term *audit* originates from the Latin *audibilis*, meaning “to hear” and shares its root with words like audible and audience.<sup>47</sup> Auditing methods are increasingly being used when there are asymmetries of power, for example when journalists or researchers want to examine proprietary algorithms for racialized impacts.<sup>48</sup> In these cases, where insider access to records and systems is often not possible, the audit consists of reverse-engineering the outputs and impacts of systems. In 2013, for example, the group Stop LAPD Spying undertook a People’s Audit of the Los Angeles’ police department’s data-driven tactics of citizen surveillance.<sup>49</sup> This is aligned with what Steve Mann called “sousveillance” – watching from below as a form of resistance.<sup>50</sup> Scholars in both algorithmic fairness and geography have reintroduced the anthropological idea of “studying up” or “mapping up” – using the tools of research, data science and cartography to undertake sociocultural studies of powerful, dominant actors.<sup>51</sup> Sousveillance, studying up and mapping up represent a way to turn the academic gaze away from marginalized groups and toward institutions that consolidate and maintain unequal power structures. Audits, in the context of asymmetrical power, represent a way to *study up*.<sup>52</sup>

In a similar vein, recent calls have been made to audit statues, buildings and street names for connections to slavery, colonialism and patriarchy. Some of these endeavors are being undertaken by the institutions that manage the heritage landscape such as national and city governments.<sup>52</sup> Others are being undertaken from the outside-in, by artists and cultural workers,<sup>53</sup> nonprofits,<sup>54</sup> activists<sup>55</sup> and academics.<sup>56</sup> In all cases, the audit is place-based, encompassing a specific geography of interest. Generally, it entails creating a systematic catalogue of items of interest, tracing their origins and connecting them – as a collection – to racial and social injustice. The fact that the audit encompasses a *systematic collection* of items is important to distinguish them from case studies that focus on a single monument or place name.

In the next section, we introduce three short case studies and describe the diverse motivations and challenges entailed in conducting place-based audits of the heritage landscape. We chose these cases for diversity in institutional starting points (municipal government, nonprofit advocacy, academic), distinct geographic scales (city, region, nation) and variations in each audit’s proposed goals, audiences and impacts.

### **City of Cambridge, Massachusetts**

In April 2019, Cambridge City Councilor E. Denise Simmons introduced an ordinance directing the City Manager to “compile a full accounting of streets, schools and public buildings that may be named in honor of those who have ties to the American slave trade and to work

toward renaming all of these streets, schools and buildings.” Councilor Simmons has spoken about Cambridge’s need to recognize its legacy of slavery and to begin to reckon with its racist history.<sup>57</sup> The proposed audit seeks not only to catalogue connections to slavery (“studying up” in the words of Nagel) but also to discover and uplift Black heroes and the stories of enslaved people. It is unique among our three cases for endeavoring to address these systemic erasures from the heritage landscape. The Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), a municipal agency established in 1968 to preserve the historical legacy of Cambridge, was charged with carrying out the “full accounting.”

From the records that the CHC has compiled so far around the origins of Cambridge street names, it is possible to discern clear patterns in the disproportionate commemoration of white and landowning men (Figure 16.1). 95% of these commemorated figures are white; 85% of them are male. A street in Cambridge is named after Robert E Lee. With the exception of seven out of the 34 streets, every commemorated woman was named in relation to a man (daughter of so-and-so) or through marriage. Four percent of Cambridge streets are named after a person with direct ties to slavery.

One unignorable pattern that surfaces in the Cambridge streets audit is the tie between the white landowning men commemorated there and Harvard University. One in every five streets in Cambridge is named after a Harvard alumnus. Founded in 1636, Harvard was the first settler-colonial institution of higher learning in the United States and is today among the most prestigious in the world. Much of the wealth used to build it comes from the oppression of Black and Indigenous people whether through direct ties to the slave trade or the theft of Indigenous land.<sup>58</sup> Notably, Harvard was a key site for the development and legitimation of *scientific racism*.



Figure 16.1 Map of commemorated figures in Cambridge, MA. Credit: Map by Nicole Ntim-Addae, Hua Xi and Wonyoung So. Data source: Cambridge Historical Commission and Auditing Cambridge Streets for Equity.

These unequal relations – dispossessive, enslaving, racialized, gendered – are inscribed into the hegemonic domain of the matrix of domination in Cambridge. They are spatialized into the landscape which lends credence to their authority.

There are many examples that surface from this analysis: Only one street indirectly references the Indigenous people displaced by settlers – Massachusetts Avenue – however this thoroughfare was named in 1894 to reference the colonial state, not the Native people. John Collins Warren, currently commemorated by Warren Street, actively supported scientific racism and was the founder of Massachusetts General Hospital and the first dean of Harvard Medical School. Louis Agassiz, professor of zoology and geology at Harvard, commissioned the first daguerreotypes of enslaved people (now the subject of much controversy and lawsuits) and used them to support scientific racism. Thorndike Street in East Cambridge is named after Israel Thorndike who funded his large contributions to Harvard through his profits trading goods and enslaved people in the West Indies. Brattle Street is named for William Brattle, a Harvard alum turned minister at the First Church of Cambridge who enslaved at least one person. Isaac Royall Jr. inherited enslaved people from his father and was known for his cruelty to them. He donated his estate to Harvard and his family crest was imitated in Harvard Law School's crest. Throughout the early 1700s, several university presidents enslaved people and are all commemorated in various ways in the built environment. Many Harvard alums commemorated in Cambridge's streets either owned enslaved people, profited directly from the institution of slavery to amass their wealth or supported and gave credence to white supremacist theories.

These are a sample of the people and legacies spatialized directly into the city's landscape as street names and landmarks. Collectively, the audit-in-progress starts to chart a pattern of commemoration that challenges Harvard's origins and unmasks its roots in dispossession and exclusion. Settler people in Cambridge used the hegemonic domain to boost their claims to land through crafting symbolic and material ties to places, as well as to uphold and celebrate Harvard's authority in the creation of settler knowledge systems. The city's audit is not yet complete: Councilor Simmons and the CHC are working together to move the audit forward as part of a public process.

### **Whose heritage? By the Southern Poverty Law Center**

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a nonprofit legal advocacy organization specializing in civil rights and racial justice. As a response to the mass killing at Mother Emanuel in 2016 – and racial hatred accompanied by a Confederate flag, they decided to audit the heritage landscape in the American South to monitor which Confederate memorials still standing versus those that have been taken down or renamed. The SPLC's objective was to audit the iconography of the Confederacy by creating a database to “assist the efforts of local communities to reexamine [Confederate] symbols.” In 2015, they did an initial audit named *Whose Heritage?*, an interactive map of Confederate-related monuments and place names as well as a community action guide that allows users of the map to take direct action by providing instructions on how to build a campaign to remove monuments and/or rename streets,<sup>59</sup> which culminated as a larger report, “*Whose Heritage?: Public Symbols of The Confederacy.*”<sup>60</sup> From the initial audit, they first identified 1861 Confederate symbols. In 2016, they checked and showed that over 100 had been removed, but the remainder still stood. Following George Floyd's murder, the SPLC rechecked that almost 100 Confederate symbols were removed, relocated or renamed.<sup>61</sup>

Due to their collection criteria and categories, the SPLC audit permits the visibility of specific structural aspects of the hegemonic domain of the matrix of domination across the

American South (Figure 16.2). First, they are specifically interrogating commemoration of the Confederate ‘Lost Cause’ mythology, which puts their work at the intersection of militarism and white supremacy. Second, because the SPLC audit collects information on the year that the place was dedicated as well as the sponsoring organization, this surfaces interesting patterns around chronology as well as gender. Notably, the SPLC identified two historical periods where there was a major uptick in the commemoration of Confederate figures in the heritage landscape: the beginning of the 20th Century and the Civil Rights Movement. The former period was the time when states were enacting Jim Crow laws to disenfranchise the newly freed African Americans and resegregate society, and it also marks the resurgence of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK). During the Civil Rights Movement (1954–68), the increase in Confederate monuments



Figure 16.2 Map and timeline of Confederate iconography presented in the 2019 report “Whose Heritage?” published by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Image courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

was associated with the backlash against desegregationists. It is interesting to note that in the Jim Crow period many monuments were erected on courthouse grounds, and many schools were renamed to commemorate Confederate men. During both time periods, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a white women's organization, was responsible for fundraising and erecting 69% of the existing Confederate monuments logged in the database. While the vast majority of Confederate monuments of people commemorate white military men, the audit helps to make visible the white women who played an outsized role in the production of this landscape, operating as the self-appointed guardians of patriarchy and militarized white supremacy.

The SPLC's work challenges the normalization of these symbols, and provides pragmatic geographic evidence to take further actions toward their removal. They make their data open and available online, do re-audits to check on the status of monuments and names and publish reports about their findings. They published the aforementioned community action guide to spur others to take action. Additionally, legal advocacy groups can and have used their data to support their legal efforts to challenge state laws that protect Confederate monuments, such as the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act which prohibits local governments from removing or renaming monuments that are more than 40 years old. Also, academic researchers have used the SPLC's data to undertake deeper studies of gender and the UDC's role in Confederate public memory,<sup>62</sup> including the relationship with white and Black people's poverty inequality,<sup>63</sup> among others. Thus, the SPLC's audit functions as a base of information for diverse groups to take research, advocacy and legal actions at various geographic scales.

### **Audit the streets**

*Audit the Streets* is an early-stage project created by the authors of this research paper along with contributions from students at the Data + Feminism Lab at MIT (Figure 16.3). The work began in Spring 2020 when we digitized records from the Cambridge Historical Commission.<sup>64</sup> This city-scale audit provoked our curiosity to explore the feasibility and utility of undertaking a national-scale audit.

To initiate our national-scale database, we collected place names from four different data sources. For street names, we collected road data from OpenStreetMap (OSM), the largest crowdsourced geographic database. For place names, we collected three datasets: Domestic Names published by the US Board on Geographic Names (USGS), Points of Interest data from OSM and location data on places that commemorate the Confederacy collected by the SPLC. Each dataset complements the others because their characteristics are diverse and collected in different contexts. As evidenced in Figure 16.1, the Audit the Streets platform connects a place (e.g. Columbus Court in Marshfield, WI) and a person it commemorates (e.g. Christopher Columbus). It will infer people-place linkings when a full name is present.

One significant challenge of this project is that the data will never be *complete*, because of the scale and the inaccessibility of historical materials. It will always be impossible to collect *all the data*, and, indeed, much of the information does not exist and may not be known. Inequalities in the hegemonic domain (the domain of culture, symbols and heritage) of the matrix of domination extend to the information and archives about those symbols. For example, according to our work with the street names dataset of Cambridge, MA, documentation of street name origins tends to be done in places with "an antiquarian class."<sup>65</sup> That is, they are wealthier, landowning settlers who have class- and race-based interests in preserving and documenting their connection to the land. Because of these known archival inequalities, the platform encourages participation from the public.



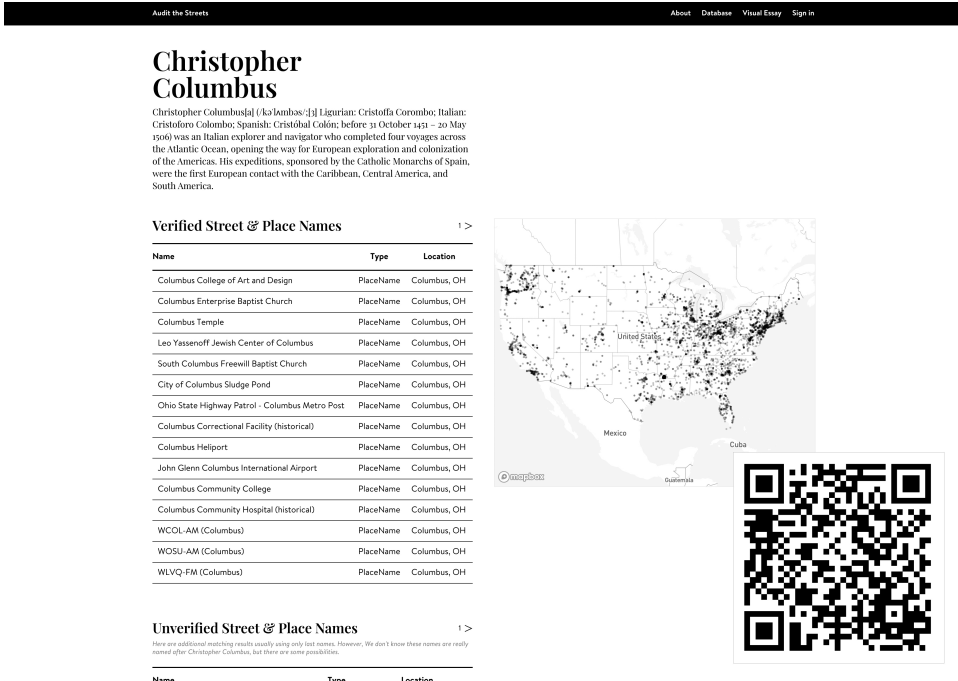


Figure 16.3 Streets and places where Christopher Columbus is commemorated. Credit: Audit the Streets project.

Who are the potential participants in this information system? At this early stage, we envision supporting place-based investigations into the heritage landscape. These might be undertaken by other academics, urban planners and preservationists, journalists, government agencies, activists and community organizations, librarians and educators. Such investigations may use our data as a starting point for research that contextualizes their audit for their community and their audience. This invitation toward participation is consistent with Browne’s emphasis on “sousveillance,” Nader’s call to “study up” or Huntley’s imperative to “map up”: the invitation places the participants’ attention on investigating and documenting the dominant structures of power in the heritage landscape in their locale. In this we hope to offer the system as a *pedagogical and informational starting point* to aid efforts that are tackling long-standing inequities in the heritage landscape due to settler colonialist disruption of land and place relationships, as well as the subsequent infusion of white supremacy and patriarchy into the built environment. The act of collecting people-place linkages, as well as looking across collections and geographies, raises awareness of the heritage landscape to not just participants – through the process of finding such linkages – but also around the community, thus supporting and teaching the view that the matrix of domination is systemic in nature. Heritage struggles are never only about a single statue but additionally about recognizing and challenging the pattern that elevates dominant groups in the hegemonic domain and erases and excludes minoritized groups.

### Conclusion: The perils and possibilities of audits

The three cases we have introduced undertake audits from different sectors: a city government, a nonprofit organization and our own academic research project. Each aims to create a catalogue

of places and their relationship to unequal histories, but different patterns are revealed based on the geography in question, the collection categories organized by the audit's authors and how/whether those can be analyzed to reveal intersectional dimensions of the matrix of domination. In this final section, we analyze these case studies in relation to the literature on critical toponymies and Black and Indigenous feminist theories of land and power as a way of exploring our questions about the utility of audits as a form of cultural and political action.

*First we must ask, for whom is the audit of the heritage landscape?* People whose ancestors and communities have consistently been denied land due to settler colonialism already know the scope and the scale of oppression in the heritage landscape because they walk, live, feel and resist it every day.<sup>66</sup> However, we speculate that there may be political and educational utility in quantifying and aggregating patterns of exclusion that people already know and feel to be true. The audits that we discuss in this chapter reckon with the 'official' landscape – the landscape that authors from critical toponymies would call “hegemonic” and that Black and Indigenous feminists help us see as specifically and precisely shaped by the forces of settler colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy. The City of Cambridge's audit is for the city to reckon with itself. Councilor Simmons' goal is to uncover all places and landmarks in Cambridge with ties to chattel slavery so that the city government – and the broader public – can have “a discussion about how we correct history in a way that takes people whose blood, sweat and tears made this city but were never honored, thought about, or in any way memorialized.”<sup>67</sup> The SPLC's audit is also for themselves, in the sense that it supports their legal advocacy work, using settler institutions like the courts and legal system, to remove symbols of hatred in the American south. Like Cambridge, the SPLC is working through institutional gatekeepers to make changes in the heritage landscape. But the fact that they make their data freely available, opens the possibility that this information may be used by a variety of other place-based efforts to take action in other locales. Originating out of academia, *Audit the Streets* is the newest project and most open-ended in terms of audience. We plan to use our platform for our own research and we have aspirations to provide information to the place-based efforts of planners and preservationists, activists, journalists, librarians and educators who may want to conduct their own investigations into their heritage landscape.

Building on other work in this chapter, the goal of these three cases is to “sousveil,” to “study up” and to “map up” – to turn their settler institutional gazes upward and inward to investigate how dominant groups secure and maintain unequal power and prominence in the heritage landscape. Symbols such as place names, monuments, markers, especially when compiled as a collection or undertaken as an audit, demonstrate the scope and scale of the settler project to sever other groups' ties to land. They function as part of the hegemonic domain of the matrix of domination – the domain that circulates oppressive ideas through culture, symbols and stereotypes. Audits that take intersectional forces of domination into account may also reveal the contours of how this power works. In Cambridge, the audit reveals the centrality of Harvard University as a settler knowledge institution which legitimated its affiliated people – predominantly settler white men – and their ideas by creating symbolic ties to the land and landscape. In the case of the SPLC, the role of white women in producing the patriarchal military Confederate symbols of the US South emerges from a consideration of dimensions of time and patronage. And in the case of the project *Audit the Streets*, even the fact that data about the heritage landscape are much more readily available from geographies with an “antiquarian class” demonstrates the elite settler interest in preserving and legitimating their own groups' ties to land through symbols. This is not to say these things were not previously known by other methods, but rather to make us critically confront the “permeability” of such symbolic ties to the land by the European settlers, and denaturalize those ties in the heritage landscape.

As Audre Lorde famously wrote, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”<sup>68</sup> Here, we ask the question, might the master’s tools be used to study, quantify, subjectify and objectify the master’s house? Might the master’s tools be used to emplace his house on the plantation,<sup>69</sup> to situate the plantation as embedded in the larger matrix of domination,<sup>70</sup> and to trace the matrix as descended from 500 years of (ongoing) settler imagination?<sup>71</sup>

We speculate that the audit of the heritage landscape holds powerful potential as a tool for settler institutions to turn their gaze on themselves as well as for minoritized groups (Black, Indigenous, women, LGBTQ+ people and more) who are struggling for justice in multiple and different ways. The audit reveals, through quantification and aggregation, the systemic nature of historical privileges and powers coming from the places engineered by European settlers: the names and monuments of white, cisgender, landowning and slave-owning men. Through this process of hypervisibilizing power, it also exposes the gap in how Black, Indigenous and other oppressed groups were excluded or silenced in diverse (and often non-equivalent ways). As Harris points out:

Although the systems of oppression of Blacks and Native Americans differed in form – the former involving the seizure and appropriation of labor, the latter entailing the seizure and appropriation of land – undergirding both was a racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law.<sup>72</sup>

Through providing an accounting of the systemic configuration of power structures, the audit flips the gaze back to European settlers and sousveils/maps up/studies up those people and institutions who have been using land expropriation and exclusion to keep oppressed peoples in a state of enforced placelessness.<sup>73</sup>

*Second we ask, what actions are taken (or should be taken) based on audits of the heritage landscape? Is changing a name and removing a monument ever ‘enough’?* Faced with the simultaneous, ongoing operation of settler colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy disrupting relationships to land across the four scales of power in the matrix of domination, it is no wonder that theorists express doubt about the political efficacy of monument-toppling and name-changing in the heritage landscape. Simpson, for example, writes that movements to remove offensive slurs, like “sq\*\*w”, from maps have her respect but also her worry:

It is not acceptable to call Indigenous women ‘squaws’ but it is acceptable to maintain all of the systems that target Indigenous women’s minds, bodies and spirituality ... In a sense, it is like the colonizer saying to me that colonialism, colonial gender violence and Indigenous dispossession are now so entrenched in North America that we don’t even have to use racist stereotypes to maintain these systems. They perpetuate themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Changing the heritage landscape – as but one domain of the matrix of domination, and primarily the domain of culture, ideology and symbol – does not rewrite the Indian Act, grant reparations, return land or abolish the carceral state.

In this sense, there is a root-level tension between liberal-leaning projects that might make the heritage landscape *more equal* by renaming a couple of places for Black women or putting up a statue of a white suffragette, in relation to those projects which seek more liberatory and visionary transformation. Here we advance the idea that auditing the heritage landscape might be a preliminary tool for (1) collective political education and (2) beginning to hold settler structures accountable for past and present violence in the hegemonic domain. In the

first instance, the master's tools – for example, data and spreadsheets, along with the work of compiling them – become a means to political education. While Simpson is skeptical of renaming, she also describes powerfully how ideas and culture are tools of oppression, and calls for Indigenous people to “viciously throw off the lies fed to us through schools about the foundations of Canada and struggle to understand and feel the violence and pure evil that took our lands from us.”<sup>75</sup> Understanding how false ideas of cultural superiority have been utilized to disrupt people's relations to land matters. The heritage landscape is one such site where cultural dominance is propagated through veneration of settler people, settler memory and settler systems. Otherwise said, there is much pedagogical work to be done in the hegemonic domain of the matrix of domination, and audits may serve as a multiscalar locus of attention. And in the second instance, audits represent a way to turn settler institutions' attention to the ongoing colonial violence and exclusion – the present-day harm – that they are enacting in the landscape as well as a method to denaturalize what philosopher and trans activist Paul B. Preciado has called the “ubiquitous corporeal public praise of the values of white, masculine and heterosexual supremacy.”<sup>76</sup>

However, an audit will never be *enough* in the sense that counting and classifying alone do not create change. Information does not take action. Databases represent latent political potential that can only be actuated by constellations of people, communities and institutions. And there is no guarantee. Audits can and have been used as excuses for inaction by the official stewards of the landscape. For example, New York's aforementioned 2018 commission on monuments was charged with reviewing “all symbols of hate on city property” but ultimately voted to remove only one statue.<sup>77</sup> Where we see more space for political actuation of audits is in the narrative change work undertaken by data journalists, educators, activists and students who may use audits of the heritage landscape as a baseline of information to craft new stories and interpretations of our not-so-public history.<sup>78</sup> And, using these, to build political will toward Preciado's clarion call that “all statues must fall.”<sup>79</sup>

## Notes

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- 2 Kenyatta McLean, “Reclaiming Time and Space: Bringing Historical Preservation into the Future” (Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2020), <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/127624>.
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# THE PERSISTENT DESIGN-POLITICS OF RACE

## Power and ideology in American public housing redevelopment

*Lawrence J. Vale*

### **Introduction: The design-politics of public housing**

The long, troubled saga of low-income public housing in the US can be narrated as a tale of race and space, brought together to advance certain ideological preferences while resisting particular cultural practices. This story is made both tangible and visible by close examination of the roles played by architecture and urbanism in supporting such deeply politicized agendas. Subsidized housing for low-income residents is more than a matter of laws and policies; it entails controlling and redistributing space. Decisions about public housing reveal the confluence of ideological assumptions about social structure and environmental determinist beliefs about spatial order. Decisions about where to build what kinds of housing developments for which kinds of people permeated the processes and practices of constructing public housing in the mid-20th Century. Power and ideology, expressed through racialized class-based hierarchies, clearly colored the initial emergence of places known as *the projects* – the colloquial term adopted by both residents and the general public to describe low-income public housing developments, places that have principally housed non-white families at least since the 1960s. Importantly, the same ideological hierarchies continue to inform contemporary practices that raze and replace such benighted realms with new developments referred to as *mixed-income communities* – a blanket term conflating a variety of income mixes that pair returning public-housing households with wealthier neighbors, often including the re-importation of white households. Here again, once attuned to the ways it gets expressed, we can read racialized decision-making in the resulting cultural landscapes. This chapter explores such socio-spatial convergence through the lens of what I term *design-politics*, focusing upon the racialized redevelopment of public housing in the US since 1990.

Deploying a term like *design-politics* entails embracing definitions of *design* and *politics* that are, simultaneously, focused and inclusive. Design, for me, includes both *products* – buildings of various types, as well as the spaces between them and the way buildings meet their neighbors – as well as *processes* – encompassing finance, policy, community engagement and governance. Looking at the inhabited built world through a design-politics lens requires us to take these process categories as an intrinsic part of what counts as design. This necessary engagement



with the views and positionalities of other stakeholders – rather than narrowing a definition of design to connote merely the aesthetic vision of a designer or design team – helps build the bridge to politics. Politics, for me, is the negotiation of civic order between the governors and the governed. It is about power – who holds it, who contests it and how this gets exercised. But it also matters what that power *looks* like: how is authority enacted on the landscape in ways that are mute but viscerally visible?

That last question bridges design and politics, a bridge that is typographically rendered as the hyphen in design-politics. In other words, my argument is that if we uncover the political assumptions encoded into design, we will see that design itself – especially when the subject is public housing – is also wordlessly expressing views about such matters as community engagement, governance, policy and finance. And, within those same design-inflected realms, design silently helps transport ideologies. In short: objects encode objectives.

In the design-politics of American public housing, ideologies matter in multiple dimensions. The forms and norms of this housing are products of complex cultural belief systems advancing moral judgments about the primacy of heteronormative family structures, supporting the aspirational aims of homeownership while demonizing renters and naturalizing the operations of racial capitalism. By penalizing characteristics dismissed as socially or politically deviant by what Black feminist scholar Akira Drake Rodriguez calls “white supremacist spatial logics,” the development and redevelopment of public housing demonstrate the complicity of planners and designers in the racialized production of the 20th and 21st Century American city.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Structure and methods for detecting racialized design-politics***

Structurally and methodologically, this chapter collects, repurposes and extends a set of analyses of public housing development and redevelopment that I conducted over the last 30 years in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco and New York City. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with public housing residents, designers, developers, lawyers, social service providers, community activists and housing officials, this larger body of work traced the evolving ways race and poverty have been managed by a variety of governance constellations in various American cities. These interviews are brought into dialogue with the drawings, representations and physical built realities of constructed places. I do this to seek a fuller multi-perspective understanding of how and why public housing projects were created and how and why they have subsequently been torn down and redeveloped. What does it mean to inhabit, visit or resist such places? In what follows, I bring my own work into dialogue with others who study the redevelopment phase of these complex public housing sagas, introducing some of the mechanisms by which a design-politics lens can focus attention on the ways that racial and class hierarchies exemplified in public housing have been exacerbated through the silent power of architectural and urban placemaking.

In recent decades – accelerating recently – there has been belated but extensive attention given to ways the history and current practices of architecture and urbanism are inextricably bound up with white supremacy and structural racism. This engagement has taken the form of analysis of specific buildings, building types, exhibitions and urban-scale city designs, and also included examination of discriminatory labor practices and segregated environments. From single-family homes to skyscrapers, scholars and journalists excavate the motives of designers and their sponsors and endeavor to ask ever more probing questions about how both monumental and quotidian aspects of the built environment are received by the diverse publics that encounter these ideologically freighted products.<sup>2</sup> Deployment of a design-politics

lens continues this larger quest. In examining multiple instances of design-politics-in-action, I emphasize five particular aspects:

1. The racialized design-politics of implementation: what changes along the way?
2. The racialized design-politics of welcome: who feels included?
3. The racialized design-politics of the unit mix: which households are wanted?
4. The racialized design-politics of curtailing vistas: whose views matter?
5. The racialized design-politics of incorporated exclusion: who feels resisted?

Before turning to focus on the redevelopment phase of public housing, it is important to underscore some of the ways that racialized design-politics played out during the earlier development phases of this housing.

### **Developing public housing: Implementing a racialized design-politics**

During the mid-20th Century, local municipal governments in most American cities introduced large housing projects – targeted exclusively to the poor – on a racially segregated basis, in advance of civil rights challenges to such practices. This happened as one part of a larger system of legislation, policy directives and design practices shaping patterns of investment in cities. Combined with a racialized system of redlining that signaled declining areas of racial minority occupancy that lenders should avoid, federal government programs and policies also drove patterns of disinvestment.<sup>3</sup> Undergirding all this, early housing policies both implicitly and explicitly rewarded certain kinds of households – small, heteronormative, two-parent families with stable employment histories – while resisting (or actively displacing) households judged to be too large (either because they had ‘too many’ children, included multiple generations, or contained unrelated individuals), or contained children born out of wedlock. Architects and their clients avoided the need to house large or extended families by choosing to build apartments with fewer bedrooms.<sup>4</sup> The ideal of the small nuclear family, both explicitly through selection criteria and implicitly through the sizing and design of apartments, conjoined spatial standards with social standards.

Taken together, especially when city leaders built public housing as replacement for cleared areas judged to be “slums,” mid-20th Century tenant selection processes sought to replace displaced slum-dwellers – a world of immigrants, extended families and boarders – with a more ideologically palatable type of household seen as deserving of government largesse and unlikely to need such support for very long. Policymakers – pressured by local real estate interests that regarded government housing subsidies as anathema to free market operations – intended public housing to be a temporary waystation. Most early public housing served white households, viewed as part of a ‘temporarily submerged’ middle class and soon able to move onward and upward toward the ‘American Dream’ of owning a single-family home.<sup>5</sup>

In some cities, such as Atlanta and New Orleans, this meant that public housing development itself contributed to the segregation of neighborhoods that were once more racially integrated.<sup>6</sup> In other cities, such as Chicago, city officials used the siting of public housing, in combination with the routing of new highways, to reinforce existing racial boundaries – overlaying a *second ghetto* on top of the first.<sup>7</sup> Other cities used public housing to segregate on both an ethnic and racial basis: San Francisco built Chinese-only projects; San Antonio assigned whites, Mexicans and Blacks into separate developments; Boston targeted separate developments to particular white ethnic groups, favoring the Irish, while displacing other ethnicities.<sup>8</sup> In sum, public housing construction often involved razing slums that housed diverse populations and replacing

them with uni-racial households composed almost entirely of two-parent households headed by US citizens.

Architecturally, the early public housing projects shared many similarities. Most were low-rise brick structures arranged around semi-enclosed courts during the 1930s and 1940s, featuring more open superblock constructions during the postwar public housing resurgence in the 1950s.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the physical similarities, the accelerated racial sorting of the city followed the unstated white supremacist spatial logic allocating non-white projects to the most disinvested areas of the cities.<sup>10</sup> Even as public housing proponents sought to find the worthiest among the needy to reward with modern dwellings, other policies undermined any sense of uplift.

This initial heady phase of reward and waystation did not last long. By the late 1950s or early 1960s, depending on the city, old ideological preferences for such selective collectives grudgingly and fitfully gave way to a broader embrace of the increasingly more-impoorished households that now demanded entry to public housing from waiting lists. Civil rights pressures prevented housing authorities from confining occupancy to two-parent households headed by a man and forced these local agencies to stop reserving some developments solely for white occupancy. Gradually, but inexorably, old ideological preferences for a certain kind of “deserving poor”<sup>11</sup> yielded to a new target demographic – the welfare-receiving poorest of the poor, who were increasingly also members of racial and ethnic minority groups. With this shift of beneficiary, public housing became more of a coping mechanism than a reward. By the end of the 1960s, acknowledging the economic desperation of those seeking entry into public housing, the federal government amended legislation to tie public housing rent payments to no more than 25% of tenant income (later raised to 30%). This made it possible, and appealing, for increasingly poor households to afford public housing. As this happened, public housing authorities faced shortfalls in rent receipts, coupled with a lack of adequate operating subsidies. This caused deferred maintenance, leading to increasingly poor living conditions. Public housing became widely viewed as housing of last resort.<sup>12</sup>

As public housing came to be associated with politically marginalized populations of the minority poor, new investment disappeared, yielding a situation where redressing deferred maintenance alone would cost tens of billions of dollars. Since the 1990s, in the absence of such a large influx of cash, redevelopment efforts have proceeded on a much more piecemeal basis. Public housing came to be seen as the poster child for concentrated poverty – and, indeed, nine of the ten poorest census tracts in the US were dominated by public housing projects, inhabited chiefly by African-Americans.<sup>13</sup> This prompted calls to remake such developments in ways that could attract a broader mixture of incomes. In turn, this meant city leaders and their developer partners gravitated toward those sites that offered the highest chance of enticing renters or homeowners who could afford to pay market rates, thereby encouraging state-sponsored gentrification.<sup>14</sup>

This process of reimagining the target demographic for public housing reverted to an earlier area of racialized ideological preferences. As urban public housing authorities redeveloped their projects, they typically limited the right of low-income households to return after redevelopment.<sup>15</sup> The selectivity of the earliest era of public housing admission returned with a vengeance in the 21st Century.

### **Redeveloping public housing: Racialized design-politics persists**

Over the last 30 years, nearly all large public housing authorities with substantial older portfolios have faced the need to redevelop these projects. Once again, their design decisions combined space and race, linking the presumed panacea of ‘mixed-income’ redevelopment projects to

an ongoing racial politics aimed at restoring mainstream ideological norms while resisting expressions of non-white identities.<sup>16</sup>

Proponents of mixed-income approaches typically put forth four kinds of rationales for such investments. The presence of higher-income residents is said to provide (1) increased social capital for low-income residents; (2) direct or indirect role modeling of social norms for work and behavior; (3) informal social control leading to safer and more orderly communities for everyone; and (4) gains for the broader community through enhanced engagement of political and market forces.<sup>17</sup> Researchers assessing inhabited mixed-income communities have consistently found little evidence for the first two kinds of postulated gain – scant signs of instrumentally productive cross-income interaction and slight indication that such communities help bridge racial divides or promote ties between renters and homeowners. Researchers find somewhat more empirical support for the third proposition, but note that greater informal social control may be more the result of stricter management practices than resident action. The fourth notion garners the most consistent corroboration: attracting higher-income individuals often generates more resources for the neighborhood, though this may also encourage gentrification that prices out low-income residents.<sup>18</sup>

In what follows, I provide some examples of redevelopment stories – both from my own work and from that of others – that are broadly consistent with such findings. Moreover, I argue these rationales for income-mixing entail more than policymaking; they are also matters of design. Mixing across race, income and tenure status occurs only in environments of welcome and trust. By contrast, many kinds of design and programming decisions quietly work against such possibilities for inclusion – and often exacerbate tensions.

Importantly for the idea of design-politics, in the 1990s the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) teamed up with Congress for the New Urbanism – both informally and, often, formally – to execute the HOPE VI program. HOPE VI, an acronym currently translated as Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere, constituted a concerted design-politics effort to resurrect the fortunes of public housing. It did so both literally – by importing higher-income residents (often including homeowners) – and figuratively, by dramatically recasting its architectural presence. Once HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros signed on to the *Charter of the New Urbanism* in 1996, and his secretarial successor Andrew Cuomo copublished a booklet entitled *Principles of Inner City Neighborhood Design: HOPE VI and the New Urbanism* in 2000, the ideological marriage of policy and aesthetics was consummated.<sup>19</sup> Instead of the stripped-modernist masonry masses of mid-century slabs and towers, the neo-traditional animus behind much of the New Urbanist aesthetic nostalgically recalled a pre-modern era, deploying an urban and suburban mashup. Gone were CIAM-informed superblocks with their vast open spaces; now, once again, buildings could be arranged along streets and semi-private courtyards. Seen most broadly, the architectural and the cultural codes of the new developments shifted backward in time and space. They returned to streetscapes more reminiscent of an earlier image of middle-class America, replete with porches or even white picket fences, as typified in Figure 17.1. It is a new round of environmental determinism, one that – just like the slum clearance era of the mid-20th Century – once again masks the accompanying social transformation of the community. In other words, the architecture and urbanism of the neighborhood changes, but it is not that old residents are transformed by their new surroundings. Instead, just like the processes that created the projects in the first place, once the neighborhood is cleared, few of the old residents are chosen to return.

Nationally, during the mid-1990s, the HOPE VI program dropped any requirement to replace lost public housing units on a one-for-one basis.<sup>20</sup> Retaining such a mandate clearly constituted a disincentive to developers, while eliminating it facilitated pursuit of a wide variety



Figure 17.1 Boston's Orchard Gardens development replaced the 1940s-era Orchard Park project with a New Urbanist alternative. Instead of three-story brick slabs containing multiple apartments, this HOPE VI successor neighborhood featured many wood-frame houses, each with a private entrance, a porch and front yard, separated from the sidewalk by a white picket fence. Photograph by Lawrence J. Vale, June 2016.

of income mixes, as well as efforts to introduce homeownership options.<sup>21</sup> Especially with market-sensitive for-profit developers calling the shots, developers and their site management partners introduced screening practices and rule systems intended to satisfy investors. Taken in combination, the choices of apartment sizes coupled with the choices made during tenant selection not surprisingly meant most public housing redevelopment efforts displaced most former residents. Some left happily, offered portable vouchers that would enable them to deploy their subsidy elsewhere in the private sector, while all too many others signaled a wish to return but were rebuffed – or, if they did manage to return, felt marginalized and resented by new systems of renewed ideological preference for smaller, whiter households, often coupled with homeownership. Because so many of these real estate transformations were also transformations of class and race, the resultant tensions carried particular import. And, as with the original designs and policies that merged when first creating public housing, these redevelopment efforts also used architecture and urban design as a silent expression of power politics.

### **The racialized design-politics of implementing public housing redevelopment**

Typically, the world of design is seen as a binary world of 'before' and 'after' but this misses the design-politics of the *during*. Architectural plans and other representations are iterated not only within the realm of design firms and their professional partners; this iterative process is also a protracted relationship with one or more communities. The *during* is not equivalent to

construction; it also includes the variety of design solutions that have to get publicly presented or privately shared, often in the form of drawings, renderings and models. That design process can be quite fraught, both with existing public housing residents and with outside neighbors – and within the design team itself.

Politics enters design through multiple portals. As a process, iterating a design begins with a set of assumptions, stated or not, about who will inhabit, use or visit the resultant place. Such assumptions may be rooted in the beliefs and preferences of the designer, but are also almost inevitably skewed by the agenda of the developer-client or even, in the case of multi-family housing, the future manager. Unfortunately, designs rarely get coproduced with public housing communities. Mid-course adjustments to designs occur for myriad reasons, and iteration of ideas is intrinsic to the very meaning of design as a practice.<sup>22</sup> Often, if not always, adjustments come in response to financial exigencies, with shifts often explained by the seemingly rational term *value engineering*. But we can also ask: which values – and whose values – are being engineered?

Many things change during the course of implementation. Often, early proposals prove to be over budget or face community backlash. Especially in the case of public housing, such backlash will often come from a community that has previously been promised many things, but carries deeply rooted mistrust about the institutions that have failed to deliver, manage and maintain their previous housing. Often the community backlash is not about design decisions of a narrow sort, but about the social, political and cultural *implications* of those decisions. Whose open views are now to be blocked? Will different income groups be segregated into architecturally distinct housing types? Who gets to decide how the public realm of the community will be programmed if priorities differ? Which people from the old neighborhood get to come back, and which do not? A decision to build a project in a single phase may sound like a perfectly logical way to maximize construction efficiency or bulk purchasing of materials or a necessary way to handle a narrow financial time window to gain Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. Yet this is only the way it is seen by professionals. To residents who may have previously been promised a multi-phase project that permitted them to remain on-site during construction, a change in phasing strategy will not sound like a logical financial approach; it will feel like a deliberate act of forced displacement and a profound breach of trust.<sup>23</sup> These, then, are the kinds of design-politics pressure points that may trigger contestation during implementation.

### **Choosing [in]visible neighbors: The racialized design-politics of tot lots, dog parks and apartment types**

The redevelopment of Chicago's Cabrini-Green public housing project exemplifies racialized design-politics in many dimensions. At its peak, it contained 3600 apartments built over several phases: Cabrini rowhouses erected in 1942, two phases of Cabrini Extension that opened in the 1950s, and a final phase, the William Green Homes, completed in 1962.<sup>24</sup> It took two decades to build Cabrini-Green; the effort to redevelop it has taken even longer. This began in the early 1990s, at the dawn of the HOPEVI public housing redevelopment program, with the last tower demolished only in 2011. More than a decade later, Cabrini-Green's reinvention as mixed-income housing remains protracted and contested. The stated goal is to spread low-income apartments into the broader neighborhood, with mixed-income housing projects constructed both on-site and on the fringes. Three decades into the process, there are spaces for just a few hundred ex-Cabrini households, instead of 3600. Typically, the new developments each reserve between 10% and 30% of their units for former Cabrini residents, with the remainder of their residents either paying market rates or assisted with much more modest subsidies (Figure 17.2).<sup>25</sup>



*Figure 17.2* Immediately following an interview with me, a Black male former Cabrini-Green resident wearing a red Ohio State sweatshirt with bold letter “O” posed on a sidewalk across the street from his new home in the Mohawk North mixed-income development. At Mohawk North, the property management company screened 78 Cabrini families to choose those 16 units reserved for public housing tenants. This man, whose street name is Pookie, says he is glad for the apartment but remains highly skeptical about the mix and the constraints of the management’s rules. Standing with his arms spread, palms up, he indicated his frustration with the changed neighborhood. Photograph by Lawrence J.Vale, taken with permission following compensated interview, March 2009.

Immediately adjacent to the now-demolished William Green Homes is the mixed-income community of North Town Village (Figures 17.2 and 17.3). The design-politics of the winning plan, by Holsten-Kenard, commendably chose not to separate out the various income groups. As developer Peter Holsten said in an interview, “Our site plan showed everybody living next door to everybody. So you had residents who had bought a fairly expensive townhome, and in the townhome right next to him was one of the [public housing] replacement units.” The mixing approach did “cause some tensions,” Holsten noted, since “you’re putting pretty different people next to each other.”<sup>26</sup> At base, the differences had to do not just with class, but with race, family composition and life cycle stage. The ‘typical townhome buyer’ was a white two-income childless couple, whereas the returning Cabrini-Green residents were all African-American, many of them single parent households with multiple children. The Holsten-Kenard team remained committed to meeting a quota of 30% of the apartments set aside for returning Cabrini-Green households, but struggled to find families to fill these. In many cases, households simply mistrusted the deal, based on decades of false starts and broken promises. In other cases, they worried that the new forms of housing would come with new norms of screening and behavioral expectations, seen as ideologically skewed to favor white middle-class preferences. At base, they worried about both eligibility and fit. Holsten acknowledged the extreme difficulty of



*Figure 17.3* View of a streetscape of North Town Village adjacent to Cabrini-Green public housing in Chicago, featuring three-story townhouse style buildings, with mostly brick facing and neo-traditional images such as cone-shaped roofs, columned porticos and ornamental metal fencing separating small front yards. In the middle distance is a densely planted traffic circle. Photograph by Lawrence J. Vale, October 2009.

finding mutually acceptable matches: there were “only about one in five that work out OK.”<sup>27</sup> Design-politics explains some of this perceived misfit.

The winning bid from Holsten and Kenard, according to the interview with Peter Holsten, featured tot lots and “a splash area for the hot summer days.” Yet, Holsten wistfully notes, “that stuff was all shelved” at the behest of the Kenard firm, Holsten’s for-profit development partner in charge of the market-rate housing. As Holsten puts it, Kenard’s Hal Lichterman “really worried about not being able to sell the for-sale units with kids playing out in everybody’s faces.” Similarly, Holsten “wanted to put park benches around the traffic circle, but [Lichterman] was adamant that these things would be magnets for lots of people that would be perceived by prospective buyers as a problem.”<sup>28</sup> Instead of the tot lots that appealed to Cabrini families with multiple young children, the design team executed a cultural switcheroo: they substituted a dog park, targeted to appeal to childless white couples and their puppies. My point here is that it is possible to look at an early drawing of a tot lot and a splash park, then look at the as-built place that instead has a dog park and no places for kids to play, and ask a design-politics question whose answer reveals the underlying tensions of the development partnership, the clash of conflicting conceptions of community and the power dynamics of decision-making. Nobody actually had to verbalize, “We don’t want your large Black family here.” The design-politics did that for them.

### ***The racialized design-politics of welcome***

Programming decisions that, disproportionately, quietly cater to young white households with small dogs do more than signal welcome to one set of desired new neighbors. Simultaneously,



these are also racial and ideological decisions about what *not* to do: promote alternative design signals that might attract Black households. As landscape architect Walter Hood argues in *Black Landscapes Matter*, the contested history of Black life spaces exists in a state of “constant erasure.”<sup>29</sup> When it comes to redeveloping predominantly Black public housing landscapes, erasure of the places that supported past conviviality seems an unspoken part of the design-politics agenda. This agenda includes a series of visual cues that help orient and sort who gets welcomed and who does not.

Sociologist and geographer Brandi Thompson Summers writes of the “spatial aesthetics of race,” by which she means that “race operates as an aesthetic language and a visual logic” that enables “blackness, but not necessarily Black people,” to “be cool.”<sup>30</sup> This operates by branding spaces as ‘Black’ as “an aesthetic to draw in tourists, customers, capital, and authenticity”<sup>31</sup> – just Black enough to attract whites without becoming scary. As Summers puts it, “[b]lackness is transformed to become palatable and consumable while some of its edginess remains.”<sup>32</sup> One result of this, she writes, is “in gentrifying neighborhoods, poor and working-class Black residents experience cultural displacement, in which they feel unwelcome and uncomfortable in areas where they have lived and roamed for years.”<sup>33</sup> Similar instances of racial capitalism play out in Latin communities. In *Abstract Barrios*, Latinx Studies scholar Johana Londoño documents a long history of “brokered Latinization” and “highly regulated and mediated inclusion” through which white elites maintain aesthetic and political control in changing neighborhoods by deploying such means as “the spatial politics of racialized color.”<sup>34</sup> She argues that colorful facades “attempt to downplay the injuries of gentrification by gesturing toward cultural diversity,” even as such gestures become “a spectacle of neoliberal urbanism whereby once-marginalized people and their cultures are distilled and sanitized for their exchange value.”<sup>35</sup> This kind of design-politics, she concludes, is “not to be mistaken for the social belonging of low-income residents of color in cities.”<sup>36</sup> In such contexts, the rebranding of public housing aimed at income-mixing and developed by for-profit corporate entities is not the place for anything as politically challenging as what architect Sekou Cooke characterizes and catalogues as *Hip-Hop Architecture* – which he defines as “Hip-Hop culture in built form.”<sup>37</sup> Of course, this too can be appropriated.

### *The racialized design-politics of the unit mix*

Design enters into the construction of meaning through basic decisions about how many units of what size get built in which particular configuration. It is design-politics when a housing organization or developer chooses to emphasize one- or two-bedroom apartments rather than four-bedroom units, since such decisions imply very different community visions and support vastly different constituencies. In New Orleans in the early 2000s, for instance, the for-profit developer of the mixed-income community of River Garden (built to replace the vast superblocks of the former St. Thomas project) explicitly decided not to include any apartments with large numbers of bedrooms.<sup>38</sup> Former public housing residents seeking to return wanted such apartments, but developer Pres Kabacoff clearly did not want those people. He did not need to say this publicly, though. Instead, the plans for the redevelopment simply off-loaded all four-bedroom units to future off-site locations – contingent on obtaining additional funding and on employing a different developer. Predictably, those apartments were never built.

When I asked Kabacoff directly about offing the large apartments, he was only too eager to decode the design-politics for me: “I didn’t want those on site. I thought that would be too many people. This may sound callous, but the trick in this thing is to keep market-rate people.”<sup>39</sup> The easy elision between talking about market-rate units and “market-rate people,” especially in

the context of income mixes that carry both class and racial distinctions, underscores the close but uneasy relationship of architectural and social structures.

### ***Views and viewpoints: The racialized design-politics tradeoffs of curtailing vistas***

In 2012, during the latter part of Michael Bloomberg's mayoral administration, New Yorkers acknowledged overwhelming unmet capital needs at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing developments, totaling tens of billions of dollars. To address some of the shortfall, the mayor proposed in-filling a few superblock public housing projects located on high-value land. This would provide additional housing, much of it market-rate, and thereby raise substantial funds needed to renovate the old public housing – all to be accomplished without displacing existing residents. As deployed on 14 sites across eight different projects in Manhattan, the overall Land Lease Initiative could generate an estimated US\$30–50 million per year in revenue – a steady stream that could, in turn, be used to leverage financing for the capital needs and maintenance costs of 10,500 public housing units, both fixing and preserving them. At the same time, the new development would create nearly 800 units of additional affordable housing (targeted to low-income households) and generate 3000 units of market-rate housing in desirable neighborhoods. Seemingly a 'win-win' solution, it nonetheless proved highly problematic to implement. A design-politics lens, focused on the example of the Governor Alfred E. Smith Houses in Lower Manhattan, demonstrates what went wrong.<sup>40</sup>

The Smith Houses, opened in 1953 near the East River, contain nearly 2000 apartments, distributed across a dozen 17-story towers on 22 acres (nearly nine hectares). Proponents of the Land Lease plan eagerly pointed to the 'underdeveloped' land between the buildings.<sup>41</sup> They salivated at the development opportunities available upon such seemingly wasted space in a neighborhood with extremely high land values. Much of NYCHA public housing fell well short of the maximum allowable building volume permitted under existing regulations, so the infill could occur on an *as-of-right* basis, with "no need for rezoning or waivers or special permits."<sup>42</sup> Seen as a zoning issue, city officials pounced. Yet this viewpoint entirely missed the perspective of public housing residents (and their immediate neighbors) who held such land in high value for very different reasons. At Smith Houses, for instance, one parcel proposed to be leased for construction housed an annual 'family day.' Similarly, various other parcels on the Manhattan sites proposed for Land Lease infill contained playgrounds, basketball courts, baseball fields and resident parking lots. In a classic disconnect between *use value* and *exchange value*, the local population viewed 'underdeveloped' land as having important uses in their daily lives.<sup>43</sup>

Seemingly oblivious to that sensitive context, NYCHA and its partners unfortunately presented the proposal in the most impolitic way imaginable. Or, in my terms, the diagrams shown as part of Zoning and Design Guidelines that were intended to help 'sell' the Land Lease idea could not have imbedded design into politics (and politics into design) more effectively – or more confrontationally. It is hard to say which version is worse – the one showing a pair of solidly rendered 500-foot towers, revealing what the block could look like if built out to the maximum allowable massing – or the more transparent version, reminding viewers that the dwarfed and trapped public housing tower labeled #3 would have its views entirely obstructed. The small notation attesting that these visions met the requirement to have a 60-foot setback from all other towers hardly seemed reassuring. Modernist site planning offered low-income families the promise of light, air and recreation as compensation for cramped apartments, a healthful update to a previous generation's dark tenements. Now, however, revised site plans proposed to put the

poor out of sight, prompting renewed fears of gentrification and displacement. Clearly, there is both a design-politics of tower blocks and a design-politics of blocked towers.

At base, such design representations triggered a PR problem, for both the mayor and NYCHA, a problem inseparable from issues of both class and race. Taking outraged note of the plan to dwarf high-rise public housing with new skyscrapers, the *New York Daily News* headline described the juxtaposition: “High and Mighty NYCHA: Luxury Towers on Leased Land ‘Look Down’ on Projects.”<sup>44</sup> Smith Houses tenant association president Aixa Torres complained about these “appalling” plans, asserting that residents “won’t have any sun.” She argued that “[t]hey’re going to literally squeeze my residents like they’re roaches,” and continued by saying that “then they’re going to build this huge, beautiful complex. You want to talk about the ‘Tale of Two Cities?’”<sup>45</sup>

With the election of Bill de Blasio as New York City’s mayor in late 2013, the Bloomberg-era Land Lease Initiative ended. That said, Bloomberg’s successors allowed it to be rebooted and rebranded, launching a new variant that emphasized the addition of more ‘affordable’ housing rather than market rate. The more politically progressive de Blasio knew it would need to be marketed with a more sensitive design-politics. Even so, as recent work by urban planner Valerie E. Stahl shows, the redevelopment efforts continued to be contentious.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, a few initiatives moved forward, though the plan for Smith Houses did not. As such, it retains its views and its public housing residents – and still needs more repairs.

### ***The racialized design-politics of incorporated exclusion***

In *Integrating the Inner City*, social scientists Robert Chaskin and Mark Joseph weave together a series of closely observed accounts of life in several mixed-income housing developments built to replace public housing projects on the South and West sides of Chicago. As its conceptual core, the book contributes the novel idea of “incorporated exclusion” to explain the tense relations that result when public housing residents get treated as less-than-full participants in their own mixed-income community.<sup>47</sup> Their notion has a parallel in historian Keenanga-Yamahtta Taylor’s concept of “predatory inclusion” used to describe ill-fated efforts to engage Blacks in homeownership initiatives.<sup>48</sup> Both of these signal racialized forms of ambiguous and destructive partial engagement. To Chaskin and Joseph, incorporated exclusion occurs when “physical integration reproduces marginality and leads to withdrawal and alienation rather than engagement and inclusion.”<sup>49</sup> My own community-based interviewing in public housing redevelopments around the country very much resonates with this finding, so I deploy it as a framing device here. Close observation of the power dynamic in these communities reveals the limits of the mixing and demonstrates ways that low-income households of color face disempowering new forms of marginalization.

Chaskin and Joseph note Chicago’s mixed-income replacements for public housing typically deploy New Urbanist planning and design principles, retrofitting vast superblocks with grid-oriented pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that purportedly encourage sociability. These new neighborhoods with their diverse communities do this quite selectively, however. The rhetoric is about mixing but the reality places “greater emphasis on design that contributes to ‘defensible’ space and less on creating public and civic space.”<sup>50</sup> This design signaling, in turn, becomes an extension of the management ethos for such communities. Rule systems about use and gathering are overseen by new forms of privatization, including “the policing of formal management of common space to minimize spontaneous socializing that might lead to (real or perceived) problems.”<sup>51</sup> At one mixed-income building containing both low-income renters and affluent condo owners, a few of the relocated public housing residents chose to socialize in some of

the lobby seating, a shared amenity; when condo owners objected, the management responded by removing all the furniture. After protracted negotiation extracted the compromise of time limits on occupancy of the seats, the developer returned the furniture.<sup>52</sup> The design of the space welcomed interaction, but the complex class and racial politics of defining The Commons suggested otherwise.

In such mixed-income settings, Chaskin and Joseph observe, the alleged focus on *community* meant treating a community “as a target of intervention rather than a unit of action, emphasizing planning, design principles and the primacy of development professionals rather than mobilization of community-level actors, processes and resources.”<sup>53</sup> By focusing on market-oriented exchange values, the approach deemphasizes the use value of these places in the daily lives of low-income residents. These regulatory regimes impose ideological strictures when they seek to keep their developments attractive to those paying market rents by enforcing middle-class norms.<sup>54</sup> In Chicago, as in Pres Kabacoff’s New Orleans, the trick is to *keep market-rate people*. The design-politics of these moves is facilitated by the layout of the housing, which renders particular behaviors both visible and audible. It is not just incivilities that may generate widespread disdain – “noise late at night, littering, loud and obscene language, unruly youths (propping open doors, running through hallways, damaging property, leaving trash in their wake).”<sup>55</sup> It is also a more ideologically driven matter of regulating perfectly legal cultural practices and preferences that some find innocuous and others deem offensive – “storing personal items on balconies or hanging laundry in plain view, washing or repairing cars in the street, and barbecuing in public.”<sup>56</sup> Or, as a public housing resident leader told Chaskin and Joseph, “[t]hey have a problem with us standing on the corner. We’re colored. That’s what we do. We gather in groups. We don’t have to be [doing] no drug activity or nothing like that for us to gather around.”<sup>57</sup> Another resident commented: “They want us to sit in the back because they thought it’s unsightly to have us out here, but we don’t see anybody in the back. In the front you can see people coming and going.”<sup>58</sup> Management deploys surveillance technology to keep its own watch. At Oakwood Shores, they installed 150 cameras, trained on rental buildings and exempting those buildings housing those who own their units. Moreover, those cameras trigger responses to particular behaviors. If “groups of people [are] standing around for a certain time,” this will generate “recorded messages warning them away.”<sup>59</sup>

Fundamentally, Chaskin and Joseph found that mixed-income communities struggled to develop viable social practices in the aftermath of razed public housing. The core of the concern, they learned, “focuses on the very presence of people congregating openly for leisure or with no apparent purpose.”<sup>60</sup> The management seeks to cater to those residents who are quick to discern ‘disorder’ and wish to carefully delimit what could be viewed more innocuously by others as “normative enjoyment of community space.”<sup>61</sup>

Anthropologist Catherine Fennell’s ethnography of Chicago’s Westhaven redevelopment – which also happens to be one of the sites studied by Joseph and Chaskin – clarifies the racial dimensions even more pointedly. In *Last Project Standing*, she observes that even those who returned to live in this new development that replaced their piece of the Henry Horner Homes suffered from “an unusual kind of displacement.”<sup>62</sup> As they uneasily navigated the transformation from Horner to Westhaven, they anxiously experienced fluctuating glimpses of once-familiar worlds.<sup>63</sup> Epitomized by what Fennell calls “project heat” – the amenity of abundant winter heat from central boilers that had become a bodily expectation for long-term residents, this was summarily and expensively lost following redevelopment once it became individually metered and no longer included in the rent. In some cases, Fennell found, public housing residents in arrears “came to owe more for utilities than they did for rent,” causing credit problems and utility disconnections. Such “sensory politics that insists on intractable bodily habits, tastes, or

dispositions,” are linked to memories of the past warmth of a solidly built project, and continued to divide old residents from new neighbors.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, during hot summer weather, many of the new residents who came from socio-spatial traditions of backyard socializing misunderstood and resented the way ex-Horner tenants socialized ‘on front’:

Fronts became spaces in which to dry clothes, to cool down, and to talk with friends. Beyond that, though, frontward gazes, blaring car horns, raised voices, sweeping gestures, and flying rocks allowed them to amplify and expand their own and others’ physical presences into space in ways that made being on front an important and pleasurable part of renewing existing social ties and extending new ones.<sup>65</sup>

To some, ‘fronts’ offered the perpetual possibility of social encounter; to others who had been raised differently, such actions just seemed confrontational. Management mandated that “transitioning Horner residents” must “retreat to the backyards if their units had them or to nearby city parks if they did not.”<sup>66</sup>

Urban ethnographer Erin Graves found additional polarizing patterns of design-politics at work in her study of the mixed-income public housing redevelopment at Maverick Landing in Boston. She describes how management controls over public spaces endeavored to signal “a homogenous middle-class community” through a “marketable combination of aesthetics and tranquility.”<sup>67</sup> By denying subsidized residents the opportunity to personalize their individual outdoor spaces (families could not leave toys, grills, lawn chairs, wading pools or flower pots on their cement patios – or even display Halloween jack-o-lanterns), and by limiting use of shared corridors (management prohibited conversations among older residents across the hall through open doors) and the common courtyard (children could not ride bikes or use skateboards and a 10 p.m. curfew was imposed on all residents), management “encouraged a culture of quietude rather than sociability.”<sup>68</sup> The designers included de rigueur New Urbanist porches – but the management disallowed residents from outfitting them with even so much as a chair. Most problematically, many of the lower-income residents felt market-rate tenants “were not held equally accountable to the rules,” or had different sets of rules entirely, intended to instantiate ideologically grounded norms.<sup>69</sup> The cultural contrast was magnified both because no market-rate-paying households had children, and because they were more racially diverse than the public housing households.<sup>70</sup>

### **Conclusion: Getting beyond the design-politics of race**

Based on three decades of public housing redevelopment studies undertaken across the US, it seems clear the old dynamic of race and power surrounding public housing remains exceptionally salient in the 21st Century. Rather than a mere historical artifact – a lingering legacy from some period of explicit *de jure* (legal) segregation – the racial animus (and animosity) engulfing public housing redevelopment seems at least as persistent as it was during the decades when such housing was first built. As before, the racialized politics of public housing continues to be expressed in the built form that these new developments take as well as through the processes used to negotiate their production. Design standards and social standards recombine in decisions about how many of which size apartment should be built, and the additional choices made during mid-implementation constitute the revealed preferences of profit-seeking promoters. Similarly, once inhabited, the impacts of intertwined mixed-income living get mediated by systems of rules and regulations that seem catered to financially dominant groups, and which

are sometimes enforced differentially – or at least perceived to be so. To inhabit can also be to inhibit. Moreover, because higher-income groups brought into formerly all-low-income communities tend to be more racially diverse than the previous tenancy, ideologically grounded cultural norms associated with white middle-class behaviors and preferences become uneasily overlaid on past social practices that once proceeded with little questioning or oversight during a pre-redevelopment era.

Given how many different scholars have consistently found tensions rather than rampant embrace of middle-class ‘role models,’ it seems evident that some assumptions behind mixed-income communities remain little more than unfulfilled aspirations. In most places, only a small percentage of past residents return and, to most developers, that is seen as a feature rather than a failure. Taken this way, the income-mixing model is more of a real estate development profit-seeking preference than it is a system for permitting larger numbers of very-low-income households to gain and retain a foothold in a safer, stable and attractive community.

Even so, it is unfair to deploy a uniformly broad-brush critique to such ventures. All too many redevelopment efforts use this process as a mechanism to purge the poorest and divert public subsidies to support the less needy, but in some cases concerted efforts have yielded more equitable outcomes. My own work has proactively sought out cases where redevelopment of public housing judged to have been “severely distressed”<sup>71</sup> has been successfully accomplished while still continuing to house large segments of extremely low-income households of color. In some instances, such as the Commonwealth Development in Boston (which was redeveloped in the 1980s), public housing households occupy all apartments. In this remarkable instance, residents and their allies negotiated an extensive community management agreement that, among other things, gives the tenant organization the right to fire the private-sector management company with 30 days’ notice. Well over three decades later, that arrangement remains in place, and is periodically renewed.<sup>72</sup> In some other cities, housing authorities and their development partners have voluntarily committed to one-for-one replacement of public housing during redevelopment. This is a required feature of the Choice Neighborhoods program that succeeded HOPEVI. That program eliminated many of the shortcomings of HOPEVI and usefully expanded neighborhood partnerships; unfortunately, it was just as inadequately funded as its predecessor.

Ultimately, while the racialized design-politics of public housing redevelopment remains daunting and entrenched, some processes have been much more equitable than others. Often, these more encouraging outcomes have involved not-for-profit developers. At their most optimistic core, not-for-profit developers seek to serve neighborhoods and their residents, not to generate profits. Some for-profit developers are surely public-spirited, yet at some level community involvement is merely contingent, rather than intrinsic, to their mission. Similarly, site managers may operate differently when they feel a need to cater to (or appease) sizable constituencies paying market rates. Sometimes, doing so simply yields a commendable commitment to widely shared norms, but sometimes it tips over into insensitive policing of cultural differences.

In all instances I have personally documented or read about from others, redevelopment efforts have fared best when residents worked closely with advocacy organizations based outside their development. Once inhabited, some management organizations (whether private or public) are simply more respectful of residents than others. Some degree of ‘incorporated exclusion’ may well be present everywhere to some extent, but it does not seem to be uniform. Over time, trust between residents and management can build, especially in cases where there are fewer obvious instances of differential rule enforcement perceived to be linked to race, income level or type of subsidy. It should be clear that there is no single type of mix in a *mixed-income* community. Often the tensions seem worst in those places where differences across residents are greatest – poor renters thrown together with affluent homeowners – especially if this is accompanied by

parallel racial divides. Narrower-mix communities may fare better if they yield fewer instances where cultural preferences, such as socializing on front stoops, become treated as rule violations.

In the end, we can understand these redeveloped public housing communities fully only when we view their full complexity as designed places of habitation. Real estate development and property management entail manipulation of buildings, but they are also negotiations of power relationships. We too often forget that these two practices are conjoined. Seemingly distinct choices about small things like stoops, tot lots, benches and apartment sizes – once these are coupled with ostensibly innocuous rules about barbecues, socializing and personalization of spaces – yield a matrix of micro-practices that wordlessly signals either welcome or rebuff. The silences of design-politics resonate loudly in the lives of the least advantaged.

## Notes

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- 57 Chaskin and Joseph, *Integrating the Inner City*, 171.
- 58 Chaskin and Joseph, *Integrating the Inner City*, 186.
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# THE SOCIALIST PAST IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY

## Mass housing and uses of heritage in contemporary Eastern Europe

*Maroš Krivý*

### Introduction

Heritage is a slippery concept – inextricable from power and themes, such as the role of heritage as an authorized discourse, the link between economic decline and the rise of the heritage industry, and the ideological and affective work heritage does in realms ranging from material culture to governance and the everyday. These are some of the key topics in the rapidly expanding field of critical heritage studies.<sup>1</sup> As a unique conduit for power and contestation, architecture represents a significant theme in this field. The ideological work of architectural heritage has been traced to the tensions between architecture's formal and material qualities and social, historical and geopolitical contexts to which it is bound.<sup>2</sup> While among heritage experts and the broader public it is commonplace to regard heritage as a timeless, objective property of buildings, built complexes or urban areas, critical heritage studies have drawn attention to the role that social, political and economic relations play in shaping heritage meanings, values and evaluation criteria.

This chapter makes a contribution at the intersection of critical heritage studies and architectural history by surveying contemporary heritage work around the socialist built environment in Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (former Czechoslovakia). Its focus is on the architecture of state-built mass housing (today condominiums) as the most recognizable and culturally significant legacy of postwar state socialism – the vast swathes of prefabricated concrete apartment blocks typically laid out in open spaces at the city edge. The chapter also attends to policies, discourses and cultural representations that shaped and surrounded this distinctive built environment. By heritage work, I refer to discourses and interventions by heritage experts and preservationist activists, as well as to heritage-based discourses and interventions by architectural historians, architects and public intellectuals such as writers and philosophers.<sup>3</sup> The evidence centers on the interconnected strategies of, on the one hand, denying heritage value to socialist mass-housing architecture and, on the other, construing its heritage value as “dissonant” (also “unwanted,” “totalitarian” and “difficult”) – especially prominent in although not limited to Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – to argue that, and show how, these professionals contributed to the *othering* of the socialist past.<sup>4</sup>

The argument is in three parts. As a background, the first part reviews 20th Century efforts to develop a socialist conception of architectural heritage. Next, the chapter examines the ways in which socialist mass housing came to be condemned as the very antithesis of heritage. I refer to this “anti-heritage” reaching its apogee in the 1990s. The third and most original part of this chapter focuses on *patrimonialization*, the French loanword used (instead of the awkward “heritagization”) to refer to mass-housing architecture becoming an object of display and exhibition<sup>5</sup> and to shed light on the practices of displaying and exhibiting it as, crucially, a discordant class of architectural heritage, reinforcing the nativist notions of inheritance and dispossession on which the production of heritage relies.

David Lowenthal, one of the founding fathers of heritage studies, famously suggested that heritage makes the past seem like a foreign country.<sup>6</sup> Although critical heritage studies departed from this too general premise,<sup>7</sup> the idea can be usefully limited so as to ask how certain pasts are made to look like a foreign country while others are domesticated. This chapter asks how, in the 21st Century, the 20th Century socialist past is made to look like a foreign past. As will be shown, the dominant idea that socialism represents a historical and cultural anomaly is *not* challenged, when mass housing is patrimonialized as dissonant heritage, instead of violently rejected. Indeed, this framing singles out the architecture of postwar socialism as some kind of oddity amid the preponderance of ostensibly non-dissonant forms of pre-socialist heritage. It is argued that contemporary Czech, Slovak and Estonian heritage work around socialist mass housing is *postsocialist*, which means that it plays an ideological role in consigning socialism to the past.<sup>8</sup>

The wider significance of the following pages is to shed light on how that heritage work helps to marginalize socialist alternatives in the contemporary city, thereby normalizing the neoliberal present of which it is an expression. The ongoing scholarly and professional appreciation of socialist mass housing remains premised on narrowly formalist conceptions of architecture that perpetuate an imaginary of obsolete socialism. At a time when the resurgence of socialism in the global urban and political arenas is met by virulent anti-socialism, architectural heritage scholars and professionals urgently need to clarify what the political significance of their contribution is. In the very least, it is necessary that they stop associating the term *socialism* exclusively with postwar architecture, so as to allow a rethinking of possibilities that a new democratic socialism offers for tackling the 21st Century housing question.

### Reassembling and relishing the past

It has become commonplace to associate postwar socialist modernism with a hubristic disregard for heritage and historic continuity. For example, the antihero of Czech dissident-turned-president Václav Havel’s play *Redevelopment* (1987) is a tormented architect tasked with redeveloping a historic neighborhood.<sup>9</sup> The play, which was inspired by the planned renewal of Prague’s 19th Century working-class district Žižkov and echoed the controversial case of Most – a historic mining town demolished and replaced by a new town made entirely of prefabricated concrete blocks – ends with the architect’s suicide. Somewhat less melodramatic, Estonian writer Mati Unt’s novel *Autumn Ball* (1979), set in Tallinn’s Mustamäe, the city’s first major socialist housing development, revolves around similar misgivings of the neighborhood’s fictional architect. The novel explores his inner mind as he internalizes the failures of modernist urbanism and ponders the lesson of the spectacular demolition of Pruitt-Igoe: “the abandoned dreamtown,” as the writer put it, “which had got out of control.”<sup>10</sup> These literary works evoke the notion that socialist urbanism disdained history, a notion that has become, after the collapse of state socialism, received wisdom, cited time and again as a proof that socialism was totalitarian.

That notion is flawed. Already in 1936, Czech Left architectural theorist Karel Teige wrote that “cultural heritage” is something that architects must “seize and reassemble” so as to “address contemporary challenges.”<sup>11</sup> Critically responding to the Stalinist architectural culture then triumphant in the Soviet Union, Teige rejected the fetishization of heritage but not its progressive value. In the late 1940s, after Czechoslovakia was incorporated into the Soviet sphere of influence and the socialist–realist method became an official architectural policy, architects were given a similar task – even as Teige was sidelined from influence. Echoing Andrei Zhdanov’s injunction that socialism “critically assimilates the cultural heritage of all nations and all times,” a debate erupted as to which traditions and influences should be seized and reassembled.<sup>12</sup> Some turned to local vernacular architecture and distant history, others championed prewar architectural modernism as the small country’s international heritage asset, while still others suggested to literally follow the Stalinist style.<sup>13</sup>

In early-1950s Czechoslovakia, these approaches were variously combined in a handful of urban development projects, such as the Nová Dubnica settlement, which combined prefabrication techniques with ornamentation emphasizing local tradition and cultural identity and neoclassical symmetry with the traditional urbanism of streets, squares and backyards.<sup>14</sup> Efforts to develop a socialist–realist conception of heritage went together with stylistic historicism also in Soviet Estonia, where the style was known under the curious term *retrospectivism*.<sup>15</sup> For example, the closed city of Sillamäe was designed with an emphasis on symmetrical composition and nods to Estonian manor architecture and local palette. Rather than an “urban anomaly” (as the city was described by an influential Estonian historian), Sillamäe illustrates the critical assimilation in Stalinist urban design of the spatial composition and landscape design of the nobility’s estates, a feature that in its general emphasis on openness can be traced well into the following decade.<sup>16</sup>

The Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s watershed Industrialized Building Speech (1954), which placed standardization, economy and scientific planning at the center of the state’s architectural policies, was the opening salvo of architectural post-Stalinism. The speech and its repercussions across the entire Eastern bloc have often been cited as an evidence that, under Khrushchev, architects turned away from historicism, something that was consistent with the Soviet leader’s renewed emphasis on the Communist future, and might explain why the so-called *khrushchevki*, in contrast to the retrospective Stalinist housing projects, are today widely seen as the most deplorable heritage of socialist modernism.<sup>17</sup> Yet it would be incorrect therefore to regard heritage as alien to socialist modernism. Rather, under post-Stalinist, and especially the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev’s late socialism, the notion of heritage was reimagined across scales ranging from interior to urban.<sup>18</sup> While the renewed emphasis in the 1960s on modern but cozy interiors variously reinforced traditional family and gender roles, the spread of mass housing was paralleled by the emergence of new forms of appreciating the past and specifically the historic urban fabric.<sup>19</sup>

The synthesis of progress and traditions was a powerful motif in Czechoslovakia’s post-Stalinist socialist modernism. Echoes of Teige’s approach can be traced to a 1975 statement by President of the Czechoslovak Committee of ICOMOS Emanuel Hruška that “preservation is no longer held to be in antagonistic contrast to progressive urban renewal, but is regarded as an integral part of the renewal process.”<sup>20</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, heritage preservation was incorporated into socialist planning legislation to forge, as Hruška put it, “a tradition-conscious renewal of the urban environment in a Socialist society.”<sup>21</sup> Hruška’s own career, spanning roles as an architect, a theorist of modernist city planning and, in the 1980s, a director of the influential Old Prague Club, aptly illustrates this synthesizing conception of socialist heritage, while also pointing to frictions between that conception and a more parochial reverence for the old.

The making of Tallinn into a historic city speaks to the same point: a series of measures to preserve the historic center had been put in place concurrently with the development of

Mustamäe, the setting of the aforementioned novel. An early-1960s proposal for redeveloping the center provoked a backlash, leading to a debate around its historic values and its establishment in 1966 as the first Soviet conservation area, balancing the goals of conservation with the improvement of living standards and tourism.<sup>22</sup> In the 1980s, shaped by the interconnecting influences of postmodernism and nationalism, the area was co-opted as a symbol of Estonian ethnic identity. All these influences were mobilized ahead of the 1980 Summer Olympics cohosted in Tallinn, as the historic center went through an extensive restoration. The designation in 1997 of Tallinn's historic center as a UNESCO World Heritage Site consolidated the nexus of heritage, tourism, branding and economic criteria so that there are continuities between the late Soviet and post-Soviet conceptualizations of historic urban fabric as both culturally and economically valuable.<sup>23</sup>

The growing appreciation for the historic city had also led to a rethinking of mass-housing typologies. In the 1980s, influenced by postmodernism, Czechoslovak and Estonian architects turned to the traditional urbanism of streets and courtyards, active ground floors and the articulated facade.<sup>24</sup> In Tallinn's Kalamaja, today a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood celebrated for its walkable streets, rustic backyards and vernacular wood architecture, an apartment building erected in the mid-1980s stands conspicuously out from the context on account of its decrepitude (Figure 18.1). The building is a relic of an abortive plan to develop a flexible concrete prefabrication system, which would fit the neighborhood's scale and style, and to initiate what can be described in



*Figure 18.1* Experimental apartment building in Kalamaja, Tallinn, architect Erkki Valdre (1985–88). Photo: Uno Kukk. © Estonian Museum of Architecture.

contemporary terms as urban regeneration. Today this postmodern apartment building is described by epithets such as “cold brutalist monster,”<sup>25</sup> while its apparent out-of-placeness functions as a foil to the neoliberal city, making the notion of an inner-city public housing seem like an oxymoron.

To sum up, having reviewed efforts to develop a socialist conception of heritage, this section suggests that these efforts themselves must be considered an important heritage of socialist architecture. The socialist notion of architectural heritage can be situated between the idea of dialectically reassembled local or national traditions and the historical turn in post-Stalinist culture, which the historian Denis Kozlov characterized by “a widespread relish of the past,” and which stands out in, but is not limited to, the last Soviet decade.<sup>26</sup> This poses an interesting question whether postmodern historicism (as illustrated by the Kalamaja project) represents a break with socialist modernism, an inflection within it or simply a doubling down on the relish of the past-present in socialist modernism all along. As we have seen, the architectural culture referred to as Stalinist or retrospective (in Estonia) and socialist–realist (in former Czechoslovakia), the other bookend of socialist modernism, supplied its own models of relishing the past, while the conceptualizations of heritage from a socialist perspective can be traced to the work of interwar Left architects such as Teige.<sup>27</sup> Against this background, the next section explores the undoing of the socialism–heritage nexus. It asks in what ways has socialist architecture been othered and used as a foil against which to contrast the supposedly genuine heritage?

### **Seeing mass-housing architecture as “toxic waste”**

In 2012, Estonian maverick architect Leonhard Lapin publicly declared that Mustamäe – the aforementioned mass-housing neighborhood in which every sixth citizen of Tallinn lives – should be blown up.<sup>28</sup> The statement added to the long list of similar destructive visions expressed in words and images in the past: for instance, a 1982 watercolor painting by Lapin’s fellow architect Avo-Himm Looveer depicts crumbling concrete panels sinking into, and being washed away by, the sea (Figure 18.2). For many architects who came of age during the last Soviet decade, there has been a spectacular dimension to imagining socialist architecture coming apart. Architectural historians have celebrated Lapin and his cohort as *paper architects* who retreated from the compromised state-socialist architectural practice to focus on the fantastic dimensions of architecture.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, there are significant continuities between the participation of these architects in late-socialist counterculture and their neoliberal bias, in that their enthusiasm for private capital being a driver of architectural culture was predicated on a formative antipathy to socialism as a practice and idea.<sup>30</sup>

Attaching pejorative meanings to socialist architecture had become something of a cottage industry in the 1990s, with examples ranging from melancholic to apocalyptic and downright vulgar. In the case of Czechoslovakia, they include a drawing of a mass-housing neighborhood as a heap of overgrown ruins, a collage that sees a housing estate attacked by monsters and a cartoon of a tower block being urinated on.<sup>31</sup> In the catalog written for the Czechoslovak Pavilion at the 1997 Venice Biennale, a philosopher contemplated derelict mass housing as a form of “toxic waste” and asked, “How and where to dispose of it?”<sup>32</sup> Another example is a widely quoted paper by a Czech émigré architect despairing about the unhappy heritage of what he refers to as “communist” mass housing. Strewn with a barrage of adjectives such as “sad,” “drab,” “gray,” “uninspiring,” “depressing” and “dreadful,” the paper laments that the sheer extent of that housing “does not allow a Pruitt-Igoe solution.”<sup>33</sup>

The previous section discussed the role of postmodernism in the abortive attempt to rethink socialist mass housing. The popularity in the Eastern Europe of the Pruitt-Igoe demolition example – which we earlier tracked in the 1979 novel about Mustamäe and was referenced

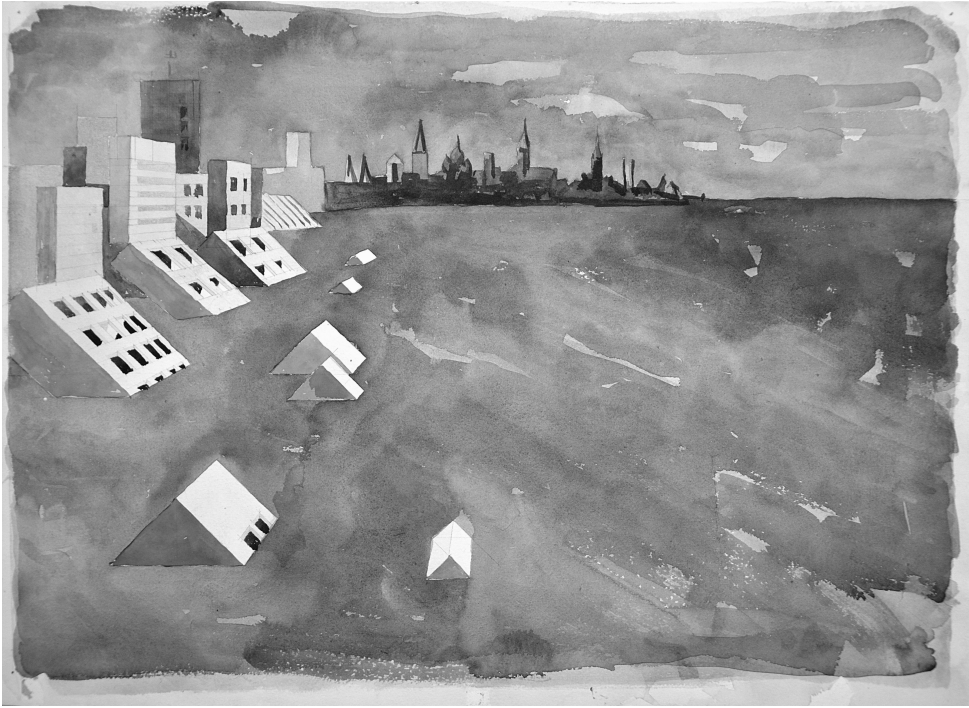


Figure 18.2 August storm in architecture, Avo-Himm Looveer (1982). Source: Estonian Museum of Architecture.

in a 1978 painting by Lapin – points to another, more violent face of postmodernism.<sup>34</sup> Estonian and Czechoslovak architects were familiar with the reference as an introductory foil in Charles Jencks's authoritative *Language of Postmodern Architecture*. In the state-socialist context, Jencks's argument on stylistic pluralism was inextricable from his housing politics: in the 1979 Czech *samizdat* translation of the book, the famous photograph of Pruitt-Igoe's demolition was rendered into a pen drawing.<sup>35</sup> While this has to do with the technical limitations of the copying technology, through the act of redrawing the record of a past demolition became an appealing vision, so that the Pruitt-Igoe example was taken to justify the idea that mass housing is architecturally worthless – a powerful symbol of *anti-heritage*.

The case of Jiří Ševčík, the influential Czech theorist of postmodernism who initiated the Czech translation of *Language of Postmodern Architecture*, illustrates that conceptions of heritage and anti-heritage are inextricable from each other. Ševčík gained prominence on the Czechoslovak architectural scene with a critical study on Most, the aforementioned historic town which was gradually demolished over the 1960s–70s and relocated some hundred meters away to a settlement made up of standardized apartment blocks.<sup>36</sup> He and his collaborators argued that the historic town was an *imageable* and *existential* space – drawing inspiration and terminology from Kevin Lynch and Christian Norberg-Schulz's theories of space derived from universal constants of human psychology. However, the message between the lines was that the new town was *not* such a space and therefore unlivable.<sup>37</sup> In Czechoslovakia, Ševčík's argument was unprecedented not because it criticized mass housing – already in the 1960s one heritage expert criticized the Most project as “a repulsive heap of ugly, poor-quality buildings” – but in that it postulated an antithesis between *good* old and *bad* new urban space.<sup>38</sup>

In Estonia, similar notions of good and bad contributed to the rise of environmental psychology and nationalistic discourses.<sup>39</sup> A prime example is a popular song known as *Stop Lasnamäe*, which the late-1980s Estonian national movement took as its anthem. Lasnamäe, Tallinn's largest socialist mass-housing neighborhood inhabited by primarily Russophone residents, was depicted in the song as an ugly, alienating space of "empty-eyed migrants" who "howl but do not feel or see."<sup>40</sup> Lasnamäe functioned as a visceral symbol that collapsed the Soviet rule, socialist architecture and Russophone citizens into a single negative meaning and thus acted as a foil to nativist notions of heritage ranging from vernacular architecture to property and homeland. In 2012, a catalog of architectural visions for Lasnamäe harked back to these notions when it justified the neighborhood's revitalization with the following innuendo: "Demolishing is part of a building's life cycle. If something better and more diverse wants to take its place, it should be welcomed with open arms."<sup>41</sup>

What kinds of urbanism were regarded as better and more diverse than Lasnamäe? In Estonia, the representation of socialist mass housing as the antithesis of heritage, legitimized by a peculiar decolonization narrative focused on undoing the Soviet legacy, mirrors the patrimonialization of everything pre-socialist.<sup>42</sup> While this was an occasional target for satire (Figure 18.3), heritage discourses also helped to justify the restoration of capitalism. Take the aforementioned house in Tallinn's Kalamaja: to understand why it appears out of context we need to ask how that context was normalized. Kalamaja, an inner-city neighborhood comprised of mostly pre-Soviet low-rise wood architecture, provides a striking contrast to Lasnamäe, while the preservation of the neighborhood's historic atmosphere, stipulated in the historic district legislation, has been quite unproblematically intertwined with real estate-led and municipally backed gentrification playing out along class and ethnic lines.<sup>43</sup>

A seemingly insignificant detail, observed in the historic town of Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia betrays a comparable link between heritage discourse, power and marginalization. Where a vista opens over this popular tourist destination – one of the Habsburg Empire's wealthiest cities in the early modern period and since 1993 a UNESCO World Heritage Site – an information panel provides detailed information about "the picturesque town" in the valley below, only to stress in passing that the mass-housing complex, clearly discernible in the distance, is ill-suited to the historic setting. Yet given the complex, as many similar complexes in the region, is inhabited by many Romani residents, the panel's representation of it as an aesthetic nuisance cannot be disentangled from wider imaginaries about who or what belongs and what or what doesn't belong to a heritage site. The patrimonialization of Banská Štiavnica has taken shape against the background of two intersecting phenomena: the subaltern status of the Romani perpetuated by processes of internal colonization (spanning the state-socialist and neoliberal eras) and a heritage-fueled nostalgia for the imperial past.<sup>44</sup>

I have been showing that the ideological work of heritage entails processes of othering. While critical heritage scholar Laurajane Smith conceptualized heritage as a form of discourse authorizing what heritage is and means, this section has addressed, through examples ranging from architectural discourse to visual art and touristic representations, the power to authorize – and obscure the work of authorizing – what I refer to as *anti-heritage*.<sup>45</sup> The capacity to represent socialist architecture and built environment as inimical to idealized heritage can be taken as one of the pillars of postsocialism. Conversely, heritage discourses and practices provide a unique lens through which to rethink the concept of postsocialism so as to reveal how negative representations of the socialist past legitimize contemporary structures of power. The following section examines the other pillar of postsocialism by asking how assumptions about the present are naturalized when socialist architecture is appreciated as historical.



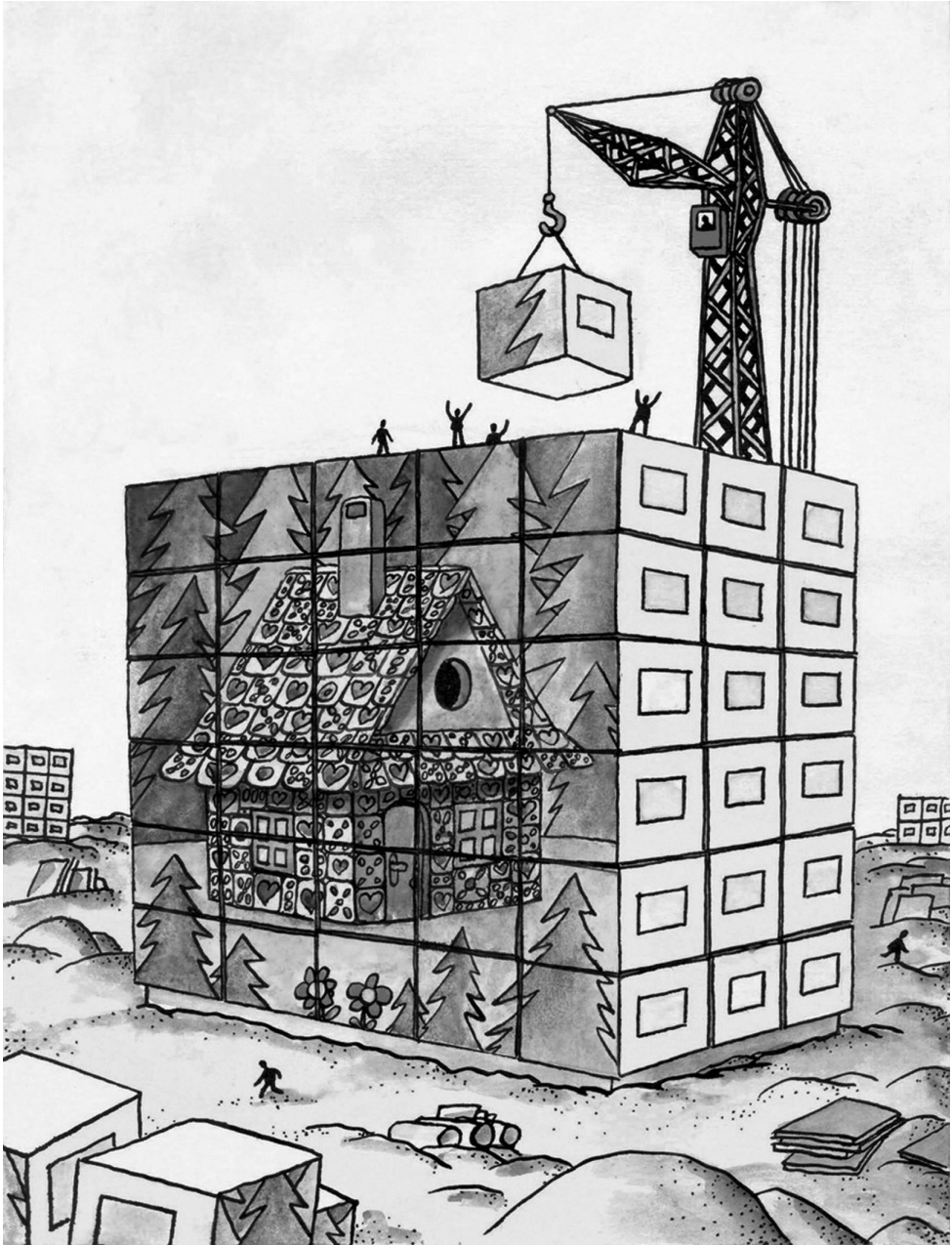


Figure 18.3 Mass housing as the antithesis of traditions? A caricature by Fero Jablonovský (1980). Courtesy the artist ([www.ferojablonovsky.sk](http://www.ferojablonovsky.sk)).

### ... or an “open-air museum”?

A good place to start is the Czech research and exhibition project *Paneláci* (2013–2018), whose title – a portmanteau of *panelák* (the colloquial Czech term for the prefabricated panel building) and *panáci* (the plural form of the word for *figurine*) – conveys the idea of humane mass housing. The premise of this comprehensive government-funded initiative, involving some of the country’s leading architectural historians, is that postwar mass housing is an essential part of the country’s “national cultural heritage.”<sup>46</sup> The historians went out of their way to challenge the stereotype of mass housing being monotonous by painstakingly documenting many different building types across the country. Nevertheless, *Paneláci* abstracts from the political premises of that housing and lacks a reflection on the motives, relevance and ramifications of its contemporary patrimonialization to which it contributes.

The visually imaginative *Bratislava: Atlas of Mass Housing, 1950–1995* (2011), or various efforts in Estonia to inventory and document the architecture of Soviet collective farm settlements, follow a similar path to rethink the architectural legacy of socialism.<sup>47</sup> While these studies challenge the conception of architecturally worthless mass-housing architecture, they nevertheless remain politically mainstream in that they treat mass-housing architecture as a heritage of the foreclosed socialist past. This trend is not limited to former Czechoslovakia or Estonia: the comprehensive *Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955–1991* focused on the Soviet Union or the traveling exhibition *Flying Panels: How Concrete Panels Changed the World*, tracking the evolution of mass-housing systems from Chile to Cuba and Sweden could be cited for evidence too.<sup>48</sup> While innovative and rigorous, these interventions offer few leads for, in fact do not admit the possibility of, rethinking socialist architecture in the future tense.

What many emerging approaches to patrimonializing socialist architecture have in common is the notion that the political context in which that architecture was created or the socialist engagement of its authors must be downplayed to appreciate its value. For example, in an overview of interwar public housing in Bratislava, a Slovak historian described the architects involved in its design as “left-leaning architects who *coincidentally* were also accomplished professionals.”<sup>49</sup> The argument suffers from the unexamined belief that being politically on the Left equals being incompetent and is biased in that it links the value of public-housing architecture not to its social program but to its functionalist style. Comparably, a recent authoritative history of 20th Century Slovak architecture centers on a contentious opposition between modern architecture and totalitarian politics.<sup>50</sup> Such conception is widespread and not limited to historians: as the architect and current mayor of Bratislava stated when reflecting on a group of influential postwar architects, “we have come to appreciate the quality of their buildings without labeling them as ‘communist.’”<sup>51</sup> The architect–mayor simultaneously challenged the stigma of architecture labeled as communist and added to the derogatory meaning of the label. On the same note, the head of Estonia’s National Heritage Board claimed that, in the Baltic country, “anything that has to do with the Soviet past” represents “difficult heritage,” but that a generation after the Soviet Union’s collapse experts assessing its artifacts should place “more emphasis on their artistic and aesthetic values rather than their political associations.”<sup>52</sup>

The ideological work of these authorized statements is more subtle and more insidious than the anti-heritage label discussed in the previous section. When historians, heritage experts and policy makers represent socialist architecture as difficult they imply that other forms of architectural heritage, such as the capitalist one, are unproblematic. The euphemism obfuscates the fact that history is always contested. Crucially, by suggesting that politics is like a skin that must be removed to get to the flesh of architecture, these actors preempt contestation and genuine alternatives in the contemporary urban arena.

To illustrate how even those who seem to be searching for alternatives have internalized a depoliticized conception of architecture, we can look at the case of the 2013 Tallinn Architecture Biennale on the theme of Recycling Socialism. In Estonia the event was unparalleled in that it approached the socialist past through a favorable lens as (in the words of an all-female curatorial team) an era “from which to rediscover projects, materials, ideas and stories.”<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, when the attention was turned to one of Tallinn’s socialist mass-housing neighborhoods, it was uncritically assumed that the neighborhood needs to be revitalized because it is stagnant. The tension was illustrated in all its complexity by the award-winning project, which proposed to bring an “entrepreneurial spirit to the district” with a predictable mix of coworking spaces and community gardens, while preserving a section of the neighborhood as a socialist “open-air museum.”<sup>54</sup> In the end, the titular “recycling” was understood less as *reclaiming* the socialist alternative than as *adapting* socialist architecture to the neoliberal reality.

The ambiguity surrounding the contemporary motives for appreciating socialist mass housing is further exemplified by the case of *Lasnaidee* (Ideas for Lasnamäe), a series of community activist interventions in the eponymous neighborhood of Tallinn. Focused on integrating the marginalized and predominantly Russophone residents, the activists went out of their way to challenge the stigma of the neighborhood by advertising its exotic qualities. According to one of the activists, there is a “potential in Lasnamäe as a tourist destination, particularly for people who are venturing outside the [historic center] ... to seek new thrills and there is a heightened interest in socialist heritage.”<sup>55</sup> Yet if the community activists emphasized the potential of the neighborhood as an unconventional, off-the-beaten-track tourist destination evocative of an aesthetic of post-Soviet cool, it is ironic that the basic structure of that imaginary – neighborhood’s potential – is something that would be more at home in the rhetoric of boosterish planners and the real estate industry. For instance, during a recent conference, representatives of the latter groups agreed that Lasnamäe has a “huge potential” “comparable to Manhattan.”<sup>56</sup> The notion of potential is fraught with tensions as different actors have different ideas on how to realize it: a socialist open-air museum or a capitalist simulacrum?

The puzzle of community activists speaking the same language as real estate developers has to do with the former’s reluctance to acknowledge that architecture is political. Indeed, in Estonian, Czech and Slovak debates, the phrase *socialist architecture* typically refers to postwar buildings and hardly ever to contemporary questions around architecture and society. Thus, the patrimonialization of socialist architecture is potentially harmful in that it forecloses the opportunity to better distinguish and articulate commonalities between these two meanings and adds to the myth of architecture being – or ideally being – autonomous from society.

A recent polemic against critical heritage studies by a group of leading Estonian heritage experts brings this point into sharp relief.<sup>57</sup> Through a series of peculiar misreadings of Smith’s concept of authorized heritage discourse – which, to repeat, posits that heritage is inextricable from contemporary power relations – the experts deduced that critical heritage studies “deny the need to have a knowledge of history.”<sup>58</sup> Seeing architectural values as existing objectively in the heritage site, rather than being born in the present, they insisted that their own training and work experience justifies their standing as “the much criticized heritage experts.”<sup>59</sup> The problematic of power highlighted by Smith touches a raw nerve because it undermines the postsocialist myth of architecture uncontaminated by politics.

The ideological work of that myth is at its most effective when socialism is subsumed under the catch-all ‘heritage’ banner, as my last example illustrates. Relative to other examples discussed above, the initiative *Čierne diery* (literally *black holes*, but meaning *forgotten places*) by the namesake Slovak architect-activist collective does *not* focus exclusively on socialist architecture. The initiative centers on an idiosyncratic archive of buildings that are, appear to be or are imagined

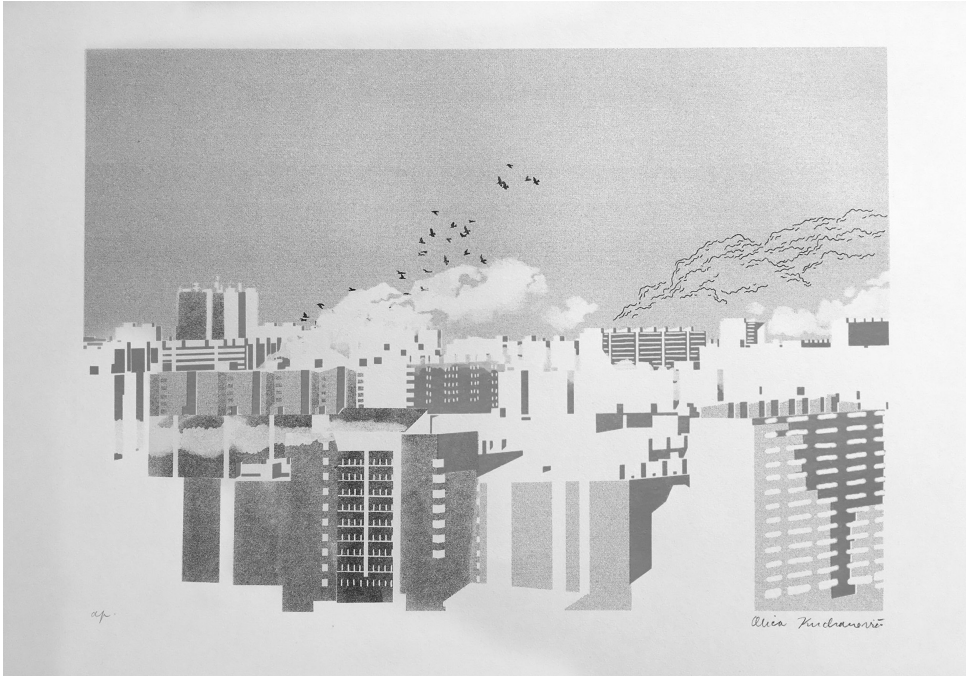


Figure 18.4 A limited-edition print commissioned by Čierne diery. Petržalka, Alica Kucharovič (2018). Courtesy the artist.

as being empty, presented through short evocative descriptions and exquisite Instagram-filtered photographs. *Čierne diery* aims to “fill people with enthusiasm for Slovakia’s neglected history” and is financially supported by sales of highly stylized limited-edition prints (Figure 18.4).<sup>60</sup> The prints’ overpowering aesthetic eliminates all distinctions between the socialist and other pasts, throwing socialist mass-housing projects into a hotchpotch of decrepit village architecture, dilapidated manors and abandoned capitalist factories. *Čierne diery* suffers from the conspicuous absence of a social justice agenda and combines a neo-Romantic nostalgia for an imagined past with a fetish for representation: after a gallery acquired copies of the prints, the collective declared that the prints themselves had become “cultural heritage.”<sup>61</sup> Crucially, the inclusion, among forgotten places, of Petržalka, Bratislava’s largest socialist mass-housing project and a very much alive neighborhood, is symptomatic of, and unwittingly adds to, the neoliberal bias. Initiatives such as *Čierne diery* themselves forget that socialism is not just a label for postwar architecture, but it is also a perspective and program for challenging capitalism.

To summarize, the patrimonialization of socialist architecture has become so widespread that we can now speak of a socialist heritage *bandwagon*. The socialist past construed in the various examples discussed in this section evokes what the art historian Alois Riegl called *age-value*, using historic architecture as a prop for the cult of the old. However, the process of fetishizing socialist architecture’s age-value is itself historically specific and cannot be conceived as following a given evolution.<sup>62</sup> The possibility of using socialist architecture as a prop for the cult of the old is fundamentally political and not simply a matter of that architecture’s physical age. Contemporary heritage authorities who celebrate socialist architecture’s “difficult heritage” add to the foreclosure of socialism at the very moment that they invite us to question it: they simultaneously challenge, and contribute to, the neoliberal construction of socialism as an *other*.

In contrast to concerns for fascist architecture having emerged simultaneously with attempts to rehabilitate fascism, there is limited evidence that concerns for socialist architecture in the area discussed in this study have been accompanied by attempts to reimagine socialism.<sup>63</sup> The socialist heritage phenomenon is symptomatic of mass housing and other state-socialist structures having been aestheticized and depoliticized.

### Conclusion: Whither socialist heritage?

Building on critical heritage studies, this chapter has argued that, in Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the existing heritage-based approaches to postwar mass housing contribute to, rather than challenge, the marginalization of socialism in the 21st Century. When preservation initiatives, exhibitions and statements frame socialist mass housing as antithetical to heritage, but equally when they appreciate it as a form of dissonant heritage, they construe socialism as an *other*. By proceeding deductively from an assumption that the socialist past is dissonant in ways that our present is not, these heritage practices legitimize the neoliberal frameworks in which they are immersed.

The chapter has acknowledged the under-researched history of socialist conceptualizations of heritage, ranging from a dialectical conception of the future as a reassembled past to socialist-realist and postmodern forms of relishing the past. Such acknowledgment provides an important backdrop against which to challenge postsocialist heritage narratives. The work of this chapter points to *postsocialism* being useful *not* as a generic label for post-1989 Eastern Europe but as a concept through which to shed light on the ideological work that heritage does when it helps othering socialism. According to anthropologist Dominic Boyer we can distinguish two facets of postsocialism: one of construing the socialist past as totalitarian and the other of making that past into an object of desire and identity *as past*.<sup>64</sup> Boyer's distinction applies to two different yet interconnected forms of heritage work discussed in this chapter and to a widespread belief that to appreciate socialist architecture we must abstract it from the historical and political contexts to which it was bound.

The key argument has been that socialism is othered not only when socialist mass housing is violently rejected, but also when it becomes an object of display and narrow formalist discourses that obscure or caricature its political complexities. Architectural historian Vladimir Kulić showed that the popularization in the West of Yugoslavian socialist memorials as an aestheticized, coffee-table-book subject is premised on, and contributes to, the process of "orientalizing socialism" through which "the last trace of socialism" is expunged from these structures.<sup>65</sup> Despite the geographical and typological specificity of Kulić's argument, the evidence offered in this chapter amplifies it by shedding light on *self-orientalizing* imaginaries among Czech, Slovak and Estonian heritage professionals. To borrow Lowenthal's expression again, they construe their own socialist past as a foreign country.<sup>66</sup>

In conclusion, it is urgent to better acknowledge the broader social, political and economic circumstances in which socialist architecture was created, while insisting on re-politicizing its heritage value from a perspective in which the neoliberal present is no less dissonant than the past. Although the notion of heritage dissonance problematically implies the existence of heritage that is not dissonant, it could be subverted to highlight the dissonance of mass-housing architecture being enmeshed in capitalist property relations, and even the dissonance of contemporary heritage work to the extent that it remains silent about these relations.<sup>67</sup> But can heritage become a critical platform for intervening in the neoliberal city, and how? Is it useful for reimagining a democratic socialism for the 21st Century?

Moving past the limits of heritage practices identified in this chapter, scholars of socialist architecture need to resist the temptation to exoticize marginalized neighborhoods. They can

ask whether socialist mass housing could be valued as a *pedagogic* object and foreground the kind of heritage work that centers on everyday physical and social infrastructures.<sup>68</sup> They can also draw inspiration from critical literature around industrial heritage, which reveals how capital and class relations shape the ambiguous role that heritage experts play in post-industrial communities as “cultural repair workers,” and invites us to reflect how ideological assumptions around the industrial/post-industrial binary map onto the socialist/postsocialist one.<sup>69</sup> Then again, it is equally important to develop theoretical and political bridges between heritage/preservation work and the work that anti-gentrification movements, progressive municipalities and new Left parties do to de-commodify the contemporary city.

Crucially, concerns for power and justice need to be introduced into the heritage debate and practice around mass housing so as to challenge the comforts of the postsocialist status quo globally. As the vagaries of contemporary capitalism make unmistakably clear, the question whether, how and by whom socialist architecture is valued is a global question. As such, this speaks to the architectural experiences of, and links between, socialisms and postsocialisms beyond Estonia, former Czechoslovakia, and the Eastern European region – whether in presently Communist-Party-ruled countries such as Cuba or China, in relation to the architecture of Nordic-style welfare democracies and anti-colonial movements in the Global South, or concerning western sites connected to working-class movements.<sup>70</sup> While the socialist heritage phenomenon is a symptom of the global postsocialist horizon, it can be broadened to reveal the limits of, and offer tools for challenging, that horizon.

## Notes

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- 4 “Dissonant”: Laura Ingerpuu, “Socialist Architecture as Today’s Dissonant Heritage: Administrative Buildings of Collective Farms in Estonia,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 9 (2018); Milena Dragičević Šešić and Ljiljana Rogač Mijatović, “Balkan Dissonant Heritage Narratives (and Their Attractiveness) for Tourism,” *American Journal of Tourism Management* 3, no. 1B (2014); “Unwanted”: Duncan Light, “An Unwanted Past: Contemporary Tourism and the Heritage of Communism in Romania,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 6, no. 2 (2000); Rasa Balockaitė, “Coping with the Unwanted Past in Planned Socialist Towns: Visaginas, Tychy, and Nowa Huta,” *Slovo* 24, no. 1 (2012); “Totalitarian”: Henrieta Moravčíková et al., *Modern and/or Totalitarian in the Architecture of the 20th Century in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Sloart, 2013); Milka Ivanova, “The Inclusion of the Communist/Socialist Heritage in the Emerging Representations of Eastern Europe: The Case of Bulgaria,” *Tourism Culture & Communication* 17, no. 1 (2017). Significantly, these terms originate in studies on Nazi and fascist architecture. See John E. Tunbridge and Gregory J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Hoboken: Wiley, 1996); Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2008); Nick Carter and Simon Martin, “Dealing With Difficult Heritage: Italy and the Material Legacies of Fascism,” *Modern Italy* 24, no. 2 (2019).

- 5 Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2012).
- 6 David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country – Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- 7 Kynan Gentry and Laurajane Smith, “Critical Heritage Studies and the Legacies of the Late-twentieth Century Heritage Canon,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 11 (2019).
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- 12 Quoted in Alonso González, “Communism and Cultural Heritage: The Quest for Continuity,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22, no. 9 (2016): 656. See also Katherine Zubovich, *Moscow Monumental: Soviet Skyscrapers and Urban Life in Stalin’s Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).
- 13 Kimberly Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 125–26.
- 14 Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*, 198–207.
- 15 Ants Hein, “Halfway Between Baroque and Barrack Style: Estonian Architecture in the Stalinist Period,” in *Stalinistische Architektur unter Denkmalschutz?*, eds. Florian Fiedler and Michael Petzet (Munich: Icomos, 1996).
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# COLLECTIVITY AND PRIVACY IN HOUSING

## Path dependencies and limited choices

*Tahl Kaminer*

### Introduction

In the last decade, a growing interest in co-housing and co-living has emerged, framed as a response to the housing crisis.<sup>1</sup> “A new rental model, co-living, is poised to change the apartment sector,” exclaimed the Chicago-based *Journal of Property Management* in 2017:

As rents soar in many desirable markets, younger renters are proving they are willing to upend the old ‘find-a-roommate-on-Craigslist’ model that has served millions in years past. Older, mainstream apartment developers are now rushing to cash in on the trend. Co-living is already disrupting the Chicago rental market.<sup>2</sup>

Co-living is ostensibly a developers’ response to the growing popularity of diverse forms of collective dwelling among millennials and particularly among young architects. In 2018, the journal *Architectural Design* declared that:

new typologies of communing domestic space – communes, co-living, cooperatives, amongst others – have emerged to create domestic spaces that more precisely reflect contemporary values. [...] Not only does this create a higher quality of life, it enables the formation of new social units that replace the nuclear family.<sup>3</sup>

Collective dwelling, such as co-housing, posits a solution to the housing crisis by pooling together resources. In the US, *co-housing* usually infers separate low-rise housing units clustered around shared communal spaces,<sup>4</sup> whereas in Europe – the focus of this chapter – co-housing typically offers small, basic units or merely rooms organized around communal spaces, often within residential buildings.<sup>5</sup> Individuals sacrifice some level of privacy in exchange for community, spatially manifested by shared living room, kitchen and/or bathroom. Consequently, those struggling to pay rents in London and other global cities can afford a comfortable dwelling and enjoy the advantages of community.

An increased interest in collective modes of dwelling, understood as a rebuttal of the focus on autonomy and privacy of the previous decades, is a welcome response to the multiple maligns of contemporary society: to the pandemic of loneliness (thrown recently into sharp relief by the

Covid-19 lockdowns),<sup>6</sup> to hyperindividualism,<sup>7</sup> to the atomization of society,<sup>8</sup> to gentrification,<sup>9</sup> to dominant, conservative modes of dwelling.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter approaches this recent interest in collective dwelling from the perspective of hesitant support: support, because the resuscitation of collective forms of dwelling is indeed urgent; hesitant, because of the concern that the current interest in collective dwelling is little more than a coping mechanism or a legitimizing ideology, as will be discussed here. That collective housing is also ripe for co-optation is demonstrated by the aforementioned co-living, an impoverished rip-off by developers of the more ambitious co-housing and of the latter's promise for a radical rethinking of dwelling.

The term *collective dwelling* is used in this chapter as an umbrella term to delineate the diverse modes of dwelling in which privacy is eschewed and dwelling is a practice that involves socialization beyond the nuclear family. Forms of dwelling that are aimed at developing a community fall under this term, yet do not exhaust it.<sup>11</sup> *Community* offers a sense of belonging, mutual aid and support, but is necessarily exclusive: by definition, a community requires exclusionary boundaries that delineate an *inside* and *outside*. Consequently, a community is regulated through shared features (such as ideology, class, ethnicity or other), which are perceived as its defining characteristics. *Collectivity*, in contrast, includes also forms of collective living that are not focused on communality and lack boundaries.<sup>12</sup> *Collectivity* and *privacy* are presented here as binary terms, yet they delineate two end points on a scale. They describe modes of social organization with differing emphasis – the latter on the nuclear family as the key unit, the former on a larger social ensemble. Such modes of social organization generate tailored spaces for the relevant social practices: social forms reflected in spatial forms.

Housing relates architecture to politics very differently than other programs. The current housing crisis in Britain, which is not dissimilar to crises in other Western countries, demonstrates the issue's ongoing relevance to everyday politics through its importance to individuals, families and communities. With housing, questions regarding function move to the fore whereas symbolic relations, so central to public buildings, recede into the background. Yet housing cannot be reduced to merely practical concerns: housing is central to the social respectability of families and individuals and is involved in shaping and affirming gender relations within the family.<sup>13</sup> It is a means of social reproduction: housing channels the social forces of integration by reproducing society's ideals, normativity and self-image at the scale of the home. As such, the provision of housing, its cost and tenure security are political issues. Modes of dwelling and inhabitation, in contrast, are rarely discussed within official politics, but are vehicles of implicit ideologies and normativity, which are implicated, among others, in class, gender, race and identity.<sup>14</sup> Housing is an apparatus (*dispositif*), to use Foucault's term,<sup>15</sup> involved in ordering, shaping and directing subjects. By studying the emergence of ideas of privacy in housing, this chapter will demonstrate the manner in which an ideology can shape society through housing, whereas the case of the current interest in collectivity, this chapter argues, demonstrates the capacity of economic interests to shape ideology.

The emergence of housing as a specific architectural category took place in the 19th Century, with the inception of mass housing.<sup>16</sup> In the last decades, in countries such as the US and Britain, the architectural discipline has shifted its focus away from housing in response to the receding involvement of architects in mass housing and the convenient perception of architecture as first-and-foremost a cultural rather than a social product.<sup>17</sup> The current architectural interest in collective dwelling challenges this situation.

This chapter will begin by interrogating the emergence of *housing* as an architectural issue in order to demonstrate that collective dwelling was thwarted already at this moment of inception, identifying a trajectory that would later undermine 20th Century efforts to develop collective forms of dwelling. It will trace the development of privacy as a core aspect of bourgeois, and later

middle-class housing, and the emergence of the villa as the hegemonic housing typology. And lastly, the chapter will offer a critique of the current interest in collective dwelling, suggesting it is a 'band-aid' of sorts rather than a real challenge to the unacceptable housing provision and prices typical of current global cities.

### **Model housing and slums**

The emergence of *housing* as an architectural issue was the result of the mass urbanization of the 19th Century, of economic change and of specialization – the professionalization of home building.<sup>18</sup> The sanitary movement in Britain, born as a reaction to advancements in health and to outbreaks of major epidemics, identified the overcrowded and decrepit homes of the working class in fast-urbanizing cities such as London and Manchester as a key cause of the spread of disease.<sup>19</sup> The working-class dwellings were also perceived as immoral, as families shared rooms with others, impeding decency associated with privacy – married and unmarried women and men sharing their domicile.<sup>20</sup>

The initial response was via a multitude of charities that embarked on realizing model homes for the working class in the 1840s. Quality and morality, the two aims of the reformers, were presumed to be addressed via privacy. These dwellings, as architecture critic Robin Evans pointed out,<sup>21</sup> were modeled on the homes of the middle-class reformers, and their key feature was, indeed, privacy: the provision of homes for single families with rooms that allowed the separation of adults from children and the separation of sexes (Figure 19.1).

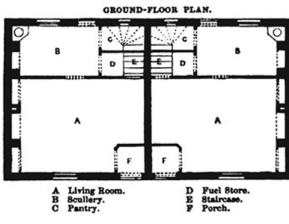
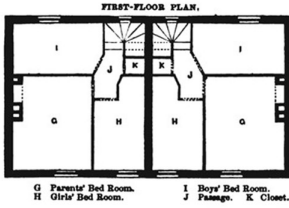
In that era, the English working class shared little with the middle-class reformers. The Church of England was perceived by the predominantly Methodist laborers as the enemy, identified with the factory owners and government.<sup>22</sup> The laborers were mostly illiterate or partially literate. There was no social mobility between the skilled laborers and the middle class. There were no shared or similar experiences of dwelling. Without a conception of social mobility, the working class could not desire or covet the lifestyle of their social superiors in this era: it was beyond the imaginable.<sup>23</sup>

The mode of dwelling of the working class was alien to the middle classes. London's East End, for example, became the locus of a growing slum, housing migrants from rural England and abroad.<sup>24</sup> The area had been a service area to the city, the locus of market gardens, tanning, weaving and similar industries. Urban migration resulted in a severe housing shortage. Newcomers entered overcrowded, speculative and badly built housing; some occupied derelict houses in existing East End hamlets. Several families could occupy a single home, lodgers would be common, and occasionally lodgers would have 'sub'-lodgers.<sup>25</sup> Shacks were built in the backyards once space became sparse, increasing the overcrowding. In effect, this was a collective form of dwelling developed from need and limited resources. This collective form of dwelling, while related to hardship, also enabled forms of mutual aid and communal support: taking care of children when a neighbor was away, alerting neighbors when water was available or warning when police approached.<sup>26</sup>

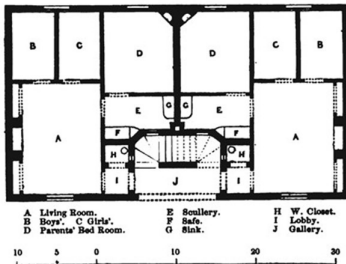
The model dwellings intervened in this context of overcrowding and hardship. Many model dwellings of the 1840s remained empty, rejected by the workers for whom they were built. Others were vandalized by the new occupants. In other cases, the occupants all slept in a single room. As the working class of the period lacked a voice, and as surveys and interviews were not conducted in that era, the reasons for the failure can be assumed but not proven. Evans pointed out that sub-renting rooms was not possible in the model dwellings.<sup>27</sup> These dwellings also offered a type of lifestyle to which the working class was not accustomed: such conditions of dwelling undermined the social networks developed through collective dwelling in the slum. In other words, the emphasis of the model dwellings on privacy may have been one reason for their

FOR WORKMEN'S DWELLINGS IN TOWNS,  
TO BE BUILT IN PAIRS, OR IN A ROW.

PLANS OF A DOUBLE HOUSE FOR ONE FAMILY IN EACH.



PLAN of a DOUBLE HOUSE, with FOUR DISTINCT TENEMENTS on Two Floors,  
the Upper one being approached by an Open Staircase.



N.B. DOUBLE COTTAGES FOR TWO FAMILIES IN EACH.

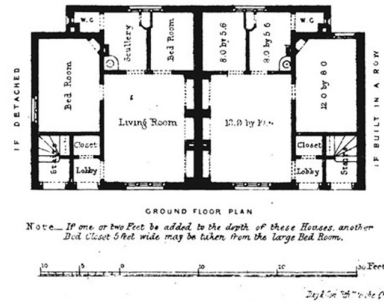
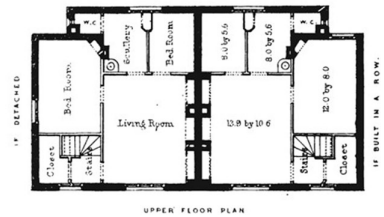


Figure 19.1 Three typologies of charity housing for the working class, modeled on middle-class housing: the main door entry of two of the typologies provides privacy to the family unit, while the terminal rooms offer privacy to family members. Drawing by Henry Roberts, c1851. Source: Henry Roberts, *The Dwellings of the Labouring Classes*, London: Society for Improving the Conditions of the Labouring Class, 1853.

rejection. “It took a very long time before the idea of an imposed communal landscape began to yield to the wish for the kind of individualized suburban domain invented by the English middle class,” wrote the housing historian Anthony Wohl.<sup>28</sup>

What matters here is that the proposition of privacy, as articulated by the reformers, was posited against a form of collective dwelling, and that while the early model dwellings were not considered a success, they formed the basis for later homes for workers, as developed in the 1850s–1900s through charity, and later via council housing. All these later dwellings followed the path identified already in the 1840s – modeling working class homes on the middle-class mode of dwelling with an emphasis on privacy. These principles were not challenged by the working class once it self-organized and became involved in addressing workers’ housing needs. An opportunity for a very different form of dwelling was thus muted by the insistence of the reformers on integrating the workers – a presumption that if the working class lived like the middle class, it would become less different, less immoral, less criminal and hence, less of a threat: a shared experience of dwelling and

lifestyle as a means of reducing adversity and averting class war. “If the working man has his own house,” the reformer Lord Shaftesbury commented in the 1860s, “I have no fear of revolution.”<sup>29</sup>

### The villa

Middle-class housing reformers perceived the detached house as the typology that offered the best quality and privacy, modeled, as aforementioned, on their own lifestyle and preferences.<sup>30</sup> The issue here is not size or space, but preferred typology. The villa and its derivatives (e.g. the suburban *pavillion*) developed into the bourgeoisie’s favorite typology in a process initiated in 16th Century Venice, as art historians Reinhard Bentman and Michael Müller demonstrated.<sup>31</sup> By the mid-19th Century, the era discussed here, it had become the desirable typology also among much of the middle class, even as the working class remained indifferent.

Bentman and Müller argue that the Venetian villa was born as a result of the economic crisis that Venice faced in the early 16th Century as the city’s power and sea trade diminished.<sup>32</sup> The crisis initiated the redirection of investments to land reclamation, agriculture and real estate on the Venetian Terraferma. There, the Venetian bourgeoisie – the wealthy traders – had been dismantling the feudal structures and sidelining the hinterland nobility through political and legal maneuvering.<sup>33</sup> Land and agriculture were perceived up until then by the urban nobility and wealthy traders as inferior to the sea trade.<sup>34</sup> The economic restructuring, then, required ideological repositioning: a valorization of land, agriculture and the hinterland landscape. The villas designed by Palladio and his peers were the vehicles of such valorization: their cultural and social prestige was achieved by an assiduous deployment of classicism, by situating the villas at the center of the new estates (*podere*), often on hills commanding impressive views of nature, and by a diligent placing of openings to produce an idealized framing of the landscape.<sup>35</sup>

The Venetian villa cannot be identified with the idea of privacy. Its rooms were *thoroughfare rooms* with multiple doors and limited privacy, as advocated by Alberti and others. Moving within the villa required crossing through rooms, enhancing the experience of the villa as a unified, coherent object. Evans, citing early 16th Century sources,<sup>36</sup> identified the villa of the period as the epicenter of social activities and a ‘publicness,’ the locus for social performativity. Privacy is absent. What is relevant here, in the early modern villa, is the transition from the social performativity and publicness of the aristocratic court to the increased focus on the single-family unit of the villa.

The enhanced emphasis on privacy can be related to the rise of the ‘self,’ the idea of the autonomous human subject, which became fully manifested in the second half of the 18th Century. This idea found its most precise articulation in Kantian humanism, but is also present elsewhere in Enlightenment culture and thought, as in the emergence of the psychologically-deep subject in the theater of the period.<sup>37</sup> Such understandings of the individual ‘emancipate’ human subjects from their environment. Individual subjects are presumed to transcend their environment – that is, no longer formed via or fully dependent on the social context, whether family or society. In such settings, spatial privacy is the spatial counterpart to the human subject’s autonomy from the social. Spatial organization corresponded to changes in perception of the human subject by ‘individuating’ spaces – namely, by increasing privacy.

By the late 18th Century, then, ideas of the *autonomous self* coincided with increased privacy within the homes of the bourgeoisie. Corridors, absent in the 16th Century villas, allowed each room a certain autonomy from the whole. Such rooms were *terminal*; they did not require access via other rooms. Thoroughfare rooms fell out of favor. The early formation of these ideas of spatial privacy, according to Evans, took place in the second half of the 17th Century and was a consequence of *puritan* worldviews.<sup>38</sup> In the utilitarian puritan mindset, he argued, the constant

commotion of thoroughfare rooms was perceived as an unnecessary distraction that undermined work and contemplation – a form of wastefulness that puritans abhorred.<sup>39</sup> Hence the introduction of passages and corridors as a means of controlling access and allowing the creation of terminal rooms, beginning in that period. Initially, these passages were the means of removing the circulation of servants from the rooms, consequently creating two systems of circulation based on class and function. Later, during Enlightenment, the passages became the only means of circulation, strengthening the privacy of the dwellers and enabling splitting the home into a public area and a private area of domesticity.<sup>40</sup> The contours demarcating the relation of the individual subject to his/her environment – read: society – were now rigidly redrawn.

Evans's argument chimes with Max Weber's: the latter described the formation of modern society and spread of capitalism through the introduction of the Protestant work ethic as a societal organizational principle.<sup>41</sup> A major moment in this process, according to Weber, was the reorganization of puritan communities around the work ethic, which took place primarily in the 17th Century.<sup>42</sup> Hence, these key moments in the emergence of modern society either slightly preceded or coincided with the early appearance of passages and corridors in the homes of the wealthy in the two periods identified by Evans – the initial introduction of passages from 1650 onward and the complete elimination of thoroughfare circulation a century later.<sup>43</sup>

### Path dependencies

By the 1850s, then, spatial privacy had become a convention of the bourgeois home. This was the era in which the villa, or more generally the *pavillion* house, was being 'middle-classed': no longer the privileged abode of the wealthy traders, in the late 18th Century the villa had been adopted – in more humble versions – as the preferred typology of less affluent traders, and in the 1840s was in the process of being adapted to the finances of the less well-heeled middle-class strata.<sup>44</sup> The most visible development was the terraced house in Britain – a typology that offered most of the villa's qualities as perceived by the middle class, that is, fewer shared or communal facilities (e.g. typically limited to shared walls, fences and access pathways) and maximum privacy for the family unit (main door entrances, internal staircases and private back yards) and for the family members (terminal rooms).<sup>45</sup> The villa and its derivatives were now seen by the wealthy and middle class to offer the correct form of dwelling, a sentiment not yet shared by the working class.

Housing reformers in that era may have wished to provide laborers with detached *pavillion* homes, but that was not financially feasible. The charity housing of the era, beginning already with some of the model dwellings of the 1840s, devised a solution in the form of shared stairwells and access galleries. "In providing for the accommodation of a large number of families in one pile of building," argued Henry Roberts, one of the architects involved in model housing, "a leading feature of the plan should be the preservation of *the domestic privacy and independence* of each distinct family, and the *disconnexion of their apartments*."<sup>46</sup> A debate among reformers that began in these years and continued into the early 20th Century pitted the question of quantity, the ability to provide housing for the masses, against quality, the intention of providing maximum privacy.<sup>47</sup> The shared facilities were seen as compromises. The debate was about how far the compromises could go before quality was completely undermined.<sup>48</sup>

The Tudor Walters Report of 1918 consolidated the conclusions of the previous decades. The committee that issued the report included influential figures such as the housing pioneer Raymond Unwin, associated with the Garden City movement.<sup>49</sup> Its recommendations regarding housing, including its proposal of specific floor plans, typologies and urban morphologies, shaped British housing for the following decades.<sup>50</sup> "The Committee did consider the Scottish building practice of tenement buildings, with dwellings on each floor level," commented the urbanist Roderick J.

Lawrence in 1985, “however, it strongly recommended the adoption of two-floor dwelling units, and this clear preference for the cottage or terrace can be associated with the options and ideas of Raymond Unwin.”<sup>51</sup> Lawrence pointed out that the comments in the report

upheld that the separate, independent nature of the dwelling unit was necessary, much as the Model Dwelling Societies had reasoned half a century earlier; secondly, they expressed a clear preference for the living areas to be spatially separate from the circulation spaces within the dwelling itself. Hence the pattern of separate dwellings for each household unit was established, and each dwelling was to have a number of separate spaces, classified and used for specific activities.<sup>52</sup>

The Tudor Walters Report was published only a few years before the experimentation in housing of early modernists commenced. Some of the experimentations of the interwar and postwar years focused on collective dwelling, such as the Narkomfin (1932), the Unité d’Habitation (1952), or the ‘mature’ forms Israeli kibbutzim (collective agrarian settlements) developed in the 1960s. In all these examples, collectivity was articulated via the provision of generous shared, communal facilities and spaces within these buildings, complexes or settlements. The *public* areas of homes were often reduced or eliminated – the Narkomfin’s F-type apartments, for example, eliminated the kitchen to encourage use of the generous communal facilities (Figure 19.2); early kibbutzim likewise did not include kitchens in the homes; by the 1960s kitchens were provided, though they remained minimal, as the communal dining hall was conceived as the epicenter of communal life.<sup>53</sup> But the logic of the floor plans of the homes in such projects remained overall similar to those of their predecessors, as Evans pointed out: split between more private areas of domesticity, with 2–3 ‘terminal’ rooms accessed via corridor, lobby or central distribution and reduced or limited *public* areas – entrance lobby, living room. The collective features of the design were more visible elsewhere – on the roof of the Unité, for example, in

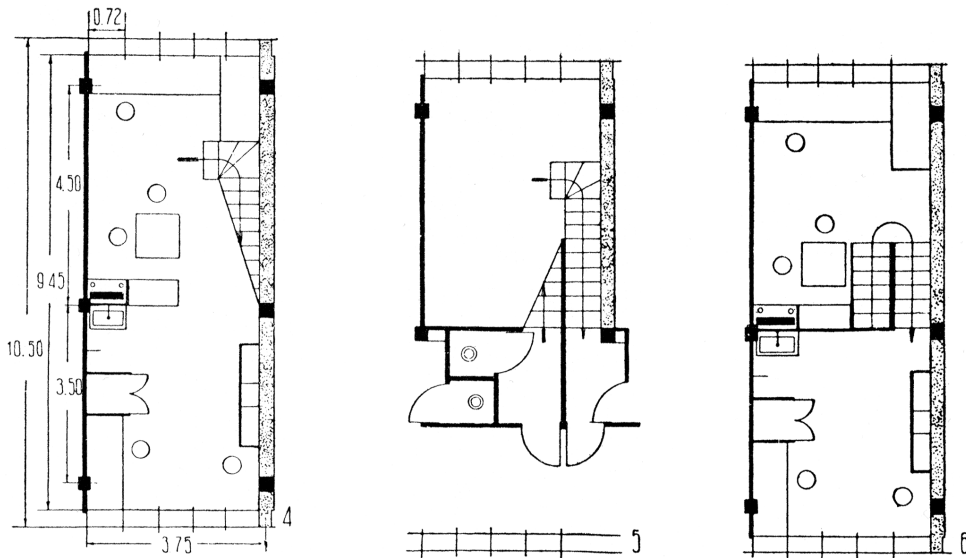


Figure 19.2 Collective housing at the Narkomfin: the central floorplan depicts the entrance level to two F-type apartments. Moisei Ginzburg, the Narkomfin, 1932. Source: Moisei Ginzburg, Жилище (Dwelling), USSR: Gosstrojizdat, 1934.



the communal area at the center of the kibbutz or in the glazed structure (the *communal block*) connected to the Narkomfin's main slab (the *residential block*).

The Narkomfin, the Unité and most such experiments in collectivity took the form of residential buildings rather than cottages, villas, terraced houses or other *pavillion* forms, shunned because of their high cost, inefficiency and their association with privacy and with the bourgeoisie. Thus, while the 19th Century reformers perceived shared stairwells and galleries as compromises, for the modernists, these were signs of efficiency and collectivity (e.g. the Smithsons' 'streets in the sky').

By the time council housing was launched in earnest in Britain with 1919's 'homes for heroes,' the working class was better integrated – through self-organization and agitation, it now had a voice. Its representatives sat in the House of Parliament and negotiated with factory owners.<sup>54</sup> While a villa was an unthinkable abode in the 1840s, by the 1920s, the skilled laborers' values and desires increasingly coincided with those of their social superiors. The Workmen's National Housing Council, for example, founded in 1898, identified the cottage as the desired home.<sup>55</sup> Toward the end of WWI, The Women's Housing Sub-committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction was set up. It directly consulted workers and workers' organizations such as the Women's Labor League. It considered communal kitchens and dining rooms a sometimes necessary compromise rather than an ideal.<sup>56</sup> A publication derived from the committee's work, *The Working Woman's House*,<sup>57</sup> included plans for housing not dissimilar to those of the earlier middle-class reformers: two-floor semi-detached homes divided into a more 'public' ground floor and a private upper floor. Discussing cooperative housing, the publication argued that the working woman

wants her own house to have its sufficiency of bedroom accommodation, its sitting-rooms and cooking and washing arrangements within itself; she wants her own garden both for the children to play in and for her to grow her own vegetables; *she wants complete privacy for her family arrangements*. But she recognises that by co-operation amongst householders she may save time and money and labour and improve the general amenities of life. In all her proposals she aims at the provision of a fully-equipped establishment where the whole of the work is carried out, and not an establishment to which each householder may go to do her work herself.<sup>58</sup>

As this process of integration proceeded, workers became less accepting of anything perceived to be stigmatized as socially inferior. The high-rise council buildings of 1960s UK, the modernist experimentations, the housing estates 'slabs' – these typologies lacked not only the familial privacy of *pavillion* homes, but basic social respectability once they were identified with the poor and the lowest social strata.<sup>59</sup> And increasingly, the working class, like the middle class, demanded privacy. Privacy of rooms did not suffice for social respectability; the *pavillion* house became a symbol of achievement, of the family unit and of the 'self.'<sup>60</sup>

In these conditions, the compromises of council housing – that is, their pooling together of resources – meant such housing increasingly faced opposition by the working class that earlier in the 20th Century welcomed it. Residential buildings, the lack of main door access, access galleries – these became the signs of compromises typical of poverty, of lower social status in Britain. With the villa or *pavillion* house as the desired abode by all strata of society, the rejection of the compromised residential building of the postwar era became unavoidable, identified with a lack of individuality, of humanity: a crime against the poor.

So far, this chapter identified the inception of the grand project of integrating the working class through housing: the presumption that a working class that would live in a *moral* and

*respectable* manner – that is, emulating the middle-class way of living – would be less of a threat to the social and political order. It has focused on the UK, the first industrialized country, yet similar processes took place also in other industrializing settings, such as Germany. The preferred home of the middle class, that is, the detached house typology and floor plan based on conceptions of privacy, despite its initial 1840s rejection, remained the guiding principle for the charity housing and later council housing. Consequently, a potential for other forms of dwelling, based on the experience of mutual aid and community developed from the hardship of the slum, was thwarted by the middle-class focus on privacy. Path dependencies meant that by the time the working class had a voice, the trajectory of housing was already set. And the experimentations of modernists in the 1920s and 50s were ultimately rejected by a working class that had already assimilated the values of its social superiors.

### Co-housing, first and second wave

The integration of the working class, the social mobility enjoyed by skilled laborers in the postwar years, the weakening of trade unions in the 1980s and the gradual erosion of industry in the West have meant that the role of the working class as catalyst of change dissipated in the 1970s and 1980s. Experiments in forms of collectivity, which began in the late 1960s, mostly involved middle-class youth seeking alternative lifestyles and demarcated the changed priorities of the era: the artistic critique of society – the demand for creativity, difference, self-realization, spontaneity and freedom – was becoming the dominant critique among the younger generation, encouraging experiments in identity and lifestyle.<sup>61</sup>

An early precursor of these experiments was the proto-hippie Drop City in 1965, the artist community in Colorado that set the stage for counterculture. The diversity of such intentional communities in the late 1960s and early 1970s was significant, ranging from urban squats to rural settlements, from communes to communities, from anarchist to anthroposophical settlements.<sup>62</sup> Yet at the center of this loose movement was a desire for reestablishing community.

Some of the most radical forms of dwelling can be found among the diverse experiments of these years – the commune was the nadir of these, a form in which the nuclear family and privacy are completely overcome. Arguably, this loose movement was strengthened by the dissipation of the radical social movements of the late 1960s, with many radicals opting to erect their ideal communities after failing to reshape society.<sup>63</sup>

Those collective settlements of the 1970s that focused on community and eschewed transience are nowadays referred to as ‘first-wave’ co-housing.<sup>64</sup> Communal settlements with links to counterculture as well as alternative or radical ideologies had particular omnipresence in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, in which such communities flourished and enjoyed longevity.<sup>65</sup> These countries have historic forms of communal and collective living, such as the Dutch *Hof*, the courtyard, often adjacent to a church, around which widows would live – ensuring mutual aid and support. A particular form of co-housing in the Netherlands, which has existed for decades yet is markedly less radical than the forms discussed above, is the *woongroep* (dwelling group).<sup>66</sup> It is often located in urban settings and can range from a standard apartment to a larger assemblage of units occupying a floor or a complete building (Figure 19.3). It mirrors many of the contemporary urban co-housing and co-living endeavors. The surge of interest in co-housing has brought about an increased interest in the *woongroep*, as demonstrated by the 2019 heading in an article in the daily *de Trouw*: “The *Woongroep* is Back in Amsterdam.”<sup>67</sup>

Current co-housing is seen as a direct though less radical descendent of these earlier experiments.<sup>68</sup> *Co-housing*, as discussed earlier, refers to a wide-array of modes of dwelling, ranging from the co-housing apartment to the cluster of low-rise homes assembled around communal

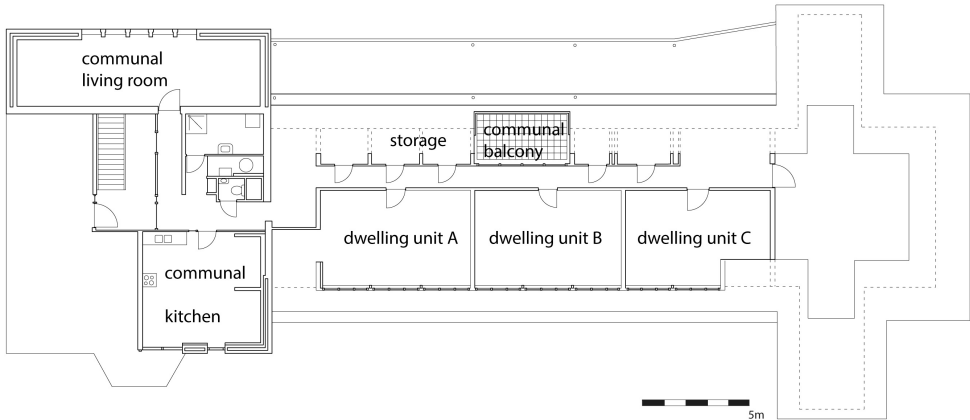


Figure 19.3 A top floor plan of a contemporary *woongroep* (dwelling group) in Amsterdam, located in a reused and adapted 1910s hospital building. Drawing by Emily Chance-Hill; special thanks to Seamus Cater. © E. Chance-Hill.

spaces. The differences between these two forms are not limited to typologies, morphologies, or scale: the latter is more middle-class focused, usually ownership-based, and easily accommodates intergenerational living – the elderly, families and children. The former rarely involves ownership and is directed at young singles or couples. In countries in which rental tenures do not enjoy significant protection, such as the UK, rent-based co-housing struggles to prevent the transience of its residents, and consequently long-term communities rarely emerge in such conditions.

### A legitimizing ideology

The decades that have passed since the rejection of the postwar effort in the provision of social housing, since the experimentation in collective dwelling, have mostly enhanced the dominance of the villa as the desired housing typology in Britain if not worldwide.<sup>69</sup> Yet despite significant processes of suburbanization and sprawl in most Western countries, the rediscovery of the city by capital and the middle class (the back to the city movement) in the 1990s and 2000s and the resulting high cost of inner-city housing have pressurized residents of cities such as London to adapt to these conditions. Residents in their 30s and 40s with well-above average earnings struggle today to pay inner-city rents or save for deposits required for mortgages; like the less affluent, they have been left with limited choices.

The emergence of an interest in collective forms of dwelling must be understood against this backdrop. Even the more corporate co-housing and co-living schemes echo the values of the movement as a whole in publicity strap lines and manifestos: “We’ll admit it: we’re idealists,” pronounces one website; “you are connected to something bigger and more social that stretches beyond your front door.”<sup>70</sup> Another argues that “we believe that connecting with others makes for a far more rewarding kind of lifestyle.”<sup>71</sup> The deployment of such values in commercial enterprise demonstrates their ubiquity and mainstreaming. It is not necessary to doubt the intentions of the contemporary advocates of collective housing – but the relative success and wide dissemination of these ideas, considered until recently fringe, owe much to the lack of choice available to young people in London as in many Western cities.

In this context, it is no coincidence that a 2019 briefing paper by the neoliberal think tank Adam Smith Institute proposed lifting limitations on home sizes to enable micro-housing.<sup>72</sup>

The profits of developers increase, as a rule of thumb, by providing smaller homes: for example, realizing a three-floor building with five apartments of 50 m<sup>2</sup> each, would usually ensure higher profits than the same three-floor building with three apartments of 83 m<sup>2</sup> each. The co-living housing currently on offer demonstrates the same formula: increasing housing densities and overcrowding increases profits – a law the slumlords of the 19th Century knew all too well.

From the perspective of the 30-year-old residents of London, co-housing and such initiatives, including opportunistic co-living, are often an improvement on other available housing in the conditions of extreme property prices. Collective dwelling in this context is necessarily a *coping mechanism* – a means of maintaining a home close to place of work, friends and family.

Coping mechanisms emerge from necessity. In the 1990s, the anarchist and journalist Colin Ward commended the British squatting pioneer Ron Bailey for his pragmatism in entering negotiations with local authorities and compromising. “Now I’m aware of course that there are anarchists around who regarded Ron Bailey and people like him as renegades for entering into deals with local authorities for licensed squats,” said Ward, “even though there are housing co-ops in London today which grew out of them. These critics would rather that the squatters had gone down fighting under the banner of ‘No Surrender.’”<sup>73</sup> This, similarly to current collective housing, was a case of deploying a coping mechanism – squatters compromising their more radical ambitions as a means of guaranteeing the continuity of their communities in conditions of limited options. It was a pragmatic approach born from understanding their own lack of power and hence inability to change the system. Likewise, the millennials opting for co-living in London have limited choices; individually, none of them can affect the housing market. But for developers, landlords and those invested in the high prices, such collective forms of dwelling allow sustaining the high real-estate values – the coping mechanism does not challenge the system. Reducing the pressures for change, it guarantees continuity.

The coping mechanism here is not restricted to the practical aspects of the struggle to find affordable housing in the hyper-priced city – it merges with ideology: the idea that living in overcrowded housing is a *value* – ostensibly realizing the desire for community, for sharing and for experimental living – allows individuals to cope emotionally and from the perspective of social respectability with the lack of options and choice, with exploitation. It encourages a positive, uplifting narrative that motivates individuals in the face of adversity. But the current valorization of collective housing also affirms current conditions, identifies them as warranted and veils the lack of choices available and therefore functions as a legitimizing ideology. In effect, the coping mechanism and legitimizing ideology are two sides of the same coin. The valorization of collective dwelling, then, is an ideology that inadvertently transfers responsibility for resolving the failures of housing policies and the market to individuals and their lifestyle. It protects the failed system by identifying a ‘band-aid,’ a solution of sorts to the crisis – albeit a ‘solution’ that does not address the main issue – housing prices.

## Notes

- 1 Some examples of the scale of media attention: Lidewij Tummers, “The Re-Emergence of Self-Managed Co-Housing in Europe: A Critical Review of Co-Housing Research,” *Urban Studies*, 53, no. 10 (2016): 2023–2040; Neeraj Bhatia, Antje Steinmuller, “Spatial Models for the Domestic Commons: Communes, Co-living and Cooperatives,” *Architectural Design*, 88, no. 4 (July 2018): 120–127; Suzanne Bearne, “Is Co-Living the New Airbnb for Millennial Nomads?” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2019/mar/02/is-co-living-the-new-airbnb-for-millennial-nomads>, accessed March 14, 2020; Natasha Levi, “Canvas House is a Co-Living Space in Singapore with All-White Interiors,” *Dezeen*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/03/11/canvas-house-singapore-co-living-interiors/>, accessed March 14, 2020; Lizzie Crook, “Foster + Partners Reveals

- Visuals of Co-Living Apartment Block in China,” *Dezeen*, February 17, 2020, <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/02/17/foster-partners-qianhai-talents-co-living-apartments-shenzhen-architecture/>; Harriet Thorpe, “Mole Architects’ Cambridge Cohousing Pioneers Community,” *Wallpaper*, May 2, 2019, <https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/marmalade-lane-cohousing-residential-development-mole-architects-cambridge>; Harriet Thorpe, “Noiascape’s Refined Co-Living Digs for Generation Rent in London,” *Wallpaper*, April 5, 2018, <https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/noiascape-co-living-garden-house-hammersmith-london>.
- 2 Diana Olick, “Co-Living Goes Mainstream, But This Is Not Roommate Roulette,” *Journal of Property Management*, 82, Iss. 5, (Sep/Oct 2017): 3.
  - 3 Bhatia, Steinmuller, “Spatial Models for the Domestic Commons,” 122.
  - 4 Dick Urban Vestbro and Liisa Horelli, “Design for Gender Equality: The History of Co-Housing Ideas and Realities,” *Built Environment* 38, no. 3 (2012), Co-Housing in the Making, 315–335.
  - 5 Jeannine Julen, “De woongroep is terug in Amsterdam: ‘We willen geen winst, we willen gewoon een thuis,’” *de Trouw*, September 21, 2019, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/de-woongroep-is-terug-in-amsterdam-we-willen-geen-winst-we-willen-gewoon-een-thuis~bd0b421c/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, accessed March 28, 2021.
  - 6 Dilip V. Jeste, Ellen E. Lee, Stephanie Cacioppo, “Battling the Modern Behavioral Epidemic of Loneliness: Suggestions for Research and Interventions,” *JAMA Psychiatry* (Chicago, Ill.) 77, no. 6 (2020): 553–554.
  - 7 Axel Honneth, “Organized Self-Realization: Some Paradoxes of Individualization,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 4 (2004): 463–478.
  - 8 Noëlle Burgi, “Societies Without Citizens: The Anomic Impacts of Labor Market Restructuring and the Erosion of Social Rights in Europe,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, 17, no. 3 (August 2014): 290–306.
  - 9 Jaap-Jan Berg, Tahl Kaminer, Marc Schoonderbeek, Joost Zonneveld (eds.), *Houses in Transformation: Interventions in European Gentrification* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008).
  - 10 Bhatia, Steinmuller, “Spatial Models for the Domestic Commons,” 120–127.
  - 11 This definition is limited in its detail yet suffices for this chapter. Other, more articulated definitions are possible. Dick Vestbro and Liisa Horelli, for example, write that co-housing is

defined as housing with common spaces and shared facilities. [...] The term *collaborative housing* is recommended for use when referring specifically to housing that is oriented towards collaboration among residents, while *communal housing* should be used, when referring to housing designed to create community. *Collective housing* should be used when the emphasis is on the *collective organization* of services. The term *commune* is used for a communal type of living without individual apartments.

Urban Vestbro and Horelli, “Design for Gender Equality,” 315

- 12 Some of the social movements of our times have encouraged open forms of collectivity, encouraging a diversity of groups and individual subjects to join premised on their shared opposition to the government or position on a specific issue. The ‘boundary’ in this sense is minor and porous compared to a ‘community’ in full sense of the term.
- 13 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1981); Beatriz Colomina, “Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos,” *AA Files*, no. 20 (Autumn 1990): 5–15.
- 14 For race, see Dianne Suzette Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- 15 Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002 [1972]).
- 16 The homes of nobility are not included here in ‘housing’; they have a long history as architectural programs, as opposed to 19th Century mass housing. ‘Mass’ here does not infer industrial mass-production, which followed only a century later, but the design and development of a significant number of homes and buildings as part of a single project.
- 17 Tahl Kaminer, “Capital A,” in *Asymmetric Labors: The Economy of Architecture in Theory and Practice*, eds. Peggy Deamer et al. (New York: The Architecture Lobby, 2016), 16–20.
- 18 Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency* (London: Routledge, 2017), 28–52; George Barnett Johnson, *Assembling the Architect: The History and Theory of Professional Practice* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2020); Linda Clarke, *Building Capitalism: Historical Change and the Labour Process in the Production of Built Environment* (London: Routledge, 2011).

- 19 Edwin Chadwick, "Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain," in *Poor Law Commissioners. Report on an Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: HMSO, 1842).
- 20 Enid Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working Class Housing 1780–1918* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974); Hector Gavin, *The Habitations of the Industrial Classes* (London: Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, 1851), <https://ia801507.us.archive.org/26/items/b22334622/b22334622.pdf>, accessed September 1, 2020; Hector Gavin, *Sanitary Ramblings: Being Sketches and Illustrations of Bethnal Green* (Milton Keynes: Lightening Source, 2015 [1848]).
- 21 Robin Evans, "Rookeries and Model Dwellings: English Housing Reform and the Moralities of Private Space," in *Translation from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: AA Publications, 1997), 112.
- 22 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991 [1963]).
- 23 Friedrich Engels, "The Housing Question," *Marxist Internet Archive*, 1995 [1872], at: <[https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_The\\_Housing\\_Question.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_Housing_Question.pdf)>, accessed August 12, 2020.
- 24 Anne J. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660–2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005); Ed Glinert, *East End Chronicles* (London: Penguin, 2006).
- 25 Evans, "Rookeries and Model Dwellings"; Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Street: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (London: Vintage, 2009), 3–24; Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 2000 [1994]); Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations*; Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977).
- 26 Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations*; Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*.
- 27 Evans, "Rookeries and Model Dwellings," 111–112.
- 28 Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, caption to illustration 31.
- 29 Porter, *London: A Social History*, 329. For detailed discussions of the project of averting class war through housing, see Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, 28–52, and Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes: The Politics and Architecture of Early State Housing in Britain* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981).
- 30 Evans, "Rookeries and Model Dwellings."
- 31 Reinhard Bentman and Michael Müller, *The Villa as Hegemonic Architecture* (Prometheus Books, 1992).
- 32 *Ibid.*, 6–17.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 12–13.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 1–17.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 14–24.
- 36 Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors and Passages," in *Translation from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: AA Publications, 1997), 65–67.
- 37 Kant emphasized human subjects' free will and ability to exercise pure reason as key features of humanity. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1996); Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964), 80–120. Within the arts, early Romanticism emphasized the inner workings of the soul and created 'fully formed' and multi-faceted protagonists in literature and theater. See, among others, Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
- 38 Evans, "Figures, Doors, Passages," 74–75.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 74–75.
- 40 Isabel Rousset identified the persistence of a thoroughfare condition in 19th Century bourgeois and petit-bourgeois homes in Berlin, in which the thoroughfare was integrated into propriety and morals and prevented clear distinction between public and private areas of the home. See Isabel Rousset, "The Berlin Room," *The Journal of Architecture*, 22:7 (2017): 1202–1229, doi: 10.1080/13602365.2017.1376343.
- 41 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Lexington: Renaissance Classics, 2012 [1905]).
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 The introduction of corridors and passages marks, in effect, the birth of 'circulation' as an architectural category. Adrian Forty identified the influence of advances in and fascination with physiology during Enlightenment as the source of the idea of 'circulation' (Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000)). 'Circulation' also becomes an architectural concept: Evans points out that elements such as staircases and corridors were increasingly perceived as the 'spine' of the building, conferring coherence to the architectural whole.

- 44 Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850–1901* (London: Routledge, 2018).
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Henry Roberts, *The Dwellings of the Labouring Classes, Their Arrangements and Constructions* (Elibron Classics, 2007 [1851]), 10 (my emphasis).
- 47 Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 86; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, 10, 77.
- 48 Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 86; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*, 10, 77.
- 49 Roderick J. Lawrence, "Design By [Sic.] Legislation: The Ideological Nature of House Planning in the United Kingdom, 1918–1961," *Habitat International*, 9, no. 2 (1985): 126–127. Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*.
- 50 Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*.
- 51 Lawrence, "Design by Legislation," 126.
- 52 Ibid., 127.
- 53 Freddy Kahana and Tahl Kaminer, "The Privatization of Collectivity," *The International Journal of Design in Society*, 14, no. 2 (2020): 39–54, doi:10.18848/2325-1328/CGP/v14i02/39-54.
- 54 Eric Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 214–251; Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes*.
- 55 Robert Williams, Fred Knee, *The Labourer and His Cottage* (London: Twentieth Century Press for the Workmen's National Housing Council, 1905); David Englander, *The Workmen's National Housing Council, 1898–1914* (Warwick: University of Warwick, 1973).
- 56 Cheryl Buckley, "Modernity, Tradition and the Design of the 'Industrial Village' of Dormanstown 1917–1923," *Journal of Design History*, 23, no. 1 (2010): 25, doi:10.1093/jdh/epp061.
- 57 A.D. Sanderson Furniss and Marion Phillips, *The Working Woman's House* (London: The Swarthmore Press, 1919).
- 58 Ibid., 49–50 (my emphasis).
- 59 Nicholas Dagen Bloom, "Myth #4. High-Rise Public Housing is Unmanageable," in *Public Housing Myths: Perception, Reality, and Social Policy*, eds. Nicholas Dagen Bloom, Fritz Umbach and Lawrence J. Vale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 92–118; Simon Pepper, "The Beginnings of the High-Rise Social Housing in the Long 1940s: The Case of the LCC and the Woodberry Down Estate," in *Architecture and the Welfare State*, eds. Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and Dirk van den Heuvel (London: Routledge, 2014), 69–92. The needs-based allocation of social housing and switch from a principle of universality to limited supply available only to the most deprived have been cornerstones in the development of stigma around social housing.
- 60 See Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 120–131.
- 61 Honneth, "Organized Self-Realization"; Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* [1999], trans. G. Elliott, (London; New York: Verso, 2005).
- 62 William Smith, *Families and Communes: An Examination of Nontraditional Lifestyles* (Thousand Oaks, CA; London: SAGE, 1999); Felicity Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics After Modernism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007); Felicity Scott, *Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity/Architectures of Counterinsurgency* (New York: Zone Books, 2016).
- 63 See Alain Tanner's 1976 film *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*. The screenplay was co-written by the art critic John Berger, who was himself part of the exodus to rural France.
- 64 Lucy Sargisson, "Second-Wave Cohousing: A Modern Utopia?" *Utopian Studies*, 23, no. 1 (2012): 28–56.
- 65 Sargisson, "Second-Wave Cohousing"; Anna Falkenstjerne Beck, "What Is Co-Housing? Developing a Conceptual Framework from the Studies of Intergenerational Co-Housing," *Housing, Theory and Society*, 37, no. 1 (2020): 40–64, doi: 10.1080/14036096.2019.1633398.
- 66 Compare to *centraal wonen*, which is more akin to North American co-housing and tends to be a cluster of homes with shared and communal facilities and space.
- 67 Julen, "De woongroep is terug in Amsterdam," accessed March 28, 2021.
- 68 Urban Vestbro and Horelli, "Design for Gender Equality," 315–335; Tummers, "The Re-Emergence of Self-Managed Co-Housing in Europe," 2023–2040.
- 69 A 2002 Ipsos MORI survey found that the most popular housing typologies in England were the bungalow (30%), the village house (29%), the Victorian terrace (16%) and the semi-detached (14%) – all of which are variations on the *pavillion*. See Ipsos MORI, "Bungalows Are 'People's Choice' In

- England,” June 26, 2002, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/bungalows-are-peoples-choice-england>, accessed September 14, 2020.
- 70 <http://noiascape.com/noiascape/>, accessed April 2, 2021.
- 71 <https://quarters.com/cities/de/berlin/>, accessed April 2, 2021.
- 72 Vera Kichanova, “Size Doesn’t Matter: Giving a Green Light to Micro-Homes” (London: Adam Smith Institute, 2019), <https://www.adamsmith.org/research/size-doesnt-matter-giving-a-green-light-to-micro-homes?rq=housing>, accessed August 11, 2020.
- 73 Colin Ward, “A Visit to Amsterdam,” *The Anarchist Library*, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/colin-ward-a-visit-to-amsterdam>, accessed August 17, 2020.





## PART V

# Spectacle and the screen



# INTRODUCTION TO SPECTACLE AND THE SCREEN

*Francesco Proto*

From the Latin *specere* (to look at), *spectare* (to view, watch, behold) and *spectaculum* (place from which shows are seen), the meaning of spectacle has evolved from the 13th Century French *spectacle* (public show) and mid-14th Century English (specially prepared or arranged display) to the more contemporary and widespread connotation of “visually striking performance,” a “scene regarded in terms of its visual impact” and “an event that is memorable for the appearance it creates.”<sup>1</sup> Progressing from the original meaning of Roman games and preindustrial festivals, carnivals, fairs and theaters, to that of radiophonic, televised, cinematic and/or Hollywood representations in both industrial and postindustrial societies, the meaning of spectacle has acquired such extensive recognition so as to apply potentially to each and every sphere of contemporary existence. Among them, those pertaining to the spectacular dramatization of individual differences through to the “glamour, heroism [and] the libidinosly successful [...] [of] the narcissistic self.”<sup>2</sup>

Providing a context, background or framework for such an all-encompassing concept is therefore challenging. And not only due to its inexhaustible range of applications but also and foremost due to such possibilities only beginning to be recognized as a potential field of research by the broader academic community in the last decade of the 20th Century. Appearing to offer a form of liberation from work or activities and institutions concerned with social production and reproduction, the spectacular has come to be defined not so much as the opposite of the everyday, but rather as a *representation of the opposite of the everyday* whose complex ontological configuration “presents itself as extraordinary whilst confirming the dominance of the everyday.”<sup>3</sup> This has made the notion of spectacle and its corresponding adjective, spectacular, relevant and applicable not just to virtually every aspect of architecture, urban studies or design, but also to the mundane by and large.

To the same degree and being recognized as an integral aspect of contemporary spectacle, entertainment and/or manipulation of appearances, the screen is also undergoing an increasing degree of interest and investigation as seen in, for example, the work of the film historian and documentary maker, Charles Musser, or the visual archaeologist, Erikk Huhtamo. While the former is repositioning cinematic studies in the broader context of the *history of screen practice*, the latter first proposed the word *screenology* for the launch of a new branch of archaeological studies.<sup>4</sup> By far exceeding the classic opposition characterizing public and domestic screens (cinema and TV), and now including such diverse screen configurations as tablets, mobiles and

computers, contemporary forms are providing such a generalized and diffused interface with the world that not only 50% of future jobs are predicted to be screen-related, but the way in which our brain's functioning is being reshaped by such new modes of interaction with reality may rapidly turn into a dedicated area of study, *screenopathy*.<sup>5</sup> It comes as no surprise then that this attention is further evident in the research of the visual culturist, Giorgio Avezzù.

Of the manifold meanings and deployment of the screen embraced by Avezzù in his enquiry, such as the use of the now-removed screens separating the nave from the choir in Gothic religious architecture (*scrinium*, shrine) or the acknowledgment of archaic theaters as collective but detached spectacles of the world (*visorio*), the most cogent here seems to be the reference made to the *fiction* produced by the insertion of a screen between the viewing subject and the scene gazed at in the practice and theory of the perspective window as illustrated and systematized by Leon Battista Alberti during the Italian Renaissance (*perspectiva artificialis*).<sup>6</sup> Its inception, which the psychoanalyst, Gérard Wacjman, celebrates for originating modern subjectivity, is not only an indissoluble aspect of spectatorship, but encompasses the idea of a *medium* long before the inauguration of the digital.<sup>7</sup>

Predictably, the dissemination of spectacle initiated by the universal exhibitions of the 19th Century, accelerated by mass production in the second half of the 20th Century and increasingly dominated by the *entertainmentization* of daily existence in the first half of the 21st Century, has resulted in the screens of media culture currently working as sounding boards and even triggers of daily sensations and screened-out phenomena.<sup>8</sup> Further amplified by the formation of mega-corporations and the consequent interpolation of diverse sectors, such as communication (television, film, pay-per-view), gaming (video games, casinos), architecture (theme parks, resorts) and so forth, spectacle is now floating and mushrooming everywhere in what philosopher Marshall McLuhan prophesized as the *global village*.<sup>9</sup>

Contemporary modes of spectacle (and consequent spectacularized occurrences) are in this respect broad and various. They can span from politics, such as Bill Clinton's hugely media-covered sex scandal or Donald Trump's ascent to the White House by way of his freshly acquired media stardom through the TV series *The Apprentice*, to military conflicts broadcast everywhere on the planet with the Gulf War possibly becoming the first real-time televised military action ever back in 1991. From sporting events (Olympic games, World Cup soccer, NBA, Super Bowls) to the film and media industry including blockbuster movies (*Spider Man*, *Star Wars* and *The Avengers*), TV series (*X-Files*, *House of Cards*, *Big Brother* and *Love Island*) and international theatrical shows (*Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Mama Mia*, a pop mega-hit subsequently evolving into a long-running Broadway/East End production and two blockbuster movies). From *fashion weeks* and the spectacular lives of fashion designers such as Gianni Versace, whose assassination was a "major spectacle of his era" recently recreated by a double-platinum single (Bruno Mars, 2016) and a Netflix TV series (2020),<sup>10</sup> to the contemporary pop music scene as spectacularized by dedicated TV channels (MTV). The extravagant live and recorded performances of mega-stars such as Michael Jackson, Madonna and Britney Spears have, in this sense, paved the way for the 'spectacular' comeback of the 1970s Swedish band Abba, lately transformed into multimedia virtual performances.<sup>11</sup>

To the same extent, spectacle has retrospectively revitalized vintage theatrical genres, such as burlesque and vaudeville, as much as it has actualized, intensified and staged all possible sorts of situation, taboo and/or fantasy as those being displayed by the flourishing pornographic business. Hand in hand with the spectacularization of science and technology, including the landing of a human on the moon, cloning techniques (biotechnology), big data (predictive and user-behavior analytics)<sup>12</sup> and, last but not least, new revelations of black holes (astrophysics), spectacle is colonizing our existence to such a degree that all aspects of the quotidian, from

the most banal and ordinary daily events (feeding a dog, painting a wall), up to a whole parallel universe of microbiology, nano-biology and quantum physics can be said to be shaped and mediated by it, for example, on mobile apps such as TikTok.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, spectacles have been traversing history in both the western and eastern hemispheres.

If the kings and emperors of the modern states have cultivated spectacle as part of their supremacy, this is not just due to the 16th Century diplomat and historian Niccolò Machiavelli advising his prince about the effective deployment of spectacle for governance, but also to the rise and fall of the ancient empires establishing universal precedents in their own right.<sup>14</sup> Starting with the Haussmanization of Paris and the introduction of arcades and galleries in the City of Light from the 19th Century onwards, the spectacularization of architecture and the built environment can be considered yet another ongoing and proliferating phenomenon far from full comprehension and analysis.<sup>15</sup>

What is unprecedented about contemporary spectacle, however, is its diversification and omnipresence both a consequence of as well as reliant upon the multiplication of digital media and communication technology, including social networking formats such as Facebook, YouTube, Skype, Twitter, Instagram and the like.<sup>16</sup> Building upon a tangled process of digitalization of information, mostly implying “the crossing of boundaries between technologies and digital platforms, paid and unpaid, work sphere and leisure sphere, public and private sphere, consumption and production,” spectacles and mega-spectacles incorporating globally networked, internationally screened, virtually circulated and virally consumed events constitute the highly contradictory scenario within which architecture is found colluding, supporting and, increasingly, originating even more structured models of manifestation and consequent investigation of the spectacularization of both the visible and the invisible, as is the case with the phantasmagoric exposure of the Covid-19 submicroscopic infectious agent.<sup>17</sup>

By far exceeding the idea of representation, theater or performance, and part of a broader trajectory spanning from the Roman demagogical enactment of public entertainment to the most recent outcomes of *technocapitalism*,<sup>18</sup> the meaning of spectacle addressed in this section of the Handbook is thus expanded and methodologically interpolated with allied disciplines in order to accommodate the progressively more diversified contexts within which contemporary architecture is either examined or materialized. Eventually charged with social, political, cultural and economic implications that, for the sake of brevity, are not always made apparent, spectacle and spectacularization emerge as driving forces of the newly coined notions of media-driven events and *spectacle 2.0*.<sup>19</sup>

### **Consumption to anesthetization**

Although the contemporary notion of *spectacle* first appeared in *The Production of Space* by the Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre, it is with the theorist, political activist and filmmaker Guy Debord that the term turned into a major conceptual tool to address the spreading of *The Society of the Spectacle* as intimately associated with and linked to the unprecedented production, and consequent consumption, of images advanced by a newly established and hyper-technological media culture.<sup>20</sup> Meant to describe the shift to a more invasive and pervasive form of capitalist accumulation, Debord's spectacle ended up describing a controversial form of society where individuals are prompted to consume due to all potentially antagonistic forces being neutralized and pacified. Situationism was born, a politically engaged, avant-garde movement horrified by the distraction brought about by the unparalleled proliferation of images circulated by both corporate capitalism (advertisements) and the culture

industry (from cinema and magazines to television). Lured into the unachievable dream of happiness and social upgrading promised by the consumption of spectacle, the spectacle of consumption and the entertainment therein, the masses were thus pushed toward liberation by the implementation of strategic forms of resistance intended to overcome both ideological oppression and political and economic manipulation.

The spectacularization of the built environment is far from unprecedented. From Shanghai's exciting new glossy façades, which one free market economist did not hesitate to describe as a "Potemkin village,"<sup>21</sup> to the hyper-buildings now populating the skylines of competing international super-environments such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur and Seoul,<sup>22</sup> extreme urban configurations have gone hand in hand with mega-events for which they provide an ideal scenographic stage prop. By promising a "world of dream,"<sup>23</sup> a "civic mobilization of achievement and overcoming"<sup>24</sup> is displayed as seen in the controversial Nationals Park sports stadium in Washington DC, where the image of vitality and progress provided by the relatively new facility only masks the material deprivation of the many residents excluded by gentrification.<sup>25</sup> An "instantiation of postmodern globalization," the triple movement of the globalization of spectacle, globalization through spectacle and the spectacle of globalization, such as that occurring in Latin-American countries has given rise to a systematic process of gentrification inexorably excluding the disadvantaged strata of the population, as Pedro Arantes and Cláudio Ribeiro reveal in "Western fantasy and tropical nightmare: Spectacular architecture and urban warfare in Rio." By turning a fake representation of socio-political changes into a *fait accompli*, according to a process that critic and theorist of architecture, Neil Leach, has addressed via the notion of architectural *anaesthetization*, ideology is endowed with the most disturbing illustration of its functioning ever.<sup>26</sup>

Guy Debord and his distinguished notion of spectacle is the obvious point of departure for Arantes and Ribeiro's chapter investigating an unprecedented admixture of spectacle, control and colonization which is rapidly impoverishing, manipulating and pushing aside the existing population in the name of an alleged "urban welfare" in Rio de Janeiro. The "tropical belle époque" experienced by the white community as a consequence of the slum clearances affecting the megalopolis – now complemented with the glossy facades produced by a sequence of newly built mansions, parks and boulevards, along with cafés, salons and the spectacular promise of urban renewal brought about by the spread of neoclassic architecture occupying the city center – clashes with the "black nightmare" aggravated by "epidemics of cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis."

The notion of *economics of appearance* by philosopher Giorgio Agamben thus correctly supports a further understanding of the ongoing 'rioification' of Rio de Janeiro in terms of the deterrence and apparent pacification induced by the *mega-events* staged in the city by means of spectacular urban and architectural operations. Under a thick layer of what Arantes and Ribiero term *extreme architecture and urban forms* that dazzle the world via mediatized varieties of exotic urban escapism, what we are left with is a pure and banal process of ongoing capitalist exploitation and sanitization in the region for far too long.

What is unexpected, however, is not just the role played by star-architecture in its total lack of engagement with the preexisting human environment, but rather the role played by *urban imagineers* in reshaping the municipality in a way not dissimilar to that of Medellín as addressed in *Images of Medellín*, an innovative study by Christina Deluchi, where advanced sport facilities have reportedly turned Columbia's second largest conurbation into an "innovative and visionary city." Stemming from the collaging and superimposing of newly futuristic fragments onto the existing urban fabric, the ongoing patterns of social inequality shed light on the shocking contradictions caused by the spectacularization of emerging countries. Completely oblivious

to the regionalist drift animating relatively recent approaches in the discipline, such spectacular interventions both ignore and bypass any chance of a profitable interaction among the parts.

Some of Debord's insights, such as the passive condition of the spectator, the mediation of real life through pseudo-events, and the spectacularization of the built environment, were hardly exclusive. The idea that social inequalities were achieved by a system of falsehoods deliberately promulgated by the ruling class as a means of self-perpetuation had been inherited from the philosopher, Karl Marx, in his *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, as much as the view that political propaganda was further expanding in the nascent business of mass entertainment had been developed by a group of German intellectuals better known as the Frankfurt School, active since 1929. The Cathedrals of Light constructed for the Nazi rallies (Albert Speer, 1934, 1938) and Joseph Goebbels's ideological screenings for the Third Reich (1927–45), which made the most of the rising Hollywood techniques of ambience, scenography and film montage, are probably the best precedents to introduce the circumstances delineated by Aikaterina Antonopoulou in "Mediated spectacles: urban representation and far-right propaganda in crisis Athens." By reflecting on the filmic representation of *Agios Panteleimon* (Saint Panteleimon) Square and the role that this contested public space in Athens played in the rise of the far-right and ultra-nationalist Golden Dawn movement to national prominence, the urban setting is spectacularized for both the *Other* (Asian immigrants) and the government to be scapegoated for the recent Greek financial crisis (2010–15).

According to the analysis presented by Antonopoulou, not only did the amateurish filmic material collected, montaged and posted on YouTube by the party's supporters prove crucial for Golden Dawn to gain popularity via a mediatized representation of the events staged in the square between 2008 and 2017, but it did so through a reconceptualization of the urban experience made available by technological representation and speed. Attentively choreographed and anticipated by footage of the party's aid to destitute Greek residents in the form of free food, the confrontations arising between far-right supporters, anti-fascist groups and the police as a consequence of Golden Dawn's xenophobic attacks on the immigrants populating the multi-story residential buildings surrounding the square is spectacularized to the point of providing incontrovertible evidence of the government's ineptitude, as well as of the threat posed by the immigrants. The cultural theorist, urbanist and aesthetic philosopher Paul Virilio's methodological framework on mediatized representation, here complemented by feminist thinker Donna Haraway's concept of *situated knowledges* and philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti's *nomadic subjects*, supports an original understanding of the real-time manipulation of the built environment.

The stress on particular place-symbols in the square in order to build what Antonopoulou describes as "unsituated claims for 'Greekness' and 'pureness'" has, of course, many correlations with the rise of the Nazi party in Germany in the 1930s. From the symbolic reference to a past grandeur (Eurasian swastikas, Roman imperial eagles) up to the delirious and unrealized city plan developed by Hitler's party ideologue, Albert Speer, architecture has supported a long tradition in the propaganda staged by modern authoritarian European regimes, most recently reflected in the Gothic revivalism of Soviet public buildings in Moscow (State University, 1953) or the eclectic magniloquence of the most reactionary Fascist outcomes (the monument to Italian unification in Rome, 1955). What is remarkable in Antonopoulou's analysis, however, is the shift from the grand narrative of outmoded totalitarianism to the everyday as staged and encapsulated by ordinary individuals in their routine struggle for survival. The church and the square, more symbols of tradition and belonging rather than of power and authority, turn out to be the contested terrain to assert the making of history by the people for the people – or whatever is left of history once witnessed by the recording device.



Incidentally, it was through the groundbreaking genealogy of spectacle provided by Debord that notions of image, ideology, commodity, spectatorship and entertainment were reborn as essential aspects of a burgeoning intricate phenomenon. Progressing from *concentrated* (European totalitarian regimes of the past century) to *diffused* (Hollywood celebrity culture) and *integrated* (liberal democracies), spectacle eventually morphs into a totalizing concept whose power to disseminate, naturalize, universalize, exacerbate and further expand social inequalities remains extraordinary.

### Duplicating reality

Since Debord's innovative breakthrough, the notion of spectacle has been constantly expanded to include and further contend with the *becoming image* of the world, thus confirming that the relationship architecture entertains with the photographic medium has a long history. Le Corbusier's photographic alterations of his own architecture, as much as Mies van de Rohe's photomontages of unrealized projects that were created by cutting and pasting photographic reproductions and drawings,<sup>27</sup> may by right be considered the primordial examples of a tendency now encompassing the collaboration developed during the 1980s between the photographer, Hans Danuser, and the architect, Peter Zumthor, whose early projects were hurled into international stardom thanks to the re-reading of the latter's work in terms of a profound connection with nature. The inversion of the circumstances that saw the successful contribution of the photographer, Maison Durandelle, to the fundraising campaign for the construction of Sacré-Coeur in Paris largely ignored, to a condition where photography is responsible for the increasing conversion of the built environment into a media event, very well makes the point that the architect's authorship no longer appears as the "main orchestrator of the message."<sup>28</sup> Commencing with literary theorist, philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes' pioneering analysis of photography and his understanding of the *punctum* as one's personal connection to a photograph, spectacularization marks the shift to a phenomenon whose proportion and magnitude actually exceed coherent or logical explanation unless scrutinized from the broader rationale of the exponential acceleration of the capitalist logic.<sup>29</sup> Hence the acknowledgment of photography as one of the most powerful deceptive means for human contemplation in the chapter by Robin Wilson, "A 'crisis' of indeterminacy in the architectural photograph: architectural spectacle and everyday life in the photography of Lacaton & Vassal's Coutras House." Excerpts from the works that have made the French architectural firm, Lacaton & Vassal, celebrated worldwide are analyzed in terms of a deceptive manipulation of the interiors via the photographic medium and the complex optical game that makes the most of its alleged self-evident transparency.

By interpolating post-structuralist philosopher Louis Marin's notion of *descriptive gaze* with art historian Norman Bryson's interest in the *low-plane reality* of the everyday, the issue is raised not so much about the increased limitation imposed by the editorial autonomy of the camera work to the authorial autonomy of the architectural discipline, but rather of the ideological substratum embedded in the photographic medium itself. Stuck between rhography and megalography, such interiors reveal to the attentive yet skeptical eye of the author the manipulative intentions of the photographer (and clearly the architects themselves) by far exceeding the modernist use of the pictorial rendering. The widespread production and consumption of architectural images, through which the original artefacts are both mediatized and conveyed, henceforth enabled the shift from the grandiloquent photographic style of the modernist era to the informal and indeterminate, almost intimate, everyday space of the post-post-modern age.

In this respect, photographer and theorist Allan Sekula's critique of the *illusory neutrality* of the photographic approach is corroborated to the point where not only is photography charged,

as Wilson says, with creating “a complex and contested discourse about the architectural object within its media portrait,” but one whose ideological dimension is obliterated to the extent of displacing the “absolute centrality of the architectural referent.” The variants introduced within the compositional codes of the image, which the critical theorist, philosopher and post-structuralist thinker, Jean Baudrillard, first discussed as part of his seminal studies on the role of the image in contemporary society, turn the visible and straightforward language of architecture invisible and opaque.

It is for this very reason that the notion of image coding, subsequently developed by Baudrillard into the media-related concepts of *simulation*, *hyperreality* and *precession*, has intermixed with consumer culture, reality’s duplication and indirect forms of capitalist exploitation like those performed by clients in apparently innocent activities such as leisure, shopping and entertainment.<sup>30</sup> In the case of *X-Factor*, the international talent show franchise now aired in 147 countries worldwide, the audience is exploited twice: first as a witness to the spectacular exhibitions of the contestants, and second, as a consumer of the product that the audience itself has contributed to shape, mold and promote in their role as undisputed and self-referential judges. Indeed, the x-factor(s) at play have less to do with music than with the drama and traumas of contestants, here spectacularized for the sake of an increased familiarization and emotive attachment of viewers to their favorite wannabe pop stars.<sup>31</sup>

As the heir of philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s concern with the urbanization of society, as much as of philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (1927–40), in which the unprecedented combination of gas lighting, large shop windows and female prostitution dematerialized spectacle into desire, Baudrillard developed Debord’s notion of spectacle into simulation, a genealogical investigation of representation where the pivotal notion of hyperreality is key to understanding the translation from a solid, tridimensional form of reality into the gradually impalpable substance of the image. Renaissance Italy can retrospectively be viewed as that particular period in Western history when the image correlated to banking techniques and the double book-keeping system reflected by and transposed into the mathematization of vision pursued and accomplished through the 15th Century perspective window.<sup>32</sup>

Consequently, Baudrillard’s position opens up to a far more radical appreciation of spectacle than the one pursued by both Marxist and post-Marxist thinkers like Debord. By far exceeding the two-layered acceptance of reality informing the existing notion of ideology, Baudrillard’s viewpoint stops working as a cover-up for a deeper, more genuine form of reality to become a self-referential simulacrum that prevents political counteraction. The experiential consumerism *a la Starbucks* in Milan (brand-scapes),<sup>33</sup> the deployment of ready-made images and popular culture in the Portland Building in Oregon (image-buildings),<sup>34</sup> communication and infotainment in well-known locations such as Times Square with its Nasdaq MarketSite in New York (media buildings),<sup>35</sup> and signature architecture like the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur (César Pelli, 1996), thus furnish the best examples of the expansion of spectacle to all levels and scales of the contemporary megalopolis.

Following the publication of philosopher, sociologist and literary critic Jean-Francois Lyotard’s 1984 *The Postmodern Condition*, Umberto Eco’s 1987 *Travels in Hyperreality*, John Urry’s 1990 *The Tourist Gaze* and David Harvey’s 1990 *The Condition of Postmodernity*, the proliferating translation of architectural perspectivism into the flat and immediately intelligible format of the image has eventually spectacularized the urban sublime through the Westin Bonaventure Hotel (Los Angeles, 1976), ubiquity and simulation through *Shanzai* architecture (ongoing), novelty and *authenticity* through the Guggenheim Museum (Bilbao, 1997) and the collapse of architectural metanarratives (beauty, utility and durability) through the instantaneity and perishability of spectacle.<sup>36</sup> Expanding into hyper-buildings,<sup>37</sup> super-structures<sup>38</sup> and

*simulacrascapes*,<sup>39</sup> such as Rem Koolhaas' CCTV building (Beijing, 2012), the Euralille masterplan (1989–94) and Disneyfied Asian megacities, the *trans-aestheticization* of the environment<sup>40</sup> is unsurprisingly and progressively being recognized as the greatest threat to metropolitan forms of resistance against cyberspace. As described by Farzaneh Haghighi in her chapter "Street Protest and Its Representations," the Iranian Green political movement of 2009 seems to produce the paradoxical effect of challenging the system at the same time as stabilizing it.<sup>41</sup> The ability of urban components, such as streets and squares, to work as catalysts of substantial political advancement, especially in the Middle Eastern context, becomes in this respect a research problem around which many other cogent issues revolve.

Among these are architecture's limited understanding and critical analysis of urban areas as restrained by an overwhelmingly constricted positivist approach; the contested *space of autonomy* raised by cyberspace, which, according to the author, may not eventually replace public demonstrations as the prevalent incarnation of political interaction; and finally, spectacle itself, with its seeming power to undermine social protests as an effective articulation of popular dissidence. By building on historian Iran Ervand Abrahamian's and sociologist Asef Bayat's notion of *pouring into the street*, David Harvey's and Henry Lefebvre's concept of *right to the city*, and Anthony Vidler's awareness of the city as the site where architecture and urbanism inevitably merge, an increasing inability to discern the difference between reality and its image-constructed counterpart is given prominence. Sociologist Asef Bayat's understanding of the street as the only theatrical urban model left to express discontent against institutional power, economic normativity and lack of visibility is here put to the test in the light of the degree of aestheticization with which footage of uprisings is amateurishly captured, shared and consumed. Increasingly looking premeditated, it is for this very reason perceived as a derivative form of entertainment.

In fact, it is from within the image that the migration of aesthetics from its original field of significance (fine art, design, cinema, etc.) to other spheres of existence occurs. The question is therefore posed about the street's ability to act as *both* a theatrical urban model to express discontent *and* to oppose the simulacral model imposed by an increasingly overexposed society. How this could be realized in a self-devouring, media-saturated environment, where the seemingly objective evidence of the violence witnessed ultimately turns into a contingent form of self-demystification, remains the challenge posed to the reader.

### Dromology and stereoreality

Following urbanist and philosopher Paul Virilio's apprehension of the instantaneous sharing and feedback of information (*dromology*), and the concomitant doubling of phenomena (*stereoreality*), Marco Briziarelli and Emiliana Armano have recently integrated Debord's notion of spectacle in light of the rapidly expanding digitalization of existence.<sup>42</sup> Nearly 30 years after Virilio's 1980 theorization of the *Aesthetics of Disappearance* and almost 20 years after Neil Leach's *Anaesthetics of Architecture*, informational capitalism is eventually accounted for by "the rising prominence of the intersection of information and communication."<sup>43</sup> Notions of production, consumption, distribution, exchange, cyberculture,<sup>44</sup> video-gaming, mediatization, as well as mega- and micro-spectacle<sup>45</sup> are integrated in order for a new form of consumer to be addressed: one whose original and ostensible passivity promoted by Debord's conception of alienation has rapidly shifted toward a more interactive engagement with the web.<sup>46</sup> In the shift from fixed to flexible accumulation, and from mass alienation to individual disintegration, private initiative, creativity and precariousness are seen as merging and coalescing into a variation of inactive participation that supports, almost unchallenged, the spectacular emergence of social media.<sup>47</sup>

The most compelling contribution of what has been termed *spectacle 2.0*, however, is the special focus given to the development – and successive integration – of contemporary subjectivity in the apparatus of present-day spectacle, which the communication specialist, Nello Barile, perceptively explores through the figure of the productive consumer, or *prosumer*, originally formulated by Alvin Toffler in 1980.<sup>48</sup> An extension of the working relationship between clients and professional designers, like architects specifying project requirements, the prosumer takes part in *spectacle 2.0* by completing every possible narration that connects the product to the brand. A subtle strategy through which people's images are not just promoted but also endowed with a sense of emotional depth, unknown to the philosopher and political theorist, Herbert Marcuse, at the time when he first described the ideology of advanced industrial society, *self-branding* or engaging in the economy of the emotions is an ongoing tactic steadily shifting the spotlight from mass spectacles to their more recent and customizable counterparts.<sup>49</sup>

Dating back to the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, where the consumer experience was linked to the architectural setting in a way not dissimilar to the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, this phenomenon finds in architecture the very catalyst for social, political, and cultural metamorphosis. At the moment when masses and more masses were driven for the first time into a relentless visual experience that promoted the primacy of the eye, *seeing* and *being seen* became the precondition for the subjectification and exteriorization of the gaze thanks to the major role played by technological advancements in turning ordinary architecture into overwhelmingly magnificent glass typologies.<sup>50</sup>

It suffices to mention, on this subject, the ideology of transparency in French president George Pompidou's modernization of Paris,<sup>51</sup> the urban reconfigurations through space management,<sup>52</sup> the spectacularization of slums and homelessness,<sup>53</sup> and, of course, the challenging and innovative section of this Handbook, where the intrusive role that mega-events, media imagery and the massive deployment of signature buildings (*starchitecture*) are regularly playing in the expansion of spectacle into all possible spheres of the built environment is made all the more conspicuous. Via an invaluable assemblage of complex methodological approaches that range from visual culture to critical theory, from semiology to political economy, anthropology, geography, sociology, media studies and beyond, not only is the spectacle of architecture scrutinized and recorded as imperceptibly overlapping with a mounting interest in the architecture of spectacle *tout court*, but also manifested in the re-articulation of an increasingly complex imbrication of architecture with reality. Architects' involvement in the decoding, redirection, re-signification and making sense of that same spectacle that they themselves have contributed to over centuries of untiring manipulation of appearances stems from nothing less than this.

## Notes

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# A ‘CRISIS’ OF INDETERMINACY IN THE ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPH

Architectural spectacle and everyday life in the  
photography of Lacaton & Vassal’s Coutras House

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## Introduction

As the representation of the work of an architectural practice which professes an opposition to an architecture of form and image, the media-disseminated photography of the work of French architect Lacaton & Vassal can contain a contradictory set of motivations at the intersection of spatial production, image production and media production.<sup>1</sup> I focus here on the photography of an early house project at Coutras in the Gironde in France. The house comprises twin, standard horticultural greenhouses, one fitted with partitions for the rooms of the more traditional spaces of the family home, the other left open for appropriation as a more indeterminate, “double space.”<sup>2</sup> (I will refer to these as *determinate* and *indeterminate* halves.) The study moves across images taken by two photographers at different moments in the building’s life: Philippe Ruault’s documentation of the building soon after its completion in 2000, published in the journal *2G*,<sup>3</sup> and Hisao Suzuki’s return to the building for the publication of an edition of *El Croquis* in 2017.<sup>4</sup>

This conjunction of architectural, photographic and media practices provides a valuable set of circumstances through which to draw out the effects of variation in approach within the architectural photograph and its use upon the journal page. Unlike much of the mainstream, international architectural press in print and digital platforms, the Spanish journals *2G* and *El Croquis* do not take the editorial format of a survey of the latest architectural news and recently completed buildings; rather, they present the body of work of an architectural office as a monograph portrait. *El Croquis*, in particular, includes examples of the past, present and proposed future production of the given practice, incorporating documentations of buildings under construction and drawings and models of unrealized projects as well as completed buildings. This format defines the commission of Suzuki as one which frequently portrays architecture at different moments in its life-cycle. While the two journals operate securely within the economies of a fashion-oriented, spectacular mediatization of global architecture, their formats open up the possibility for a more diverse imaging of architecture, beyond the repetition of generic compositional formulae

that prioritize the building's optimal moment of completion as 'perfected' design. This offers an opportunity to observe the effect of more relational pictorial strategies and contextual attentions, toward a meaningful differentiation of individual photographic practices and, potentially, of critical agency within the architectural photograph.

I highlight in Ruault and Suzuki's work the presence of reflexivity within the architectural photograph, and a performative mode of photographic pictorialism within the documentary task. Through this, I challenge architectural photography's status as a necessarily monolithic mode of architectural representation, locked into systemically determined generic norms, to explore a more complex relation to spectacle and professional accomplishment within architecture's mediatization. Within the context of domestic space, and particularly the inhabited spaces of a house documented many years after the building's initial completion, we witness the accentuation of a tension between the material sign of contemporary architectural design and the clutter and accumulation of the everyday; between the authored and the accidental; between those objects fetishized by the architectural press and those which it ordinarily excludes.

A critique of the architectural photograph must necessarily adopt a different regard to the photograph, to prioritize an understanding of it as a *constructed* image and the result of institutionally determined, compositional norms as well as more personal imaging compulsions. This may seem like a statement of the obvious. However, the mediatized power of the architectural image derives precisely from our passivity before the augmented (high resolution), indexical qualities of architectural photography – the fact that we so readily consume the architectural photograph as a faithful portrait of architectural 'reality.' My approach involves the adaptation of methods of visual analysis developed in relation to the painted and graphic surfaces of art history. I subject the architectural photograph to the scrutiny of what Louis Marin has termed a *descriptive gaze*: the recuperation of the overlooked through a slower reading of the image in its totality; and an attentiveness to the mechanisms of representation, redistributing the attention of the gaze from center to margin.<sup>5</sup>

Marin reminds us of how all representation functions through the two essential modes of the transitive and the intransitive: that an image both represents something (is a mimetic substitution for that thing), but that it also includes mechanisms of *opacity* in which representation "presents itself representing something."<sup>6</sup> Marin writes:

The more the transitive dimension presses its claim powerfully, the more that 'mimetic' transparency is manifested seductively, the more the games and pleasures of substitution occupy the attention of the gaze powerfully and captivate its desire, the less the mechanisms are noticed.<sup>7</sup>

The generic technical and compositional norms of architectural photography in part serve to nurture and entrench this mode of attention to the architectural journal page, one which captivates seductively and requires no active decoding as a pictorial system. In Marin's work, we are drawn to the operations of the frame of representation as a site that is often overlooked but in which the devices of reflexivity, instruction and the operations of power are often gathered. My aim is to bring the mechanisms of reflexivity within the work of Ruault and Suzuki into view, to explore a meta-discursive dimension to the structuring of the image, and to account for their possible effects on our reception of the architectural referent. I focus in particular on the photographers' recording of the daily life of the interior of the house, the presence within the image of what Norman Bryson refers to in his analyses of still-life painting as "rhophography," the "low-plane reality" of the everyday.<sup>8</sup>



Unlike much of the photography published within the architectural press, the imagery of the Coutras house by both Ruault and Suzuki contains significant documentation of the everyday use and placement of objects within the interior. Taken some 16 years apart, the two sequences of imagery could be understood to form a body of evidence about the life of the building and attest to photography's potential to record the appropriation of space by the occupant. However, a post occupancy evaluation through photography is certainly not my intention, and nor can we expect to draw definitive judgments about the use of space through architectural photography. Rather, I aim to reveal the complexity of the architectural photograph as a site of ideological contestation, as a portrait of space formed at the intersection of different authorial and editorial projects, manifesting a complex pictorial realism and politics, as opposed to one exclusively defined through photography's denotative plenitude. I examine these two photographic portraits of the building in order to understand the image as a discursive *and* spectacular site; a site of tensions, contradictions, of opposing representational desires and drives, both personal and institutional.

### Spectacle and the exclusions of the modernist image

Spectacle, within the critical practice of Guy Debord, defines the accumulation of capital into image, implying an instrumental "machinery of domination" through the image, as Lara Schrijver puts it.<sup>9</sup> The spectacle is the site of struggle against the market's power of recuperation, in its relentless assimilation of the new, of difference, as commodity. The spectacle continually co-opts the radical, according to Jonathan Crary, in its "capacity to neutralize and assimilate acts of resistance by converting them into objects or images of consumption."<sup>10</sup> Counter resistance to the spectacular image in Debord's practice and that of the Situationist International, took the form of acts of *détournement*, the strategic diversion of fragments of the spectacular sign system toward new meaning, in the hope, as Thomas McDonough puts it, "that out of the utter detritus of the 'modern' would come something charged and whole."<sup>11</sup> Martin Jay locates the transgressive urban operations of the Situationists as directed against the "deathgrip of desiccated images," including the iconic, architectural symbols of the new urban modernity: "the repressive visual order of Haussman's 'boulevardized' Paris, brought to its logical conclusion in the nightmare sterility of Le Corbusier's sterile urban fantasies."<sup>12</sup>

Within contemporary architectural photography and media production, one cannot expect to discern such clearly drawn lines of contestation, of recuperation and negation. Indeed, one might suggest that through the very act of commissioning architectural photography, and the assumption of that professional identity, all resistance to the media spectacle of architectural accomplishment and its system of fêted, global practitioners is, by definition, rescinded. The use of photography within the architectural media echoes the wider instrumental function of photography in relation to industry and institution, facilitating the flow of architectural goods and celebrity as, in Allan Sekula's words, "a traffic in photographs."<sup>13</sup> Sekula's critique of the spectacular image identifies the "illusory neutrality" of the photographic archive and image within the institution, of which he writes, "within the dominant culture of photography, we find a chain of dodges and denials: at any stage of photographic production the apparatus of selection and interpretation is liable to render itself invisible."<sup>14</sup>

Such illusory neutrality is at the core of the function of generic norms within the architectural photography of the profession and its media platforms. This facilitates an essentially complicit relationship between architects and editors within the architectural press by transposing the act of architectural authorship through a 'neutral' and 'objective' documentation. This structure of complicity also serves to nullify textual critique. The act of publication itself registers an architecture's endorsement by the press, reducing the scope of criticism to the articulation of

minor modifications to the architect's own discourse. However, I make the argument here that photography can create a complex and contested discourse about the architectural object within its media portrait through the way it might displace the absolute centrality of the architectural referent, by introducing variants within the generic codes of composition, in a reflexive diversification of pictorial interest and the status of the referent in relation to the pictorial whole.

It was in relation to the house in Coutras that critics Andreas and Ilka Ruby put forward the succinct critique of architectural media representation as "object-centred."<sup>15</sup> They wrote of the house and its representation:

[...] in the object-centred view of the architectural journals this project can seem spectacular: living in a greenhouse, how incredible! But when you visit the house the spectacle fails to take place. In fact you find the house only with difficulty; it is placed in a flat landscape that numbers a striking amount of greenhouses among its sparse built features.<sup>16</sup>

The Rubys' definition of architectural photography as an *object-centered*, spectacular image might be said to position contemporary architectural photography as a mode of imaging still dominated by modernist compulsions and, indeed the *sterility* that Jay writes of.<sup>17</sup> It could be said to encompass within its implications the modernist principle of *purity* that Beatriz Colomina understands to drive the transformations Le Corbusier enacted on the promotional photography of his completed projects.<sup>18</sup> Colomina qualifies Le Corbusier's representations of Villa Schwob as "faked images," a "purist" act of post-production, clearing "the garden of any organic growth or distracting object" and "eliminating the site."<sup>19</sup> Responding to the politics of the architectural image defined by Colomina, Pelizzari and Scivano go back further into the history of modernist, urban renewal in 19th Century Paris, citing Barry Bergdoll's understanding of how Baron Haussmann's acts of clearance (*dégagement*) and monumental construction were accompanied by the photography of Edouard Baldus, which "carved buildings from their urban context."<sup>20</sup>

Colomina notes how Le Corbusier blurs the distinction between "execution and reproduction" in his editing of photography.<sup>21</sup> Architectural photography has continued to perform a similar function within the institutional setting of the architectural media, with the suitably equipped photographer performing the role of a third party of the image. Le Corbusier's specific acts of eradication are substituted for a generic system of exclusions, according to which the architectural photographer documents the building and selects imagery to submit for publication. It is for this reason that the accreditation of architectural photographers in the media is often minimal, a note in small print. This convention supports the notion that it is the architect and not the photographer who is author of the scene – a conceit that functions through the assumption that the image is an unmediated reality of architectural accomplishment, which we as viewers of the architectural media so readily accept.

Also prompted by Colomina's exposition of Le Corbusier's imaging practices, Nigel Green insists on the futurology of the modernist image. Green understands the modernist author's readiness to manipulate the photographic record as driven by a utopian impulse and writes of the distinctiveness of temporal structure of the modernist photographic image:

Most photography is recuperative; it serves to sever the present from the flow of events that would otherwise overlay upon it. The photography of modernist space however records a present that intrinsically acts as an indication of the future [...] Whereas the photograph projects the past to the present, the photography of modernist architecture projects a reconfigured past via its manifestation in the present, as the new, into the future.<sup>22</sup>

A question thus arises as to the intentions and politics of this futurology of the historical and extant, modernist photograph (explicit and/or unconscious): do its reconfigurations facilitate the projection of a valuable or degraded utopianism? Fredric Jameson has argued that the architectural photograph in the postmodern era constitutes “bad reification,” “a spurious image,” the repetition of the stereotypical and of simulacra. On the other hand, Jameson proposes that the “various sketches of the future ‘work’” (that is, the image as project and process), are capable of opening glimpses of “utopian freedom.”<sup>23</sup> Le Corbusier’s handmade interventions into the photograph might be said to fall somewhere between the two. I take this problematic on in the following descriptions of Ruault and Suzuki’s architectural photography, to identify the opening of such possibilities of utopic play or valuable projection *within* the ‘stereotypical’ and the spectacular reification of media production.

### **Ruault 2001: A reflexive portrait of space between *high-plane* and *low-plane***

Philippe Ruault’s photographs in the journal *2G* include images which present the Coutras house as a potently efficient, isolated form within its landscape setting and set against an azure sky.<sup>24</sup> The representation of the exterior of the building effortlessly replicates that centered object of modernity, *veiled* and *self-contained*, to recall Mari Hvattum’s characterization of the architecture of late modernity.<sup>25</sup> It appears as a building that, despite the lightness of its structure, its outer translucence and inner transparencies, presents a strong sense of objecthood, commanding its surroundings like an agent of colonization within a frontier setting. However, if the exterior views of the building allow for the presentation of an architectural object of modernist credentials and ideals – and draws the Rubys’ critique in this sense – the views of the interior would suggest a somewhat different order of object relations, requiring a different response. Ruault’s photographs also present, within the spectrum of the norms of published architectural photography, a quite candid portrait of the interior, one which clearly shows an interest to capture, more-or-less as-found, the use of the interior by the inhabitants. The purity of the architectural *object-center*, as a value of control over space and its mediatization, would seem to be compromised here.

The Rubys’ critique of architectural photography as *object-centered* implies a fetishized relation to mediatized design, the closure of the discursive and contested field of architectural production into *ideal vision* and, to borrow Christian Metz’s words on cinematic spectacle, “a beautiful closed object.”<sup>26</sup> As Jay explains, Metz understood the photographic fetish to derive from the force of its *off-frame* effects, the *irreversible absence* of that which it excludes.<sup>27</sup> While we cannot frame this present discussion of alternative modes of architectural imaging in terms of a definitive retrieval of the absent, or release from fetishized relations, there is a valuable hybridity within Ruault’s pictorial strategies which sees a combination of generic imperatives with more inclusive and specific imaging responses to site and context. By activating a closer, slower reading of examples of this imagery in their totality, rather than simply consuming the material sign to the work of Lacaton & Vassal, I will construct an account of a more reflexive and *present* photographic authorship within the architectural frame; to reflect on the limits of photographic representation, but also to formulate a more genuinely productive synthesis of photographic and architectural authorship within the architectural photograph.

In my reading of Ruault’s images and as a response to Marin’s call for a *descriptive gaze*, I borrow a method of categorization from art history to describe their proposed hybridity and the meaning of their diversification from the stereotypical. Norman Bryson draws on an opposition within the historic genres of painting between, on the one hand, still-life as the depiction of the objects of “low-plane reality,”<sup>28</sup> or *rhopography*; and, on the other, the spectacle of history painting as the most elevated of the painterly genres, or *megalography*, the association of the image with prestige and “the

human impulse to create greatness.”<sup>29</sup> A core paradox of architectural photography is the way in which it systemically expels the rhopographic, *low-plane* life of objects (and often of people), while it is often immersed in the very environments designed to support it. Like still-life, architectural photography is a genre of image-making in which the human figure is often deliberately avoided (a characteristic absence within its system of exclusions). As Bryson writes of still-life, it “negates the whole process of constructing and asserting human beings as the primary focus of depiction.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly so with the architectural photograph, however, within its drive toward the ‘purification’ of its object-center, the absence of the figure does not equate to an absence of human ambition within the architectural photograph. By contrast, it reinforces a notion of mastery over space and objects by a single author. Its *object-centeredness* presents architecture for megalographic, spectacular purposes, to reflect and amplify human accomplishment, to convey heroic (modernist) achievements – the perfection of systems in the serene progression from design to realization. When extraneous objects feature within the architectural photograph, they typically do so as a distinctly curated presence, supporting the discourse of architecture’s perfected realization in an assertion of control over space and its objects alike.

One might surmise that *low-plane reality* will threaten at the margins of the architectural photograph. For, surely no photographer working within the economic and time restrictions of a photographic commission can exact complete control over the presence of the everyday within the site of documentation? Here, however, the power of the generic image and its mediatization is powerfully at work. The formulaic framing of images, the image’s technical specification, the selection of photographs by editors and their textual framing within the journal page, build an agglomeration of protocols of production that work toward the systemic recuperation of the everyday and contingent event, so that the integrity/purity of the design object as commodity spectacle and mediatized value ultimately persists.

My aim in relation to the two bodies of photography of the Coutras house is to describe the reassertion of low-plane reality within the architectural photograph, not as moments in which the abstractions and exclusions of the architectural photograph are altogether expelled, but in which they are combined with the megalographic function toward a more complex deployment of the photographic image. In this way, the terms of spectacular representation are realigned, reconfigured, but, importantly, also revealed in what might be defined as a moment of reflexivity in architectural photography that draws attention to its own processes, limits and authorial structures.

Within Ruault’s imagery of the house’s early appropriation by the inhabitants, in an array of interior shots across a double-page, the unprogrammed or *indeterminate* space has its sliding doors promisingly open to the meadow beyond<sup>31</sup> (Figures 21.1 and 21.2). Flattened cardboard boxing makes for a provisional floor, some sheets of which are placed across wooden battens, some directly onto the ground. White plastic table and chairs have been placed toward one end of the space alongside a folding table. In one photograph the casual disposition of their grouping in the *indeterminate* space is foregrounded by a more formal placement of a dining table and chairs within the *determinate* space and its finished flooring. Here, although the dining table is itself a folding or trestle table, its placement at a more precise alignment with the frame of the house, the use of a tablecloth, the presence of wooden chairs and a vase of cut flowers, signify a more fixed arena of inhabitation and the formalities of older dwelling traditions.

The photography reveals that *indeterminate* volume has assumed the status of a utility space for the processing of laundry and the casual storage. A collection of potted plants has been grouped against the dividing slider between the two halves of the house. These would suggest an intention to garden within and without, to populate the greenhouse, but also to begin the augmenting of the botanical life of the meadow beyond. The photographs could be said to present a reading of the building through a spatial sequence from the inner core of *determinate*



Figure 21.1 Interior of the Coutras house from the *determinate* toward the *indeterminate* half. Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Philippe Ruault (2000).

space, to the intermediary, *indeterminate*, double space, and then toward the exterior. In this they would also seem to testify to the tentative emergence of what Lacaton & Vassal qualify as a hoped-for *migration* within the dilated space of the new interior, a certain freedom and flexibility in the deployment of material possessions and technologies.<sup>32</sup>

In all but one of these interior photographs the remnants of yellow, paper garlands appear, signifying recent festivity – a birthday or house-warming perhaps. They also appear in the image of the elevation of the building used on the front cover of the journal. With the garlands, a colorful register of the past tense enters into the *indeterminate* space; a distinct, temporal marker within the space's short history. These remnants of festivity, one might readily surmise, date from some moment after the setting down of the boxing as flooring (after the unpacking of possessions had taken place), but before the more provisional setting out of furniture, with the day's laundry in process, which register more recent actions within the space. This suggested, simple sequence of events and material accumulation is, of course, framed by the building itself as the precursor and precondition to the evidence of inhabitation we view.

However, within the mediatized image, the relationship of architecture to that which is contained by it is also of a more complex order. I suggest that the building itself – the steel frame and polycarbonate of the appropriated greenhouse and the glass sliders fitted within it – occupies two temporal categories of photographic/media time simultaneously; that we receive discourse about the building through two distinct representational modes, which are conflated or contested here in the published photography. On the one hand, we would evidently understand from the image



Figure 21.2 Interior of the Coutras house within the *indeterminate* space. Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Philippe Ruault (2000).

that the building's accomplishment in a more distant moment of the recent past has facilitated the nature of the material evidence of life that we see within it; that the assemblage of the building and its subsequent material inhabitation constitute a related progression of spatial production across time. Yet, on the other hand, the power and motivations of architectural photography as an institutionally determined mode of image production and reception also persist. For, regardless of the extent to which Ruault's lens gathers evidence of life within the interior, the function of architectural photography to render new design as the dominant object, or object-center, rather than one element within a relational field of objects, continues. Under the hegemony of this more design-object-oriented gaze the building stands apart from the contingent reality that it contains, detached within its own abstract space and time. The architectural photograph fixes the building in time at the moment of its completion, which, paradoxically, is not simply of the same temporal order of the recent past of events, accumulation and life, but of a serene and 'perfected' configuration of design that extends, as if untroubled by event from the moment of its erection, to occupy the present as a figure of the new. The effect is that architecture as 'perfected design,' on the one hand, and the life within architecture, on the other, are in a state of copresence within the image, rather than fully reconciled. That is, despite Ruault's more inclusive framing of the domestic interior, architectural mediatization ultimately resists the portrait of authored design as a fully integral *part* of an architecture lived and appropriated.

Nevertheless, I suggest we understand this state of copresence as a 'crisis' of the image and worthy of critical attention, comprising a confusion of temporal structures, and of a conflation of the

spectacular, or megalographic, function of architectural photography with Ruault's rhopographic, low-plane, attention. This crisis occurs in part as the effect of a critical architectural discourse, as the way in which Lacaton & Vassal's double space and its attendant principle of spatial migration instigate an expansion and disorientation of objects and actions, in an incremental and uncertain movement of objects from *determinate* to *indeterminate* space. Ruault records this phenomenon within and across the threshold of the two spaces. In this, one might suggest, Ruault has been encouraged to respond and record differently by the architecture he witnesses, and that an instinct to use photography to record with a social, ethnographic or rhopographic attention has been prompted. However, the presence of the rhopographic record does not altogether dispel the effect of purity within the image, the pristine status of an architecture completed and perfected, and the material sign to Lacaton & Vassal's notoriety as an extensively mediatized architectural practice. The effect, through the aforementioned copresence, the separation of the two within the same image, is as if two genres of photography had been seamlessly montaged.

However, there is yet a further layer of photographic authorship to be described here, in a suggestion that Ruault's photography actively responds to the problematic of this duality or hybridity. I propose to reflect further on the presence of the paper garlands, these items of decoration captured in a partial state of disintegration. Through these, Ruault introduces the potential for a yet more complex reflection on time within the image, and on the play between the rhopographic and megalographic values.

The fact that Ruault chose to retain within his photographic frame such distinct yet easily removable applications to the new architecture demonstrates, at the very least, an interest for the life of the interior as-found. They may also be said to indicate a more reflexive value within Ruault's construction of the architectural photograph, as a response to its representational imperatives and limits. My claim that the inclusion of the garlands is reflexive, is supported by the composition of Ruault's imagery. In each of the interior photographs, the broken rhythm of the loops of garland could be said to determine the position of the frame of the camera lens as much as the frames of the principle architectural elements themselves.

We might understand the garlands to occupy both "planes" of the duality that I borrow from Bryson: as evidence of the accumulation of material life and socialization within the interior (rhopography), they also adorn the inner skin of the architectural façade itself (megalography). One cannot help but surmise that Ruault readily entertains their presence for the sake of an inference to the masonry garlands of architectural history, of the neo-classical façade (the oak garlands of Soufflot's *Panthéon de Paris*, for example). If the garlands are the most prominent signifiers of transitory event, of the cheap and cheerful embellishment of daily life, they also serve to gesture in an ironic mode toward the abstract *time* of architectural representation and to the megalographic instincts of the profession and its history embodied within that imaging tradition. For, within the abstract logic of the mediatized image, as an architecture of the journal page, could not the garlands be understood to festoon architecture for the sake of its own festival, an aptly *low-plane* celebration to this newly achieved, polycarbonate monument?

### **Suzuki 2017: Editorial cropping and a pictorial reimagining of architecture's 'future'**

Hisao Suzuki's return to the Coutras house for *El Croquis* 2017 resulted in the publication of seven new photographs, four of the exterior, three of the interior, with the editorial sequencing of photographs following a progression from outside to inside. The new photography would seem to reveal a quite different scenario of spatial occupation of the building to that suggested in Ruault's earlier documentation 16 years before. We gain the impression from Suzuki's

photographs that while the more traditionally programmed spaces of the house remain ordered and well-maintained, the *indeterminate* space has become an increasingly chaotic space of storage, accumulation and disintegration. Less an interstitial space of migration between inside and outside, it appears to be a space of obstruction, of blockage and confusion; where things are left to desiccate and fragment; where there is little room left for experimentation. The heady promise of new freedoms under azure skies suggested in Ruault's photographs seem to have come to an almost terminal halt in a space of entropy.

Two of Suzuki's images of the exterior avoid this inner life of the interior altogether, showing the building with its sliding doors shut. One employs a frontal view onto an end elevation, revealing, through the pattern of opaque and translucent surfaces, the simple logic of the original program of identical volumes treated differently. On the following pages, reproduced across a double-page, is a perspective view showing the same elevation and the building's longer, side-elevation, this time with sliding panels open and with two of them revealing glimpses of the interior of the *indeterminate* space<sup>33</sup> (Figure 21.3). Here, we would seem to be presented with a schism within the logic of architectural photography. The façade of the object—center of design has been opened to reveal something like its antithesis: not simply an interior characterized by the occupants' tastes, choices of object and spatial arrangements, but a space in which the relationship between architecture and its use has become almost unintelligible; one in which the norms of domestic space would seem to have been perturbed to the point of collapse.

Clearly, Suzuki has no intention to conceal the current use of Lacaton & Vassal's *indeterminate* space. Indeed, the composition of this image actively encourages us to view the object (design) in light of the (photographic) *whole* (the imaging of the surrounding context and the life of the interior). Suzuki's lens reveals a significant array of information at the margins of the building. This opening of the scene serves to provide a certain level of information about the site. We may gain some sense of the size of the plot in which the house sits and the relative proximity of



Figure 21.3 Exterior of the Coutras house. Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Hisao Suzuki (2017). © Hisao Suzuki.



other dwellings. However, this peripheral information is not simply informative of context, it is also instructional about the image itself and the way to see it.

To the right of the image Suzuki includes a considerable depth of vegetation: a shaded entanglement of grasses and shrubs in the foreground merge with a tree of the middle distance and silhouetted branches. The twigs and needles of a nearby spruce take the eye to the upper frame of the photograph and along almost to its center – a complex vegetal border of both the garden plot *and* the image. As Marin has revealed within the history of painting, and as a privileged space of attention for his descriptive gaze, the border is often a space of the image where figures and devices of instruction are gathered. It is usual within architectural journals that photographs are framed by the textual, editorial instructions of titles, accreditations and captions. Here, exercising one of the extravagances of *El Croquis* as a journal of exceptionally high values of production, Suzuki's image is reproduced across the entire width of the double-page (Figure 21.4). The borders of the photograph alone form the *frame* that separates representation and its pictorial codes from the *reality* beyond the page. Marin writes, "In its pure operation, the frame displays; it is deictic, an iconic 'demonstrative': 'this.' The figures ornamenting the edges 'insist' on pointing out, they amplify the gesture of pointing [...]"<sup>34</sup>



Figure 21.4 Suzuki's image of the Coutras house published as a double-page spread in *El Croquis*. Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Hisao Suzuki (2017).

In Suzuki's image, the mechanisms of instruction insist from the vegetal margins that we view this image with care; that we *take in* the intricacies of its details. The cluster of bare branches and twigs of the spruce in the upper right of the image function as deictic figures: they gather our gaze and prime it to register detail at their diminutive scale, and they also 'point' toward the center of the image in a vaguely anthropomorphic, gestural performance. Our apprehension of these forms then transfers to the center of the image as an instruction: *View the image in this way!* Our attention is encouraged toward a play of resemblance between natural and manmade form, between the curving spruce twigs and the antennae and aerials affixed at the apexes of the barrel roofs of the house. These meta-discursive mechanisms of the image connect the margin to the center. From here, a wire relays this resemblance and our gaze into the center of the framed view of the interior, through the open slider of the end elevation, arriving there prepared to study its complexities.

As we progress through the pages of the article three different views are presented of the interior of the house. Significantly, in each case, the imagery is composed as a view from the *determinate* space through to the *indeterminate* half.<sup>35</sup> Two of these interior images are structured as oblique views along the length of the sliding glass doors which divide the two spaces, taken from opposing orientations. The other is a 'frontal' view onto the divider with the *indeterminate* space beyond, from a position deep within the *determinate* space. Each view of the *indeterminate* space offers a different sense of the state of objects within it. While one end of the space still seems to offer potential for action and inhabitation, the other seems to be almost impenetrable, with the accumulation of possessions on the ground merging with the dropped, fabric ceiling, which has collapsed in places.

Among the three photographs taken within the interior, this latter image is structured most forcefully as an opposition between a space of order (within the *determinate* half), and the space of *indeterminacy* (Figure 21.5). It should also be noted that the composition of this image is one that has been largely defined by the *editorial* frame or discourse, for it is an extensively cropped image. The original image by Suzuki was of a landscape format, which has been reduced in its published version by approximately half, with a small area of the *indeterminate* space cut from the right-hand-side, and an extensive view across the width of the *determinate* space eradicated to the left (Figure 21.6).



Figure 21.5 Interior of the Coutras house, from *determinate* to *indeterminate* space (published and cropped version). Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Hisao Suzuki (2017).



Figure 21.6 Interior of the Coutras house (unpublished, original version). Architect: Lacaton & Vassal. Photograph by Hisao Suzuki (2017).

Within the cropped, published version, the object-center of Lacaton & Vassal's architecture (the signature material and spatial device of the glass, dividing screen) is more securely established as the dominant geometry of the image and appears pristine, unperturbed by the perceived 'crisis' of space that it contains. The oblique view of the screen is repositioned to occupy one half of the image at its center, where it visually mediates a relationship between the two sides of the house, as a thick, photo/editorial/architectonic edge. The editors choose to prioritize the strong juxtaposition of authored architecture against the rhopographic crisis of the *indeterminate* space, at the expense of a more 'balanced' portrait of the occupants' use of both halves. While the more stable, traditional space of the *determinate* half is largely absent from the report on the house as a whole, the clutter and fragmentation of the *indeterminate* space is more markedly present and, as I will argue below, is incorporated into a reconfiguration of mediatized, architectural spectacle.

The strategy of representing the interior space exclusively from the 'stable' space of the *determinate* half, partially veiling the contents of the *indeterminate* space behind the glass sliders, serves to emphasize our inability to understand the spatial order of the *indeterminate* space, to make sense of its rhopographic clutter. It serves to distance that space, to place it outside of the realm that we occupy as viewers, putting it behind a frame within the image as *another* space beyond the more resolved, 'traditional' space of the everyday. Through cropping, the editors reinforce the juxtaposition of the coherent and the chaotic, the 'whole' and fragmented, while also excluding a fuller documentation of the *determinate* half, reducing it to little more than a token representation with little specificity.

The rhythm of sliding doors, open and closed, has the effect of putting that which is behind it into a photo-architectonic equivalent of brackets. The perceived permanence of

the architectural solution, its perfected presence in the moment of documentation and its projected future (recalling Green's thoughts on the modernist image), renders the space it frames separate, as if under a clause, a proviso: *What you witness beyond the frame is provisional and of another time!* Here, the (bracketed) evidence of life within Lacaton & Vassal's *indeterminate*, double space is situated as an *anterior* space, both spatially and in terms of photographic time: this configuration portrayed in the present of the photographic image is now, by definition, of the past – which is to say that it has no claim to the future. The future, on the other hand, remains a temporal category that is colonized by the authored architecture that frames and supersedes it within the visual hierarchies of the photographic composition (emphatically reinforced through the editors' crop): the persistence of the megalographic, spectacular, modernist monument.

However, I believe that another construction of time is also at play within the depiction of the *indeterminate* space in relation to the wider pictorial whole, and one which acts upon the configuration Suzuki achieves in depicting the building from the exterior and interior alike. I return in the final section to the wide-angle, exterior view of the building's end and side-elevations: this time to view the image as one that acknowledges the low-plane reality of the everyday, actively facilitates our eye to travel to the thresholds of its crises, but which also maintains the potency of the object-center. I wish to account for how the Rubys' notion of *object-center* is retained and reasserted rather than fragmented by the rhopographic presence; but also to suggest how it is reconfigured or, rather, *reimagined* in relation to the whole.

Before looking anew at the exterior view, I will prime that reading by reflecting first on a detail of the image of the interior and its structuring of the view onto the *indeterminate* half (Figure 21.6). To the immediate right of the nearest metal post of the dividing screen we see what looks like a small satellite dish, standing upright in the middle of the space beyond but appearing, through Suzuki's chosen angle of alignment and the effect of foreshortening, as if propped against it, or even attached to the metal frame itself. Here is a singular, visual play of confusion/overlap between the authored architecture and the clutter of inhabitation beyond. The angle of the dish to the antennae rod, that projects from its base, also forms an alternative conclusion to the lower half of the metal frame of the open slider of the outer façade beyond, its actual lower half obscured by wooden crates and stacked firewood. While the rest of the accumulated objects of everyday life within the *indeterminate* space fall into a kind of sub-rhopographic (relegated low-plane) condition, dissociated from authored architecture, the satellite dish would seem to have a symbolic and narrative function within the pictorial logic of the photograph, which insists on its visual *association* with the frame of authored architecture. It is reclaimed as an accessory to the frame and the photographic/editorial discourse, adding an emphasis or inflection to the instructions of that frame, to the telling of its futurity, subtly modifying the message of its modernity.

With the suggestion that the satellite dish is receiving signals from the midst of the *indeterminate* space, the photograph's framed vignettes of abject clutter and material deterioration are paradoxically associated with the technological. For me, this invests the scene as a whole with a subtle inference to an alternative narrative to the 'realities' of the history that we would suppose the house to be a part of, one which resembles some form of future, post-apocalyptic scenario. The prominence of the satellite dish might be said to dramatize the scene, prompting thoughts of a condition of disconnection from the context and society that immediately surrounds it. The portrait of *indeterminate* space and its satellite would seem to infer the scenario of an isolated community that must communicate remotely, from afar, or the yet more thorough isolation of a vessel that continues to emit a signal into the void after all connection has been lost.

Returning finally to the exterior perspective view, with the house fully operational and occupied, set within a maturing meadow and its borders, here too the play of a fictional or subtly dramatized relationship to historical reality could be said to be at work. With its outer form intact, but its polycarbonate skin now stressed and faded, and its internal clutter visible, a tension arises in the photograph between the founding act of authored design and the weathering, aging and occupation of its material realization. Somehow, however, this seems to me *not* to be the central theme or message of the image, or its whole narrative. Rather, both expressions of the past tense (original design and the accumulation of the signs of time passing), are, in a sense, combined into a new (centered) whole and a new articulation of mediatized architectural time: a reimagined futurology. Again (and, of course, this is an approximative reading and a personal reception of it), the effect seems to be one of a more exotic and extreme time-travel than simply a question of aging by 16 years. The photographic message about architecture and time here does not simply amount to the declaration, “*This is what the building looks like now!*” Rather, Suzuki’s photograph constructs a sense of a radical architectural vessel embarked on a solitary voyage into the future, and that we are offered a glimpse of its passage *through* time, the precise coordinates of which are unspecified. It is somewhat redolent of that common description of the now historical, modern genre of science-fiction as offering to us in the contemporary moment a vision of “future’s past.” But it is not quite that either, for the architectural past (the founding gesture of design), is *reaffirmed* through the act of re-photography rather than consigned to history, as such. The building’s present state is offered as a *conditional* rather than definitive version of the future that has come into being. We are presented with something more like a virtual image of the inhabited house, a building worn by the dust storms of the future and braced to resist more: Lacaton & Vassal’s radical, founding proposition is pictured, battered yet resilient, en route to one possible destiny among others.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

In this analysis of architectural photography, I have sought to establish an approach that destabilizes the hegemony of the generic image and its system of exclusions. I do not make a claim for the possibility of *détournement* as the enactment of the logic of a radical negation of the spectacular, megalographic system of architecture’s mediatized signs. I explore instead approximate strategies to *détournement* with reference to Marin’s mode of *descriptive gaze*, toward the expropriation of the photograph’s intended, institutional meaning and the structure of its *illusory neutrality* in Sekula’s terms. These have taken the form of diversionary readings of details within the totality of the image, to offer pathways to a more complex and relational understanding of the architectural, photographic referent. In the work of Ruault and Suzuki, as two exceptional practitioners within the field, we see the surfacing of a sophisticated aesthetics, with reflexive and pictorial impulses emerging within the imaging of architecture, its contents and context. Between architectural authorship, the actions of inhabitation, photographic authorship and editorial control, a complex configuration of space imagined, produced, recorded and redacted emerges, which can only be understood as a project of the media page. However, the challenge remains with the viewer to interrupt the consumptive pattern of habitual response to the architectural photograph, and for editors to commission differently. If, in the act of commissioning and viewing the architectural photograph, we can reflect on, rather than suppress, the constructed nature of the architectural photograph; if we can keep in mind how the context of architectural photography is also the site of media reproduction, as well as photography itself, then we will potentially embark on the reclamation of the photograph as a tool and process toward a valuable and critical utopianism of the journal page.

## Notes

- 1 Jean-Philippe Vassal, "Royal Academy of Arts, Annual Architecture Lecture," filmed July 2019, at Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK, video, 1:24:20, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiH7n1kp\\_lw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiH7n1kp_lw)
- 2 Cristina Díaz Moreno and Efrén García Grinda, "Everyday Delights: A Conversation with Lacaton & Vassal," in *Lacaton & Vassal 1993–2017, El Croquis*, 177/178 (2017): 9.
- 3 "House in Coutras," *Lacaton & Vassal*, 2G, no. 21 (2001).
- 4 "House in Coutras," *Lacaton & Vassal 1993–2017, El Croquis*, no. 177/1778 (2017).
- 5 Louis Marin, "The Frame of Representation and Some of Its Figures," in *On Representation: Louis Marin*, eds. Werner Hamacher and David E. Welbery, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 353.
- 6 Marin, "The Frame of Representation," 352.
- 7 Marin, "The Frame of Representation," 352.
- 8 Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 61.
- 9 Lara Schrivjver, "Utopian and/or Spectacle? Rethinking Urban Interventions Through the Legacy of Modernism and the Situationist City," *Architectural Theory Review*, 16, no. 3 (2011): 248.
- 10 Jonathan Crary, "Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory," *October*, 50 (1989): 100.
- 11 Thomas McDonough, "*The Beautiful Language of My Century: Reinventing the Language of Postwar France, 1945–1968*" (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 6.
- 12 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 425.
- 13 Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures*, eds. Benjamin Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 201.
- 14 Sekula, "Photography Between," 97–98.
- 15 Andreas and Ilka Ruby, "Naïve Architecture: Notes on the Work of Lacaton & Vassal," *Lacaton & Vassal*, 2G, no. 21 (2001): 5.
- 16 Rubys, "Naïve Architecture," 5.
- 17 Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 425.
- 18 Beatrice Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture and Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 114.
- 19 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 107–111.
- 20 Maria Antonella Pelizzari and Paolo Scrivano, "Intersection of Photography and Architecture – Introduction," *Visual Resources* 27, no. 2 (2011): 108.
- 21 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 118.
- 22 Nigel Green, *Photography and the Representation of Modernist Architectural Space: From the Melancholy Fragment to the Colour of Utopia* (PhD diss., UCA Maidstone, 2008), 2–3.
- 23 Fredric Jameson, "Spatial Equivalents in the World System," in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 123–125.
- 24 "House in Coutras," 2G, 91 and 93.
- 25 Mari Hvattum, "Veiled Works and Blurred Contexts," *The Journal of Architecture*, 13 no. 2 (2008): 108.
- 26 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington, IN, 1979), 94. Cited in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 382.
- 27 Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (1985): 84. Cited in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 385.
- 28 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 61.
- 29 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 61.
- 30 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 60.
- 31 "House in Coutras," 2G, 94–95.
- 32 Frédéric Druot, Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, *Plus* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2007), 37.
- 33 "House in Coutras," *El Croquis*, 78–79.
- 34 Marin, "The Frame of Representation," 357.
- 35 Notably, Ruault's earlier documentation includes images taken within both halves of the house.
- 36 This connection of the photograph to science-fiction draws on Fredric Jameson's work on the genre. See, Fredric Jameson, "Generic Discontinuities in SF: Brian Aldiss' *Starship*," in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London, Verso, 2005).

# MEDIATED SPECTACLES

## Urban representation and far-right propaganda in crisis Athens

*Aikaterini Antonopoulou*

### **Mobile videos and the representation of conflict**

With visual communication prevailing and underpinning the production of knowledge in the digital age, new technologies affect to a large extent the way we understand the reality/ies of cities today. Although the modern city has always been considered as a mediated construct, today, more than ever, anyone who possesses a mobile device is able to record and display their own, partial, everyday realities.<sup>1</sup> Impromptu mobile filming, along with its infinite reproduction via the social networks, produces unique representations of the *here-and-now* of places and exposes the – otherwise often unnoticed – subjectivities that take part. As the city is filmed, watched and rewatched, the logic of perception of the urban is shaped less by the material presence of architecture and public space and more by their transient representations; this has significant impact on the way politics play out in the streets as well as the way in which collective identities are formed.

In *Overexposed City*, Paul Virilio identifies a “strange topology” in the apparent immediacy of televised images: within the framework of a technological time-space, places are rearranged following an “invisible montage,” and time is reorganized according to the cross-cutting and mixing of the filmed footage.<sup>2</sup> As the screen brings forward new forms of distance and representation, the public space of the city, argues Virilio, loses its “geopolitical reality” by being broadcast, so that its civic spaces, formerly realized in the *polis*, with its *agora* and its *forum*, are replaced by the interface and the “shadows and spectres of a community.”<sup>3</sup> It is the interface, in other words, that brings together the city recomposed in complex ways based on connections rather than on physical proximity. This “urbanization of the real time” may challenge the distinction between the private and the public, the inside and the outside, the micro and the macro, giving us the illusion that anything can be brought in front of our eyes without mediating agency.<sup>4</sup> It leaves us, however, with an unclear sense of the reality of things (as we are constantly presented with ephemeral images) as well as with limited capacity for immediate interaction. Moreover, if the *here-and-now* has been made into a general condition and accessible to all, then conversely, the *there*, the space of the other, is significantly undermined. Indeed, the use of mobile cameras and the real-time dissemination of photographs and films allow us to follow the “ordinary practitioners of the city” and to observe how their everyday trajectories reshape the spatial order of the city as well as how

they write their own subjective use of urban space.<sup>5</sup> Michel De Certeau's construction of the city as a story devised by fragments of paths that has "neither author nor spectator" becomes a form of resistance to the urbanistic project and to the view of the city from above and as an "optical artefact," however, in the production of such mediated representations, we are urged to ask: who films and who is being filmed?<sup>6</sup> Especially in spaces of conflict, it is crucial to look closely at the places and people that are obscured, distorted, overwritten or left behind, thus contributing to a "crisis of urban representation."<sup>7</sup>

Following up from Virilio's conceptualization of the urban experience as mediated by technology and shaped by the acceleration of speed, and at the intersection of Donna Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" and Rosi Braidotti's "Nomadic Subjects," this chapter critically reflects on the filmic representation of a contested public square in Athens, Greece, and its role in the production of far-right propaganda.<sup>8</sup> *Agios Panteleimon* (Saint Panteleimon) is a densely built residential district on the northern edge of the city center of Athens, where the increasing immigrant population and their presence in the city's public spaces in combination with the declining social conditions of the older residents in the context of the recent financial crisis, have led to the development of aggressive, xenophobic and nationalist behaviors. Its central square has therefore become a site of violence of far-right groups against immigrants and has given space to clashes between far-right and anti-fascist groups. By looking at a series of amateur YouTube videos associated with *Golden Dawn*, a long-standing neo-Nazi political party which grew in popularity during the years of the financial crisis (2010–2015) in Greece, this chapter unravels the multiple, divergent and contradictory representations of crisis Athens, the situated perspectives that emerge from them, and, by their very exclusion, the space of the 'other' in the city. The aim is to examine how particular place-symbols in the square have contributed to the staging of mediated spectacles and, consequently, to the construction of unsituated claims for 'Greekness' and 'pureness'.

More than 100 unofficial videos by Golden Dawn supporters, uploaded on YouTube between 2008 and 2017, have been studied as part of this research. In addition, 45 videos, which contain mass media coverage of the events that took place in the square were examined.<sup>9</sup> Finally, another 20 videos from anti-fascist groups, which operated in the area, have provided useful context. Many of the original videos have been removed from YouTube after 2015, when the trial of Golden Dawn began. This chapter analyzes five amateur videos, which all take place in the square.

### Setting the scene: The church, the square, the playground and the inscription

The residential district of *Agios Panteleimon* takes its name from the church dedicated to Saint Pantaleon, which is centrally positioned in the area. The neighborhood was established as one of the first extensions of the Athenian city center to the north, and the foundation of the church in 1910 denotes that there was already a residential hub in place in need of a center and a landmark.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the district was densely built with *polykatoikias* (multi-dwellings), the typical multi-story residential buildings in Athens, during the rapid urbanization of the city after WWII. The urban development of the city at the time took place in a hurried and "unplanned" manner due to the increased housing needs for the masses, who migrated from the poorer rural areas of Greece from the 1950s to the 1970s; it was, therefore, shaped by a number of different local and political agents.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, the *polykatoikias* tightly surrounded the public square in front of the church, making it the only significant public space in the district (Figure 22.1).





Figure 22.1 Panoramic view of Agios Panteleimon Square with the Christian church at the background. Photograph by Aikaterini Antonopoulou (2019).

After WWII, *Agios Panteleimon* became a lively upper-middle class neighborhood; between 1970 and 1990 however, the original residents of the highest social and financial status moved massively outside the city center in pursuit of a suburban lifestyle. They were progressively replaced by immigrants who arrived at the city in two waves: from the Balkans and the post-socialist countries in the 1990s, and from more diverse backgrounds (Middle East and Africa) after 2000. The big square often gave space to people who had just arrived in the city and did not have a place to stay; or, after they found shelter, it constituted one of the few spaces for recreation and socialization, which rendered the transformation of the neighborhood's character ever more visible.

Until the financial crisis hit Greece in 2009, Athens was never socially segregated because the making of the *polykatoikias* took place through small- and medium-scale developers. This bottom-up expansion led to the informal financing structure of the urban development (banks and other funding institutions were lightly involved in the process and therefore a broader range of social backgrounds benefited from this process) and enabled a larger class mobility, as the rural population shifted to the city.<sup>12</sup> This prevented the city center from any form of ghettoization.<sup>13</sup> The typology of the *polykatoikias* also contributed to the mixing of the social classes, accommodating a social section of the population within, with the better-off residents residing at the top floors and the less-privileged ones at the lower levels. As the former residents of the city were replaced by immigrants, this mixing continued to exist; however, in the context of the crisis, these relationships began to change significantly.<sup>14</sup> Although the immigrants who arrived in Athens in the 1990s got settled relatively easily (during the economic boom that preceded the 2004 Athens Olympics, there was need for a cheap workforce), many of those who arrived in the 2000s – documented or semi-documented – have lived in precarious conditions for many years (among other reasons, many of the latter, especially of Asian backgrounds, shared less cultural traits with the ethnic Greek local population than the former and, therefore, were stigmatized even by earlier immigrants).<sup>15</sup> From 2007 onwards, poverty and uncertainty became ever more manifest in the city streets and, among other areas of downtown Athens, *Agios Panteleimon* emerged in the mass media as a site of fear and illegality.<sup>16</sup> Such narratives were quickly capitalized by the far-right to promote their political discourse, and neo-Nazi Golden Dawn found particularly fertile ground to grow in this context.

Since 2008, Golden Dawn became ever more visible both in the politics and the streets of Athens and other urban areas of Greece.<sup>17</sup> Their popularity as a political party also grew significantly between 2012 and 2019, and they gained representation in local councils and the parliament. Nikolaos Michaloliakos, the party leader, was initially elected to the Athens City Council with 5.29% of the total votes in the local elections of 2010. Then Golden Dawn gained 21 parliamentary seats with 6.97% of the total votes in the national elections of May 2012; eight seats and 6.99% in the national elections of September 2015; and no seats and 2.93% in the national elections of July 2019.<sup>18</sup> In the meanwhile, their members and supporters kept an active

presence in the city's public spaces. *Agios Panteleimon* became one of their key sites of operation, with local followers infiltrating residents' committees and other community-based projects. With the involvement of Golden Dawn, the *playground*, originally situated at the south-west corner of the square, was one of the first locations that came to symbolize the struggle between the old and the new residents. In November 2008, 1000 residents signed an open letter, ample in references to the public space of the district, requesting from the authorities to help them clear the area of its high immigrant population.<sup>19</sup> This is one of the first instances – with many more to follow – when the racist narratives transitioned to the public space of the city, prescribing the use (and the users) of the district's streets and its main square, and therefore not only did they become more visible, but they also got promoted as a “collective” for the “common good.”<sup>20</sup> Among other places, *the playground* is presented in the letter to be dominated by immigrants' children who harass, and even act violently against, the ethnic Greek children. Shortly after, a ‘residents’ committee’ decreed that the playground should close, so that migrant children (under the pretense that they might be ill) would not use it, thus excluding all kids from playing in it.<sup>21</sup> Anti-fascist groups occasionally broke in to make the playground accessible and clashed with Golden Dawn supporters, who then remade the playground's fencing even stronger. Expanding their operations thereafter, Golden Dawn members and supporters developed food banks to help the ethnic Greek residents only; they offered them protection from the foreigners; and, they turned against immigrants, acting as if they could replace the authorities by checking their papers and claiming to take control and clear the area of immigrant crime.<sup>22</sup> Physical and verbal abuse against immigrants were also commonly reported and, as three of the videos analyzed here demonstrate, often the square gave space to clashes between far-right and anti-fascist groups.

Golden Dawn had a strong mediatic character and was supported by both the mainstream and social media. Many of the party's key members became increasingly recognizable and popular and were invited by local and nationwide broadcasting media to take part in the ‘public discourse’ promoting hate speech and violence. The strategic use of the internet played a significant role in the party's rise. Although the official party had a minimal and tactful online presence, around them, a wide and complex network of accounts, channels and private groups that would cross-reference each other were enormously active on websites, blogs and social media.<sup>23</sup> The most active of such profiles are presented as independent (to avoid being reported and closed down, especially after the prosecution of Golden Dawn's founding members at trial in 2014) and of ‘nationalist’ or ‘patriotic’ character, but they are clearly propagandist, sharing videos of actions of the party's members and speeches of its MPs and posting fascist, racist and hateful content.<sup>24</sup> The way the videos were filmed had a very powerful effect and contributed to their wide acceptance: they took the form of noisy and rough, amateur and unedited spectacles that would position the viewer directly into the scene of action. These fed back to the mass media, romanticizing the perspectives of the ethnic Greek locals against the foreign ‘intruders,’ and, thus, normalizing aggressive and violent behaviors.

In this context, *Agios Panteleimon* became constructed by the media as a site of conflict, and the square provided the ideal stage set for many of Golden Dawn's performances.<sup>25</sup> The church became part of the event and constitutive of the spectacles. We see, among others, Golden Dawn's political campaigns taking place in front of it, official videos showing the participation of the party's members in religious processions and MPs giving interviews to the national broadcaster carefully positioned in front of it setting the scene (Figure 22.2).<sup>26</sup> Concurrently with the fencing of the playground, a large-scale *inscription*, in blue paint, appeared on the ground at the center of the square, designed to inspire dread to the immigrant population as well as to become a statement embedded in the public space to be photographed and widely circulated via the mass media. The inscription read “foreigners (stay) out of Greece,” “Greece my



Figure 22.2 Golden Dawn MP Ilias Kassidiaris giving an interview in front of the church. Video still by AATEP EIKO MME AE (Alter Ego SA), news program, national broadcasting television station MEGA, 30 August 2015.

homeland,” and it soon became emblematic of the area. At the background, the Orthodox *church* became a reminder for the strong religious bonds of the ethnic Greek population and the two together set the scene for a neighborhood that fought to remain ‘pure’ and ‘Greek’ (Figure 22.3).

In September 2013, after a long investigation sparked by the stabbing death of an anti-fascist hip hop artist by a member of Golden Dawn, the party’s criminal activity was exposed. Many of the founding members (including the parliamentary group in the 2012 elections and Michaloliakos) were arrested, and a total of 69 individuals were prosecuted at trial in 2014.<sup>27</sup> In 2020, 57 of the 69 were convicted of murder, attempted murder and violent attacks on immigrants and left-wing political opponents.<sup>28</sup> Michaloliakos and six former MPs were found guilty of operating a criminal organization.<sup>29</sup> This led to the disappearance of Golden Dawn’s members and supporters from the public life of the city and the loss of their parliamentary representation in the national elections of 2019.<sup>30</sup>

### Staging the events in the square

For the complex network of Golden Dawn’s members and supporters, YouTube provided a vital platform to archive their actions and performances as well as a lens for seeing *Agios Panteleimon*. The videos reproduced highly specific perspectives to serve the party’s purposes; in the meantime, through their reproduction by the mass media, they reached a wider audience, to whom they became representations of crisis Athens. The reality of the image as constructed by them, created a

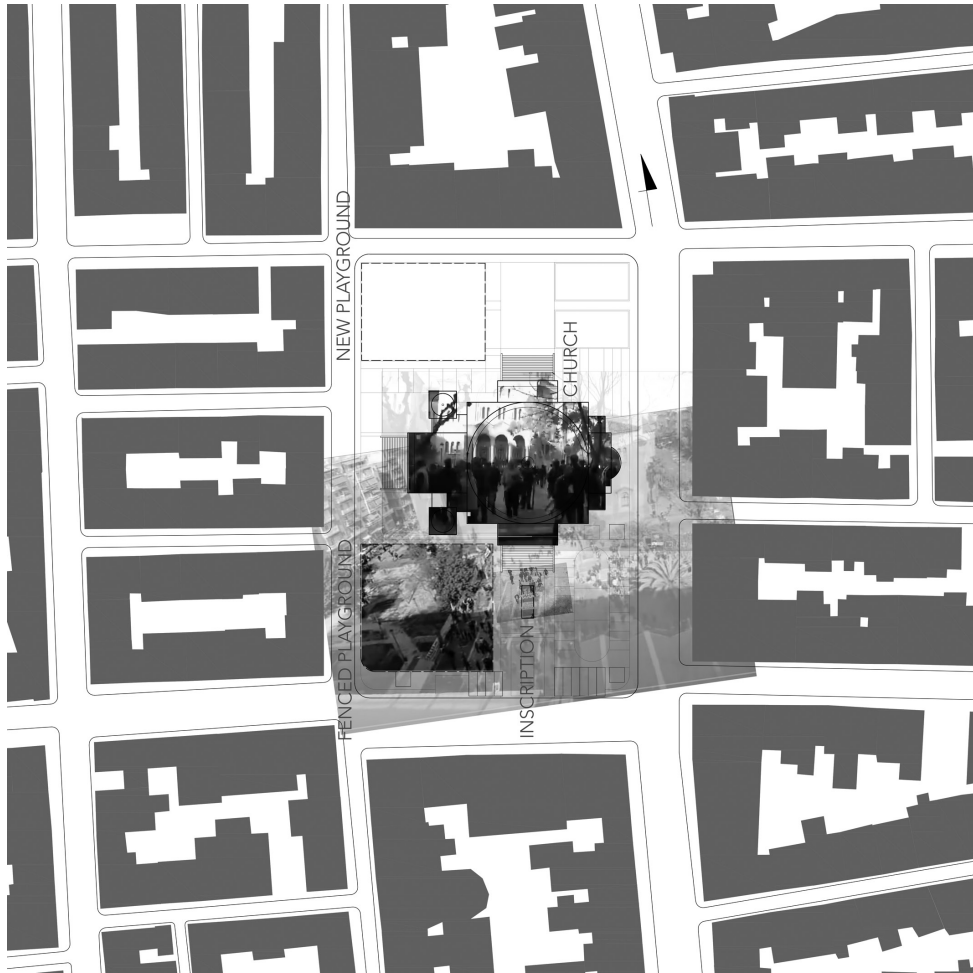


Figure 22.3 The Agios Panteleimon Square, densely surrounded by building blocks. Collage of stills of gatherings in the square upon a site plan by Aikaterini Antonopoulou (2021).

virtual presence in the square and a very distinctive way of seeing Athens, raising crucial questions on the technologies that mediate the lived reality of the city today and produce widespread representations of its space. As Virilio posits, video recording and information technologies have marked the end of a logic of public representation and the beginning of a “paradoxical logic,” where the real-time image acts upon the object represented and subverts the very concept of reality.<sup>31</sup> In such circumstances, and with social communication taking place upon these recorded perspectives, the public image replaces the public space, and the screen absorbs the public realm and becomes the new “city square.”<sup>32</sup> Most importantly, as the case of *Agios Panteleimon* demonstrates, this social interaction upon the representation feeds back to the original physical space and assigns new meanings to the urban environment. This is how disinformation is produced, according to Virilio (following up on Lyotard’s crisis of grand narratives), when the “reality effect” substitutes the “immediate reality,” allowing for the emergence of micro-narratives in its place.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that it becomes increasingly difficult to understand, accept and deal with events when their technologically enhanced appearances become misleading and construct an

imaginary reality, calls for a critical reflection on the mediations of vision. For Donna Haraway, “realism” and accounts of a “real” world constitute an insufficient way to actively engage with the world’s agency.<sup>34</sup> In “Situated Knowledges,” she argues that vision is always mediated and cannot be understood without its instruments:

There is no unmediated photograph or passive camera obscura in scientific accounts of bodies and machines; there are only highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds.<sup>35</sup>

If the instruments of vision mediate everyone’s standpoints (even those of the subjugated), then there is no immediate perception; the realities that one brings forward carry within themselves their own mediations, so that realities and mediations bring together diversified representations.<sup>36</sup> Haraway criticizes the theory of “disembodied scientific objectivity,” arguing for the embodied nature of all forms of seeing and for an objectivity which takes into account both the agency of the person producing the knowledge and the object of study.<sup>37</sup> Knowledge is determined and framed by the social situation of the epistemic agent (from their race and gender to class), and therefore becomes body-specific and site-specific. If it is the authority of the gaze that defines what is being seen, argues Debra Benita Shaw, then we also need to enquire the role of architecture in framing visions and in determining the borders of the perceived world and the hierarchies inherent in it.<sup>38</sup> In other words, if vision is always a matter and a politics of situatedness, what is the role of the urban context in reinforcing racist and xenophobic power structures?

The videos studied in this chapter present a wide range of Golden Dawn’s activity in the square: from organizing events to fill the gaps of a state, whose role as a provider of social services had become radically impoverished; to clearing up the area from crime and illegal practices; to protecting the district and restoring its former order. Golden Dawn is shown to support, defend and safeguard the neighborhood and its ‘residents’ from the foreign intruders and to illustrate the incapacity of the authorities to do so. Choreographed around the playground, the church and the racist inscription, the mass also plays a central role in the videos: it expresses support and solidarity, and it performs rage and resentment onto the square. It also represents the collective sentiment around the events and the acceptance of Golden Dawn on behalf of the residents of *Agios Panteleimon* – as if they are themselves a concrete and homogenous group and the only subjects of the crisis.<sup>39</sup> Altogether, the mass and the space of the square construct images of a city of unrest, in despair and in crisis.

In the first video (September 2012) the square is presented as the center for the Greek community.<sup>40</sup> The viewer dives into the context of the financial crisis by watching a large-scale distribution of food in the square, accompanied by a voluntary blood donation, both organized by Golden Dawn. Lorries arrive to the square, from which the organizers – all dressed in black T-shirts, many with the Golden Dawn logo on them – unload big sacks of potatoes (0:07) and containers with fresh fish (3:15) to give out to the public. Then the camera focuses on a big banner held between two trees (0:53), which calls Greeks to donate blood to the party’s blood bank, followed by people lining up in front of a mobile blood collection unit (3:14). The event appears to be massively embraced by the public: big crowds patiently wait to be served, while throughout the film, individuals are heard to thank the organizers for their help. Halfway through the video, Ilias Kassidiaris, one of the party’s most popular MPs and performer of numerous spectacles, is shown in front of the church speaking to journalists (3:15): the food, he says, is available to every Greek citizen without discrimination and without them having to prove their membership to the party, however priority is given to those in need.<sup>41</sup> The

Orthodox service taking place inside the church is heard in the background, as the event takes place during the celebrations of the Holy Cross.

The clip aims to construct our perception of the square upon the events that occur during that day. The square situates us at the center of the financial crisis, not as an abstract condition, but as a highly specific one: we see how the ‘residents’ of *Agios Panteleimon* are in desperate need of food. Through the action of Golden Dawn, the ethnic Greek population of the area becomes visible in public space and the ‘real’ subject of the crisis. It is them (not the immigrants) who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, the ‘other’ in their ‘own’ city (as they claim), despite their strong ties to the place, as represented by the church and the service. Haraway’s emphasis on the social, technical and psychical complexity of our visual systems is instrumental here, as she points toward the role of the camera in the construction of this “otherness”: the “mediations of vision” stand between the place of the observer and the situation observed, often taking an agency of their own and allowing for “highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds.”<sup>42</sup> The viewer inevitably becomes one of the deprived Greek residents. Positionality in this context takes a double reading. Firstly, as situated knowledges purport, it calls for seeing the world from another’s point of view, opening up to unknown perspectives and in anticipation for imagined and visionary ones that challenge established and fixed notions. Secondly, positionality cannot rule out the danger to romanticize and to take advantage of the vision from below.<sup>43</sup> The viewpoint of the subjugated is never an innocent one, and Haraway acknowledges that the feminist standpoint epistemology as formulated by Sandra Harding is, to some degree, problematic: the process of *naturally* inhabiting such places is neither simple nor unmediated itself.<sup>44</sup> Haraway concentrates, therefore, on how visual systems (in their organic, technical, and social sense) work to construct a politics of “location, positioning and situating” and an objectivity based on specific embodiment.<sup>45</sup> She asks:

How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides vision?<sup>46</sup>

Such questions destabilize the concept of scientific objectivity as the ability to see and to interpret everything by being everywhere and nowhere. According to Haraway, the eyes have always been used as a trope to separate the knowing subject from any condition and situation to the benefit of unlimited power. The instruments of visualization and technologically enhanced vision have reinforced the view from above as universal knowledge and have hence helped promote systemic forms of oppression, such as militarism, capitalism, colonialism and male supremacy.<sup>47</sup> For Virilio, too, this production of a “sightless vision” with technological means brings about the militarization of space and a “fixed,” “objective way of seeing”: such vision machines are designed to see and interpret the world in our place.<sup>48</sup> It is exactly this automation of perception and its role in creating a false sense of placeness and a state of emergency in the square that the Golden Dawn videos aim to bring forward.

The question of positionality becomes more complicated in the next three videos, which present the struggle of the ‘represented’ community to reclaim the space of the city. They were filmed in 2011 and illustrate how a ‘residents’ assembly’ in the square transforms into a widespread array of clashes between Golden Dawn members, anti-fascist activists and the riot police. The gathering has been organized by the Golden Dawn to prevent an anti-fascist march from approaching the square and organizing an informal music festival there, in support of the immigrants in the area.<sup>49</sup> The first, more analytic video, is filmed from above, perhaps in an attempt to objectively record

the events, and presents how the locals, with the help of Golden Dawn, proudly defend their territory.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning, Golden Dawn's leader and, at the time, elected member of the Athens City Council, Michaloliakos, addresses the public in support of the Greek residents (0:37), followed by a priest (1:23) and a representative of the 'residents' committee' (2:57), who accuse the migrants of the degradation of the area. This takes place at the backdrop of the chained playground, the railings of which hold banners with nationalist slogans and Greek flags. Next, we see a number of Golden Dawn members as if in a military deployment next to the inscription, with Michaloliakos commanding them on the side (2:58). Within indistinct noise, slogans are rhythmically chanted: "blood, honor, Golden Dawn" (3:14), "anarchists and Bolsheviks, this ground does not belong to you" (3:26), "Greece belongs to Greeks" (3:36). Then the square turns into a battlefield between the neo-Nazis and the anti-fascists, with the riot police using tear gas to disperse the crowds. The camera zooms in and out of the square, focusing on the opposing groups and their operations. It periodically returns to the big inscription, where a man stands holding a Greek flag (11:36, 13:23, 16:09, 16:52, 20:32, 22:06, 24:20, 26:51, 28:12, 28:38). In one instance, the man is surrounded by the riot police, we assume in an attempt to remove him from the site (29:15). As things calm down, the Golden Dawn supporters densely gather over the inscription (33:49), they chant the Golden Dawn hymn (34:50) and march out shouting, again, "Greece belongs to Greeks" (35:52). A second video taken from a different angle (from the church's steps looking over the playground) serves another important cause: it attempts to dismantle the role of the police to respect and to protect the citizens by showing a policeman stepping over a Greek flag during the clashes (1:54); in this way, it makes space in the city for the Golden Dawn.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, a third video, filmed from the center of the square (next to the inscription) accuses the police of betraying the Christian symbols by showing the policemen entering the church, where the Golden Dawn supporters have hidden (1:30).<sup>52</sup>

The presentation of the square as a battlefield turned into a visual spectacle (Figure 22.4), which forces itself into visual culture and subsequently to corporate news media toward the demonization of the 'other' in the city, attests Stephen Graham's formulation of the "new military urbanism" and what James Der Derian has termed the "military-industrial-media-entertainment network."<sup>53</sup> The square is normalized as the container of violence where oppositional strategies are played out but also recorded and reviewed. The aerial perspective aims to objectify the developments and to map out the clashes against the church, the playground, the inscription. In this context, we need to ask: whose vision is it? Is it the former residents' who appear to be constantly oppressed and distressed due to the presence of the foreigners in their area or, is it the immigrants' who are increasingly absent from the public space of the city (and most certainly from the videos by the Golden Dawn supporters) due to the racist performances that take place there? The attachment to the place-symbols of the square reinforces the 'out-of-placeness' of the foreigners.

This progressive erasure of the space of immigrants is shown in a video from 2008, which, as its title promises, showcases "The Entrance of Golden Dawn in Agios Panteleimon."<sup>54</sup> We see the aftermath of events sparked by the seemingly independent open letter signed by 1000 residents described earlier. The video displays the end of a march of Golden Dawn supporters throughout the neighborhood and the culmination of their demonstration in the square. It is filmed by someone within the crowd and its low resolution contributes to the creation of a fearful and alarming experience. Unable to focus on individuals or on the square itself, one can only focus on the mass, on the expanse of the crowd and the innumerable Greek flags and banners featured, while slogans such as "foreigners (stay) out of Greece" (0:02), "Greece, Greece, protect us too" (0:38), "Greece belongs to the Greek nationals" (0:59) are rhythmically chanted. As the camera stops moving and focuses on the crowd loudly singing the national anthem

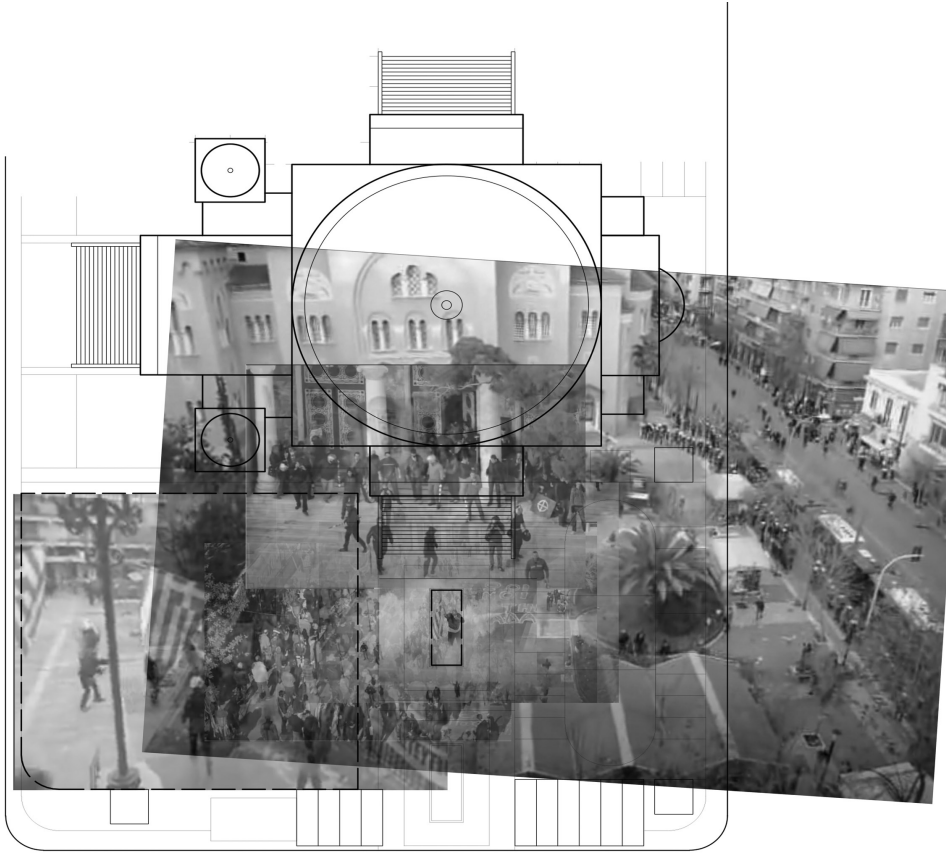


Figure 22.4 The square as a battlefield turned into a visual spectacle. Collage of video stills of clashes in the square by Aikaterini Antonopoulou (2021).

(1:50), we can almost discern the southeast corner of the church at the background. One can only follow the mass as they move through the neighborhood and as they fill the square and the streets around it, leaving no space for opposition, for discourse, for otherness.

The tension between the apparent fixity of the former residents and the apparent mobility of the immigrants brings the “politics of location” to the forefront and calls for a politically invested cartography of the condition of mobility within a globalized world.<sup>55</sup> The cartographic method is proposed here as a counterpoint to the staged events publicized by the far-right. It advocates a reading of the present based on a careful understanding of facts and events; on allowing space for different subject positions; and on the acknowledgment of the subjects’ space (Braidotti argues for geopolitical and ecological space, and I would add social and cultural) and time (historical and genealogical).<sup>56</sup> This closer engagement with one’s “locations,” as defined above, enables situated practices to be brought into the representation, against fixed cultural or national identities and, ultimately, methodological nationalism.<sup>57</sup> Braidotti’s nomadic thinking, in this context, becomes an opportunity to oppose nationhood and to consider subjectivity as multiplicity, process and becoming.<sup>58</sup> Nomadism is not a mere representation of precarious workers and transitory citizens, but instead a trope to resist permanent and hegemonic identities:



The nomad does not stand for homelessness or compulsive displacement: it is rather the figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. It expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes without an essential unity. The nomadic subject, however, is not altogether devoid of unity: his mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes.<sup>59</sup>

The nomad is not necessarily someone who is in constant transit or opposes any form of stability but, instead, someone who does not take any form of identity as granted and therefore builds situated connections. In describing nomadism, Braidotti uses the concept of *figuration* (as opposed to mere representation) to reinforce the need for practice embedded within the image so that the subjectivity “in the process of becoming” is appropriately represented.<sup>60</sup> Figurations highlight the need to engage with the material conditions that nurture the different subject positions. In the case of *Agios Panteleimon*, they call for a reexamination of the perceived reality as constructed by the Golden Dawn videos and for a critical engagement with the elements of the square. They suggest the movement away from the abstraction of such fragmented performances and toward highly specific cartographies, which call for a self-reflexive and collective process of understanding the ‘other.’ Nomadism is about critical relocations, situated claims and knowledges and against the abstraction of the notion of ‘others’ and the fixity of places and borders. In crisis Athens, the migrant as nomad opens up the opportunity to understand ‘otherness’ from closely attending to the places and conditions around them, and to build new forms of belonging that depend less on fixed place-symbols and more on his/her negotiations with the social and urban context. This brings us back to De Certeau: by weaving their own trajectories through and around the square, the migrants elude any generalizing and totalizing representation and construct their “*migrational*, or metaphorical, city.”<sup>61</sup> These negotiations have no place in the Golden Dawn videos, however. *Agios Panteleimon* is shown as a place that needs to return to its former glory, that of homogeneity and tradition as instantiated by the church, the square, the inscription and the playground.

### **Against uncritical representations of ‘Greekness’ and ‘pureness’**

With the proliferation and popularization of new technologies, the space of the city becomes an instrument for the creation of particular representations and spectacles. This mediatic character of the built environment is theorized by Andrew Herscher, who argues that the binary relationship between violence and architecture opens up a space for mediation and interpretation.<sup>62</sup> Especially in times of conflict, architecture shifts from being a mere manifestation of its (social, historical, political or cultural) context, to an active agent of its own making as a sign and a symbol; a concentration of history and memory; and a tool which continuously constructs subjects and objects as well as identities, agencies, meanings and subsequent readings of the urban environment.<sup>63</sup> In this context, this chapter has explored how digital infrastructure, in the form of screens and mobile cameras, interacts with some of the traditional elements of urban space and produces new readings of it.

The amateur videos masterfully weave their narratives into the square: the mass is finely choreographed around the racist inscription; the xenophobic slogans on the banners alongside the playground force the immigrants out of the square and create an intimate environment for the ethnic Greek ‘locals’; the fenced playground expresses the strong sense of territoriality on behalf of the represented community; and the church attempts to restore the Christian traditions in the lives of the locals. Moreover, the ethnic and religious symbols registered into the square (the Greek flags, the church service, etc.) reinforce the attachment to the place while they construct images

of purity, clarity and an authentic and self-affirming collective identity. This collective identity has been constituted by the media technologies. The popular media may blur into the background of urban life, yet they promote their synthetic vision as pure perception, and, as such, they become instruments of surveillance, observation and control – in the words of Graham, “in a sense, they *become* the city.”<sup>64</sup> Altogether, through the space of the film, which is infused with historical and nostalgic references of a neighborhood that is long gone, the xenophobic standpoints project a fake place of ‘Greekness.’ And as the material conditions of the square make space for the spectacles organized by the Golden Dawn, they build an over-simplified and straightforward reality, with which the ‘follower’ can easily identify: the viewers project themselves right into their image and construct their own fantasy relationships with the city.

Despite its apparent placeness, it is exactly this single and radically reduced group-identity that situated knowledges and nomadic subjects call against as unlocatable, disembodied and irresponsible. Feminist objectivity becomes a form of resistance against the simplification of things.<sup>65</sup> In the words of Nancy Fraser, this imagery denies “the complexity of people’s lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations.”<sup>66</sup>

In conclusion, this chapter focused on how mediated representations of the public space of the city shape the perception of the place itself and attributes new meanings to its physical entities. Through the videos presented here, the square of *Agios Panteleimon* is understood by the Golden Dawn supporters as a space of conflict between the old and the new, the local and the foreign, the Christian and the un-Christian. By drawing upon Haraway’s formulation of situatedness, this chapter unpacked the complex visual systems at play and their role in determining a politics of place and an embodied sense of objectivity (and against a generalizing scientific objectivity): the image of the chained playground established the square as a space of exclusion; the reproduction of the inscription targeted the immigrants as the cause of the district’s decline; and the church at the background of all the filmed action served as a constant reminder of the Greek Christian traditions. In response to such constructions, Braidotti’s nomadic thinking calls for considering *practice* as a constitutive part of the image of the city and its representation. This argues against the use of the square as a stage set for abstract performances and toward a closer examination of each place’s stories and the subjects involved in them. It stands, therefore, against the erasure of a much more complex world (of migrants, or refugees, of women, etc.) from the representation of crisis Athens. *Situated Knowledges* calls for the gathering of as many standpoints, partial perspectives and specific ways of seeing as possible. Only by bringing together different cultural narratives may we unpack stereotypes and fixed identities and take apart such images of ‘purity’ and ‘Greekness,’ toward more open forms of representation. In her most recent work, Haraway calls on us to “stay with the trouble” and to focus on stories and theories which gather the complexity of things and yet remain open-ended for new and old connections: “it matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts. Mathematically, visually, and narratively, it matters which figures figure figures, which systems systematize systems.”<sup>67</sup> Instead of either taking for granted such filmic representations of the city or merely abandoning and rejecting them, it is perhaps important that we stay with them and that we place ourselves between the screen and the spectacles it portrays as well as the collective and social fantasies that are built within them, so that we can expose the ways in which they operate and the urban representations they construct.<sup>68</sup>

## Notes

- 1 On conceptualisations of the city as a medium, see: Friedrich A. Kittler and Matthew Griffin (trans.), “The City Is a Medium,” *New Literary History* 27, no. 4 (1996): 717–29; Lewis Mumford, *The city in history: its origins, its transformations, and its prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961). On cinematic constructions of urban space see: Richard Koeck, *Cine-scapes: Cinematic Spaces in*



- 20 George Kandylis, “The Space and Time of Migrants’ Rejection in the Centre of Athens,” in *The Centre of Athens as a Political Stake*, eds. Thomas Maloutas, George Kandylis, Michael Petrou, and Nikos Souliotis (Athens: National Centre of Social Research, 2013), 262.
- 21 In June 2015 the playground was redesigned and relocated to the northwest part of the square, and the inscription was erased.
- 22 Doxiadis and Matsaganis, *National Populism and Xenophobia in Greece*, 34; George Kandylis, “The Space and Time of Migrants’ Rejection in the Centre of Athens,” in *The Centre of Athens as a Political Stake*, eds. Thomas Maloutas, George Kandylis, Michael Petrou, and Nikos Souliotis (Athens: National Centre of Social Research, 2013), 273–274.
- 23 Eugenia Siapera and Mariangela Veikou, “The Digital Golden Dawn: Emergence of a Nationalist-Racist Digital Mainstream,” in *The Digital Transformation of the Public Sphere: Conflict, Migration, Crisis and Culture in Digital Networks*, eds. Athina Karatzogianni, Dennis Nguyen and Elisa Serafinelli (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 35–59.
- 24 Siapera and Veikou, “The Digital Golden Dawn,” 42.
- 25 Koutrolikou, “Utilizing socio-spatial stigmatization,” 107.
- 26 Zouglagr, “Εκδήλωση της Χρυσής Αυγής στον Άγιο Παντελεήμονα (Event by Golden Dawn in Agios Panteleimon),” filmed March 2014, video, 0:57, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSw44VyCcyQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSw44VyCcyQ); Χρυσή Αυγή – Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος (Golden Dawn – Popular Association (official account)); “Χρυσή Αυγή – Άγιος Παντελεήμονας 3 (Golden Dawn – Agios Panteleimon 3),” filmed July 2012, video, 0:18, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn0eoTw6ioK](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn0eoTw6ioK); Imetaxas, “Περιοδεία στελεχών Χρυσής Αυγής στον Άγιο Παντελεήμονα - Δηλώσεις Κασσιδιάρη (Campaign of Golden Dawn Members in Agios Panteleimon – Statement by Kassidiaris),” filmed August 2015, video, 0:24, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uyAlhCpZZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uyAlhCpZZY).
- 27 “The Trial,” Golden Dawn Watch, [https://goldendawnwatch.org/?page\\_id=420&lang=en](https://goldendawnwatch.org/?page_id=420&lang=en).
- 28 Ioanna Mandrou, “Εγκληματική Οργάνωση η Χρυσή Αυγή (Criminal Organization Golden Dawn),” *Kathimerini*, October 7, 2020, [www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561107527/diki-chrysis-aygis-oi-antidraseis-stin-dikastiki-apofasi/](http://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561107527/diki-chrysis-aygis-oi-antidraseis-stin-dikastiki-apofasi/); Helena Smith, “Neo-Nazi Leaders of Greece’s Golden Dawn Sentenced to 13 Years,” *The Guardian*, October 14, 2020, [www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/14/greece-golden-dawn-neo-nazi-prison-sentences](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/14/greece-golden-dawn-neo-nazi-prison-sentences).
- 29 Mandrou, “Εγκληματική Οργάνωση η Χρυσή Αυγή (Criminal Organization Golden Dawn),” *Kathimerini*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/politics/561107527/diki-chrysis-aygis-oi-antidraseis-stin-dikastiki-apofasi/>; Helena Smith, “Neo-Nazi Leaders of Greece’s Golden Dawn sentenced to 13 years,” *The Guardian*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/14/greece-golden-dawn-neo-nazi-prison-sentences>.
- 30 Greek Ministry of Interior Affairs, “National Elections 2019.
- 31 Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, trans. Julie Rose (New York: Semiotext(e), 1994 [1989]), 62.
- 32 Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 64; Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 25–27.
- 33 Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 24–25; Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, 60.
- 34 Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 593.
- 35 Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 583.
- 36 Bruno Latour, “Whose Cosmos, Whose Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck,” *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 3 (2004): 455.
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# STREET PROTEST AND ITS REPRESENTATIONS

## Urban dissidence in Iran

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### Introduction

The street as a site where citizens can demand and practice democracy is praised in the literature on social movements; however, what is less examined – concerning Iranian protests – is that it is on the street that the crowd becomes a visible object that can be regulated and potentially killed. This chapter explores the politics of space in general and the role of urban streets in social movements in particular through an analysis of the recent examples of urban dissidence in Iran, particularly the urban protests of 2019. *Pouring into the street* is not a recent phenomenon in the Iranian context. It can be traced to narratives surrounding the 1979 Islamic revolution, through which an image of the agency of urban space in social movements was constructed. The urban street in Iran is not a place where political change can be achieved, or at least the price is extremely high – the number of people being killed, executed or arrested for political protest on the streets is proof of this – which I will examine later. I argue in this chapter that we cannot separate the *street protests* from the *representation of the bloodshed on the street* if we want to investigate whether the urban street is a catalyst of meaningful political change or not. By considering them as intertwined, we will understand how the street and its representations establish who is human and who is the crowd.

To analyze the role of the urban street in social movements in Iran, first I examine the works of historian of modern Iran Ervand Abrahamian and sociologist Asef Bayat, whose analysis of the revolution of 1979 renders *pouring into the street* as an inevitable part of this event. I show that although their accurate account of this revolution highlights the role of the left and urbanism in mass mobilization, they do not discuss the human cost involved. Such historical studies document the number of people who were killed, injured or arrested but they do not discuss whose lives are framed as disposable. Another field of study helpful to better understand the complexities of spatial characteristics of such dissidence is the urban social movement discourse.

This term, *urban social movement*, was first introduced by Marxist sociologist Manuel Castells in the 1970s, and was used in both pessimistic and optimistic ways.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, he argued that social movements are reactionary and cannot produce any structural change because of their inevitable institutionalization.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in 2015, he suggested a third hybrid space made up of cyberspace and urban space as a space of autonomy.<sup>3</sup> His optimism was

criticized for not considering the limitations on the internet imposed by corporations.<sup>4</sup> To go beyond the optimism/pessimism duality and beyond discussing whether a structural change can be achieved or not, I turn to Marxist geographer David Harvey's work in which the *urban* is considered as the fundamental condition for any radical change.

By considering the urban *street* as an urban space that is first and foremost constructed by rows of individual buildings on its edges, this chapter shows that the discipline of architecture mainly engages with form and material, and as such it is very limited in its critical analysis of these urban areas. The ways that streets facilitate or restrict mass mobilizations are obvious from an architectural point of view. For example, a long, wide boulevard allows military tanks and large crowds to occupy this urban space, and tall buildings provide a convenient shooting platform for anonymously killing protestors on the street. Although such architectural analysis can be extremely useful in human rights activism, this chapter suggests that this is in fact the limitation of the discipline of architecture/urbanism in its critical analysis of the street. To develop another creative perspective, one can examine the role of architecture in the politics of truth-telling.

In order to develop this perspective, I will draw upon the notion of *population* by philosopher Michel Foucault, who suggests that population is a *constructed political subject* that is governed in specific ways to protect the state. Population, therefore, is not a collection of individual human beings, but rather it is statistics, birth-rates, infection rates or well-being-rates. By drawing a parallel between the population and the crowd, I argue that it is in fact the street that constructs a mass, which becomes an object and a potential target to be shot, killed or injured. This perspective stops me from losing sight of human lives when analyzing urban protests. It enables me to highlight those certain individuals who are rendered disposable and their death on the street framed as the norm.

This critical framework is developed to analyze the bloodshed in urban protests on the streets of Iran in 2019, which is the main case study of this chapter. I should also note that by focusing on the street, I am not disregarding the potential of virtual space in social movements, or the various techniques of mobilization in digital space. It is not to undermine or deny their role, but rather to concentrate on one specific spatial realm in which public discontent has been continuously expressed all across the world, as evidenced by the various Arab Spring protests in the early 2010s up to the Black Lives Matter protests during the pandemic in 2020. By focusing on physical space, this chapter examines the expression and representation of discontent on the urban street in Iran during a series of protests in 2019. The urban street is analyzed as a space in which crowds gather, protest, move, run and shout, and in which they are arrested, wounded and killed – while the images of such events continue to be captured and ceaselessly broadcast in media and the news.

### Pouring into the street

For sociologist Asef Bayat, the *street* is a significant spatial element in urban struggles, specifically in terms of the displaced urban poor. He uses the term *street* in three different ways: first, as the main and only public space left for ordinary people outside of institutional power, or those who have lost trust in institutional politics, to express discontent;<sup>5</sup> second, as a vibrant public space for informal economic activity that operates against the regulation imposed on the market by the state; and third, as the representation of the modern urban theater of contention par excellence.<sup>6</sup> The politics of the street are significant for Bayat because the street has the potential to galvanize a revolution. Moreover, he is well aware of the physical character of the street and its spatiality. He notes:

[I]n addition to thinking about why revolutions take place, who participates in them, and how events unfold, we should also be thinking about where they actually take place. More specifically, why do certain spaces/places, such as urban streets, more than others become the sites of acts and expressions of public discontent?<sup>7</sup>

Bayat is acutely aware of how streets allow contentions to build up, resulting in mass marching. He suggests that when a particular group of people march on the street, a sense of solidarity can extend to much more diverse groups of people and include strangers as well.<sup>8</sup> He continues his urban analysis to suggest that street protests usually occur in the locus of mass transportation networks, and specific streets allow the crowd to escape police by fleeing into adjacent narrow alleyways or shops, or by taking sanctuary/refuge in homes.<sup>9</sup>

Bayat's works are notable in addressing the role of neoliberal economics and neoliberal rationality in creating social inequality through the restructuring of Middle Eastern cities, a situation that led to the Arab Spring in the early 2010s. He is also quite specific about the limitations of the street as a space in which structural change can be achieved, implemented and sustained. However, he does not engage with the issue of bloodshed and the role of the street in allowing violence to occur; rather, he views bloodshed as an inevitable cost that must be paid on the streets by the crowd. What remains problematic, however, is that the street represents the only space left for expressions of discontent outside the hegemonic system. The price of such expressions is human lives. I argue that Bayat has a nostalgic and idealized view of the street, regarding it as an arena in which a radical shift can develop to disrupt a system. However, the cost to human life is secondary to this vision, despite the evidence pointing to the devastating impact of violence, both on the political and human level. The same problem is also evident in the works of the established historian of modern Iran, Ervand Abrahamian.

The studies of Bayat and Abrahamian are influential in their analysis of the Islamic revolution. While Bayat highlights the role of class struggle and the urban poor, Abrahamian presents a wider context by emphasizing the role of the Left in mass mobilization. I refer to their works because of their consistent reference to street protests as a self-evident and almost inevitable component of the formation of the revolution. In Abrahamian's work, for example, street protests are stated as historical facts without any examination of the nexus between violence and the street.<sup>10</sup> For example, he writes:

[T]housands wearing white shrouds to show their willingness to be killed violated the night curfew and poured into the streets [of Iran]. An estimated seven hundred died. In Qazvin, 135 were killed when tanks rolled over demonstrators. In Mashad, some two hundred – many of them high-school students – were fatally shot.<sup>11</sup>

If the two middle classes were the main bulwarks of the revolution [of 1979], the urban working class was its chief battering ram. Oil workers pushed the state to the verge of bankruptcy. Transport and factory workers brought industry to a halt. Moreover, slum dwellers provided much of the youth that defiantly challenged the military authorities, many of the martyrs that died in the major massacres and the bulk of the vast crowds that tenaciously marched in the streets.<sup>12</sup>

Here *pouring into the street* is reported in conjunction with the agency of the crowds and their eventual massacre. The nexus between crowd-street-violence is treated as self-evident, meaning that crowds pour into the street to demand change at the expense of their lives. It would be unfair to criticize Bayat or Abrahamian for not examining this nexus as this is not the topic of their investigations. However, it is exactly the point of my chapter – to consider the frameworks



though which *pouring into the street* is constructed as an inevitable or ultimate action toward social change.

While Bayat and Abrahamian use the word *crowd* to refer to a group of people, it is worth questioning this word. A crowd is not simply a collection of individuals; it is a constructed idea with a specific history that explains why certain lives are rendered disposable or able to be sacrificed to achieve certain demands. As argued by economic sociologist Christian Borch in his semantic studies, crowds, masses or mobs have been produced to situate people in relation to modern societies: “the crowd is often observed as the dark side of modern society” because it is opposed to the individual liberal autonomous subject.<sup>13</sup> As such, it is understood in negative terms – as a danger. The crowd is associated with “irrationality, violence, and de-individualization,” and therefore questions and upsets the ideal of a distinctive individual living in a liberal modern society.<sup>14</sup> Drawing upon the works of philosopher Chantal Mouffe, Borch believes that interest in the crowd phenomenon should be rekindled based on its relevance to the reconceptualization of contemporary politics.<sup>15</sup> Mouffe, following Sigmund Freud’s analysis of libidinal investment in the creation of collective identification and Jacques Lacan’s concept of enjoyment, emphasizes the role and significance of affect in politics. For her, crowd theory matters as it highlights collective identification, which is necessary for people to become interested in politics – specifically in liberal individualistic societies – and more importantly, “the need for collective identification will never disappear since it is constitutive of the existence of human beings.”<sup>16</sup> Mouffe’s analysis is illuminating because she highlights the significant affective role of the formation of this collective identity in mass mobilization.

This brief introduction to the notion of the crowd aimed to problematize its self-evidentiality. The crowd is a constructed collective identity, a *we*, that can be used to affect people in positive or negative ways and to achieve a different range of demands. Now, I want to return to the nexus between the crowd and the street – the spatial aspect of this collective act. Foucault’s concept of *population* helped me to explore the very spatial aspect of a collective act as he locates urban demonstrations in much wider spatial, social and political settings.

In *Security, Territory, Population* (1977–78) Foucault argues that the notion of *population* emerged as a new political concept through a new form of power, called the *apparatus of security*, and this new system of power was itself the result of the transformation of the town.<sup>17</sup> The new town, which was no longer walled, posed specific economic and political problems which required different governmental techniques. Here, Foucault highlights the urban aspect in the emergence of the new art of government through specific historical references to town/scarcity/epidemic and street/grain/contagion in western Europe, which led to the emergence of what Germans called the police-state (*Polizeiwissenschaft*) in the 18th Century. The number of citizens, their necessities of life, health and activity as well as the circulation of goods all became objects of concern for the police, whose role was to affirm and increase the power of the state while procuring the happiness of its subjects. Foucault offers the tantalizing conclusion that “to police and to urbanize is the same thing.”<sup>18</sup> To better understand this relationship between the urban population and the police, a brief summary of Foucault’s argument will follow.

The European towns of the 18th Century were changing spatially, juridically, administratively and economically, as the key problem became how to make the circulation of goods more efficient, productive and secure when the city was no longer enclosed but rather opened up to the outside, leaving it vulnerable to unpredictable events and an unknown future. Transformation of the town from an enclosed space within the city walls to an open matrix, Foucault suggests, required a different form of government, that is, one providing *security*. Security manages probabilities – it “will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable

framework.”<sup>19</sup> As such, the apparatus of security operates to manage probabilities and open series of events, and consequently it works on the future. The apparatus of security is exercised over a whole population and is concerned with multiplicities. What makes its treatment of space different from sovereignty and discipline is that it is centrifugal rather than centripetal:

[...] the apparatuses of security, [...] have the constant tendency to expand; they are centrifugal. New elements are constantly being integrated: production, psychology, behavior, the ways of doing things of producers, buyers, consumers, importers and exporters and the world market. Security therefore involves organizing, or anyway allowing the development of ever-wider circuits.<sup>20</sup>

This mutation of “technologies of power” manifested in the apparatus of security is a typical feature of modern society.<sup>21</sup> The result of this mutation of power is the production of a political subject called a population, which is different from people or individuals. The apparatus of security in 18th Century Europe removed the threat of scarcity by enabling the free circulation of grain and allowing the prices to fluctuate and run their own ‘natural’ course. Consequently, the population always had access to food because the grain was now free to circulate at whatever price the market demanded. Individuals, however, could also starve to death in this system, because they fell through the cracks of what constitutes the population, which is different from people. By associating the question of population to political economy,<sup>22</sup> Foucault articulates the division or opposition between population/people – those who subscribe to the social contract and laws, and those who break it, for which reason they fall outside the collective subject.<sup>23</sup>

Population is no longer a source of wealth or a productive force requiring disciplinary supervision, nor a collection of juridical subjects; rather, it is “a set of processes to be managed at the level and on the basis of what is natural in these processes.”<sup>24</sup> Population becomes a “technical-political object of management and government.”<sup>25</sup> The central point in the definition of this new entity, population, is the relationship with biology and “the entry of a ‘nature’ into the field of techniques of power.”<sup>26</sup> The new technique of power has to understand the nature of this object and allow it to run its course naturally, in terms of birth/death or contagion. For example, when there is an epidemic, this new form of political technology calculates the rates of contagion to identify the nature of how a population reacts toward the epidemic. Foucault calls *population* an “absolutely new thing,”<sup>27</sup> meaning that men are no longer mankind (*le genre humaine*) but rather the human species (*l’espèce humaine*). One could argue that a population is entangled with the development of power over life, a new technology that regulates the territory to ensure the state remains secure. By translating this to the Iranian urban protest context, it becomes clear that the violence of the totalitarian regime continues to guarantee the continuation of the state itself, while the killing of people is legitimized through representing the protestors as a threat to the security of the population.

In short, the notion of the crowd opens up two avenues of thought: a crowd is a constructed collective identity which poses a threat to individualistic ideals; and a crowd can be distinguished from a population in its resistance to being governed by the power over life. Therefore, the crowd/people is counter to the ideal of an individual while it problematizes the governable subject. The rethinking of the notion of the crowd/people is also extended to the notion of urban social movement.<sup>28</sup> By using Foucault’s concept of counter-conduct – the will not to be governed by certain people at certain costs – political economist Carl Death presents a pessimistic account of social movement by showing that protest and government are mutually constitutive. Protest against something, reinforces it. This dual relationship is evident in liberal societies where dissent is tolerated to a certain level because by legitimizing *the governable subjects’* ability to protest, the

prevailing practices of government are challenged while stabilized at the same time. For example, Death points to protests at global summits that attract media attention, which consequently gives more visibility to global governance and its hierarchical order. Moreover, the more violent the protests, the more they are captured as a spectacle in the media.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, they contribute to the stability of the structure they aim to unsettle. This is the contradictory aspect of collective protests: without undermining their necessity, endurance or potential, one might argue that protests also help to support the image of an oppressive regime – and construction of an oppressive regime can be used to legitimize invasion, attack or sanction on that regime as evident in the invasion of Iraq for example. Death shows that urban protests should be analyzed in close relation with their representations and framings in the media. While the brutal oppression of urban social movements in Iran between 2009 and 2019 escalated rapidly, the representations of the protests and the violence in the media followed a simple narrative both inside and outside the country: protestors are threats to the security of the population and the state and hence they should be eliminated at all costs; and there is an oppressive regime that is killing, arresting, torturing people because it is what totalitarian regimes do. Before starting to question whether the urban social movements in Iran between 2009 and 2019 resisted the oppressive regime or in fact reinforced it, it is necessary to explain a term – *urban social movements*.

### Urban social movements

The popular term *urban social movements* was first introduced by Castells in *The Urban Question* to describe the coming together of trade unions, political parties and urban-based groups.<sup>30</sup> If the struggles of these three could be linked together, *urban social movements* would bring structural and radical change in power relations. Later, in *The City and the Grassroots*,<sup>31</sup> Castells expands this term's meaning of struggles over "state-provision of collective infrastructures and services" to include "collective consumption services, cultural identity, citizens' rights and trade unionism."<sup>32</sup> More importantly, Castells, on a more pessimistic note, shows the limitation of such reactionary movements in producing any structural change. He goes even further to argue that in fact "all social movements are unable to fully accomplish their project since they lose their identity as they become institutionalized, the inevitable outcome of bargaining for social reform within the political system."<sup>33</sup> By referring to urban movements as *reactive utopias*, Castells concludes that they are symptoms of resistance to social domination and not agents of change because "they are unable to put forward any historically feasible project of economic production, communication, or government."<sup>34</sup> Urban movements are powerless in the context of a technologically sophisticated global economy, media empires and computerized bureaucratic governments. However, these movements continue to emerge, not because people do not know they need "an international working-class movement," but because people are left with no other choice.<sup>35</sup> All the organizations and agents that are supposed to stand up for their rights, have failed them. Castells maintains that when people pour into the street as a form of social movement, it is solely a reaction to exploitation and domination, a symptom of the society's contradictions. In his later works on the network society and the significance of the internet in social movements, Castells is more optimistic. However, he has subsequently been criticized for not adequately considering the role of multinational corporations in controlling the internet or for casting doubt on the autonomy of the internet and the influence of capital in this space. Although the internet plays a significant role in the formation of what Castells calls the *space of autonomy*, which is a third hybrid space made up of cyberspace and urban space,<sup>36</sup> the unprecedented event of shutting down the internet in Iran in 2019, for example, is enough to make one question the autonomy of this

space. In November 2019, within 24 hours, most traffic from the global internet was cut off in Iran, a technological blackout that lasted around six days to further suppress the political demonstrations against the regime. During this blackout, the civil society was denied access to the internet and as such was unable to plan for mobilization or for sharing information about the unfolding events. Disconnecting the Iranian domestic network from the global internet by using the “kill switch,” is an example for how totalitarian regimes can use cyberspace for geopolitical control.<sup>37</sup>

Urban social movements, however, remain popular in their symbolic role regardless of their ambiguity – an ambiguity which is also present in Castells’ own writings. On the one hand, urban social movements represent the potential achievement of the highest level of change, as opposed to participation or protest, while on the other hand, the term can be used generically to refer to any collective act irrespective of its outcome or effect.<sup>38</sup>

Harvey offers a more optimistic view regarding the potential of the urban to create radical change. From an economic point of view, Harvey regards the city as a production machine where value and capital are created and accumulated. This mode of economics creates the social inequality inherent to capitalism, which can only be resolved through a revolutionary act. For Harvey, this uprising will arise from urban streets. The key concept for Harvey in *Rebel Cities* is in fact Henry Lefebvre’s *the right to the city* rather than *urban social movements*; however, the two concepts have a lot in common, or can be used to serve similar purposes.<sup>39</sup> They both theorize how a collective struggle can form to demand access to the resources that the city offers while at the same time to gain power over the ways in which the city is made and remade.<sup>40</sup> For Harvey following Lefebvre, the right to the city should not be reduced to demanding access to the resources that the city embodies, as is typically the case. Rather, the right to the city should encompass an anti-capitalist collective movement that seeks to retain the value produced by collective labor under collective control, and in doing so, abolish the trajectory of capital growth while reimagining a city without inequality and environmental degradation.<sup>41</sup> The right to the city is not just about access to so-called public space, or housing, basic services or safe spaces; it is also about creating new common spaces for socialization and political action.

For example, the Green Movement of 2009 in Iran’s modern history, noted for the eruption of revolts, mainly in urban centers, was to demand the right of people in the governance of the country rather than mere access to resources. This movement developed as a response to sinister election fraud, with protestors demanding a vote recount. Peaceful street protests in Iran were violently oppressed – 10,000 people were arrested, and at least 71 were killed.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, protestors’ demands grew “wider, targeting the reform of the state – accountability, neutrality of the security apparatus, and limiting the power of the supreme leader.”<sup>43</sup> According to Bayat, the Green Movement, which was neither a class struggle nor a secular war against the religious rule, “brought the Islamist regime to its most profound crisis,” and at its core it sought to reform the state rather than overthrow it through a revolution.<sup>44</sup> In the aftermath of the election protests, the leader of the Green Movement, Mir Hussein Mousavi, was arrested and has been under home-arrest for almost 11 years. Supported by the supreme leader, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who implemented neoliberal populism in Iran,<sup>45</sup> continued his second term as the president (2005–09, 2009–13). The Green Movement was opposed to the reelection of Ahmadinejad for his second term as it was believed that the election had involved fraud. As Bayat writes, during his first term presidency, massive repression swept across the country: “scores of independent NGOs were closed down, key activists incarcerated, intellectuals and journalists detained, dissenting faculty and students removed, women activists put behind bars and mass protests of teachers and bus drivers put down.”<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the poverty rates increased to 13%, and Ahmadinejad’s cabinet built strong links to the military, the Revolutionary Guards and informal

credit associations.<sup>47</sup> In the following years, numerous protests swept across the country as the economy increasingly destabilized followed by increasing unemployment and poverty.

Everyday challenges faced by the urbanized working class who are fighting for or demanding access to basic needs, such as housing, health care, education, sanitation, water and equality, are not undermined in the right to the city discussions, but rather the lack of access to such services is framed as a clear result of capitalist urbanization. Harvey defines the right to the city beyond short-term, individualistic, reformist approaches and instead grounds this right on a revolutionary movement that seeks to create a whole new system, different from and opposed to the logic of capital accumulation. As Harvey writes:

While these public spaces and public goods contribute mightily to the qualities of commons, it takes political action on the part of citizens and the people to appropriate them or to make them so. [...] Syntagma Square in Athens, Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the Plaza de Catalunya in Barcelona were public spaces that became an urban commons as people assembled there to express their political views and make demands. The street is a public space that has historically been transformed by social action into the common of revolutionary movement, as well as into a site of bloody suppression. [...] There is always a struggle over how the production of and access to public space and public goods is to be regulated, by whom, and in whose interests.<sup>48</sup>

Here, Harvey reveals the two layers of an urban street: it can be a common and a site of oppression simultaneously. He continues to define four features of urban-based, anti-capitalist revolutionary movements. First, such revolutionary movements have the potential to disrupt urban economies, to disrupt the flows of production, of goods and services in major urban centers, and by doing so claim a demand in return. Second, urban protests also have a symbolic role such as May Day, and this is important because it reminds people of their collective potential. Third, it is difficult to understand the complexity of the politics and revolutionary potential of such movements.<sup>49</sup> And finally, there is a close correlation between the spatial/territorial organization of such urban spaces and the protest itself, meaning certain spaces are more conducive to facilitating protests. This feature has not remained unnoticed by the powers that predominate. Controlling the population through reorganizing urban infrastructure and urban life is manifested in the well-documented Haussmannization of 19th Century Paris and various city reengineering projects in Iran for example. For Harvey, the actual characteristic of urban space is important in political action and revolt, and at the same time, “the physical and social reengineering and territorial organization of these sites is a weapon in political struggles.”<sup>50</sup> This feature of urban-based class struggle, which mostly centers on physical and spatial organization, can be used as a tool of oppression or resistance.

The various urban uprisings in Iranian modern history at the beginning of the 20th Century can be rethought based on the four features of urban-based movements discussed above. First, any closure of the Tehran bazaar (located in Tehran, the capital of Iran), as a form of protest, can disrupt the Iranian economy. For example, in 2010 merchants closed their shops in protest against state tax-hikes,<sup>51</sup> and in 2012, merchants went on strike against the government’s economic mismanagement and the significant drop in value of Iranian currency against the US dollar. To which social class the *bazaaris* (merchants) belong (working class, bourgeois, capitalist or linked to the state’s military sector) is still a contested debate among historians of Iranian modern history. The point here is not to discuss whether the collective protests of *bazaaris* is an anti-capitalist movement or not, but rather to highlight that their collective action disrupts the economic system for claiming a particular demand in return.

In terms of the symbolic role of urban demonstrations and their value in keeping the memory of collective potential alive in people's minds, in an Iranian post-revolutionary context, two types of such demonstrations are worthy of consideration. They are both legal, annual and set in the Iranian calendar, with clear locations, routes and agenda. However, one is engineered and state-sponsored and the other is not. For example, the Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in February each year is celebrated by the regime to legitimize its popularity, and events generally run smoothly and peacefully. This annual political celebration includes mass marching in the streets and is widely broadcasted by the state-sponsored, monopoly media across the country in the absence of a free press. On the other hand, Labor Day and Student Day often lead to brutal oppression and widespread arrests under heavy surveillance. This is largely the result of the opposition grasping rare legal opportunities to conduct public demonstrations in protest against the state's illegitimacy and brutality. These two annual, legal demonstrations, that have run continuously since the 1980s, remind people that their presence and movement on the streets toppled a 2500-year-old, long-standing monarchy – however, whether this a true historical fact or not should remain an open question.

Not all collective actions are social movements – it depends on the scale. For example, participation is at the lowest level that operates on symbolic urban and political changes. At an intermediate level we have protests that seek reforms without demanding fundamental changes in power at urban and societal levels. Social movements are the highest and rarest, through which fundamental changes in power at urban and societal levels are sought.<sup>52</sup> Such categorization shows that analyzing any *urban social movement* is complex, and social sciences are empirically more equipped to provide answers to or deal with questions around what establishes a social movement. However, the discipline of architecture can also contribute to discussions around urban social movements by creating city-conscious architecture. Overall, any collective action is inherently spatial and becomes visible when manifested in the streets, in the empty space between the buildings. For example, the Green Movement was initially manifested by a long human chain which gathered in the 17.2 km long *Vali-e Asr* Street in Tehran and joined hands along one of the longest streets in the world to show their presence. As evident in the 2019 urban protests in Iran, which I will examine in detail later in the chapter, a crowd running in an urban square enclosed by medium density buildings, blocking a motorway, marching in a street under surveillance of shooters on rooftops are examples of the expression of the spatial dimension of riots.

### **Architecture and the urban street**

If an urban revolution is necessary for overthrowing capitalism from a Marxist point of view, one could argue that the gathering of people in public spaces, whether physically or digitally, is an inevitable part of any collective movement. It should also be noted that so-called public spaces are already policed, which means that a collective movement within a public space is generally controlled with a high likelihood of oppression at the time. Examples can be seen worldwide, such as the recent Black Lives Matter protests (following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer) held across the US during the coronavirus pandemic that were heavily controlled by a militarized police force. The point to make here is that oppression, surveillance and bloodshed occur alongside praise for social movements. Several questions clearly arise concerning how many lives must be lost for practicing democracy or seeking freedom; whose lives are dispensable. Perhaps these are not questions an architect can respond to. By defining architecture as “political technology that regulates our lives,”<sup>53</sup> we, as architects or urbanists, can provide examples to show how spatial practices regulate our lives, but that is all.<sup>54</sup> I consider this point as the limitation of the discipline

of architecture and urbanism, because it deals with symptoms of a problem (the negative impacts of architecture on our behavior and psychology) rather than the problem itself. Moreover, it becomes extremely difficult to imagine a creative avenue after we accept and provide examples showing how space can be used as an oppressive tool.

With a focus on the street as the object of his study, Anthony Vidler in *The Scenes of the Street* argues that architecture should not be separated from urbanism.<sup>55</sup> If it is, *the form of the urban realm* will not be understood, and this split will reduce architecture to single buildings defined by economic developments and urban policies.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, analyzing the street should not be restricted to urban studies. Another key edited book, *On Streets*,<sup>57</sup> remains one of the very few texts with *streets* in its title (not public space or urban space) and more importantly, despite the age of the publication, it presents the main frameworks through which the street can be studied.<sup>58</sup> In short, for architects, the street can be analyzed from a formal or material point of view – dimensions, proportions, materials, traffic, urban furniture and density. However, these frameworks tend not to offer new insights when analyzing the nexus between the architecture of the urban street and social movements. It is self-evident that from a formal point of view, the proportions of a street (its width and length), the density of the neighborhood and the traffic and/or legibility of routes, will all have a direct impact on crowd mobilization. Policing of these urban spaces is also facilitated by the visibility of the crowd, and dimensions play an equally important role. Long Haussmannian-style boulevards not only make the movement of the military faster in a city but also open up wide corridors in which people are exposed to the gaze of the buildings' windows, CCTVs, drones and helicopters/airplanes. The street is a military tool. This function is not an addition to the urban space, but rather inherent to its formation – as discussed by Foucault, to urbanize is in fact to police. The street is a mechanism for controlling the circulation of goods, ideas and people – with the ever-present possibility of removing any obstacle that could pose a threat to that circulation. I argue this is another limit in the discipline of architecture because this perspective mainly documents, historicizes and analyzes existing examples of the militarization of urban space. A less-explored field is to shift the focus to the representation of the urban street in collective uprisings, examining how architecture frames the politics of truth-telling and studying the ways media construct spectacles from ordinary people's struggle through these representations, spectacles that can be consumed by others, by those in front of their screens surfing the news – myself included. Thus, the focus is better to shift from street-violence-crowd to street-mediation-crowd, where mediation helps with performing various forms of violence.

Street protests become visible when videos and photos are published and disseminated widely in media. This chapter argues that if we examine how representations of specific places or buildings are manufactured and framed, we can open up a new avenue for thinking about the political role of architecture beyond the oppressive/liberating dichotomy. The Iranian protests of 2019–20 provide a specific opportunity for an alternative way of thinking, whereby the streets can be analyzed afresh because these protests were reported in the absence of reliable data, a free press or an international press, along with a countrywide internet shutdown. These protests should be first understood in a wider, historical-economic context that began in 2009.

### **2019 urban dissidence and bloodshed in Iran**

Following years of labor unrest during 2012–16, two widespread protests expanded across the country in 2017 and later in 2019. According to a study by Kevan Harris and Zep Kalb at UCLA, 400 labor protests occurred in 2015 and 340 in 2016.<sup>59</sup> Harris and Kalb suggest that these numerous, popular mobilizations led to the bloodshed of 2017–19. The protests of 2017–18 were started by the middle-class poor (largely unemployed, educated and young – mainly in

their 20s) in December 2017 in reaction to high prices in the city of Mashhad and soon after erupted in 85 cities and provincial towns across the country, resulting in at least 25 people killed and 3700 arrested.<sup>60</sup> Left unsupported by any coalition or party, these protests failed to galvanize a political force and were suppressed by the regime. In 2019, following the triple increase in fuel price that was abruptly enforced in Iran on 15 November 2019, urban protests swept across the country starting with the blockading of highways. The peaceful unarmed protests were brutally suppressed (people were shot to death, arrested, injured, detained) by the state's lethal force,<sup>61</sup> alongside a total internet shutdown. In its report of 16 November 2021, Amnesty International documents the details of 324 men, women and children who were killed by Iran's security forces between 15 and 19 November 2019.<sup>62</sup> According to a Reuters report on 23 December 2019, more than 1500 people were killed and 7000 arrested.<sup>63</sup> In the UN Human Rights report of 2020, the special rapporteur writes in shock about the:

unprecedented use of excessive and lethal force by State security forces during the November 2019 protests, including by the police, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its Basij militia. ... [A]t least 304 people, including 23 children and 10 women, were killed between 15 to 19 November 2019 in 37 cities across the Islamic Republic of Iran, although the death toll is believed to be much higher. [...] The pattern of shooting at vital organs, established by eyewitness accounts, video footage and the documented causes of deaths, demonstrates that security forces were "shooting to kill" or with reckless disregard as to whether their actions caused death.<sup>64</sup>

Information regarding the resources used to kill or arrest people is derived from Amnesty International reports, which are substantially different from those of Reuters. Moreover, the execution of detainees and the death of the injured remain unclear and mostly undocumented for each event. As such, I found it difficult to write a single sentence in which I could mention the number of people who were shot and killed – were there hundreds or thousands? Not that responding to this question is important to this chapter, but the ambiguity and lack of reliable information is worth thinking about. The continuous work of human rights activists in Iran and abroad has documented this violation with the hope of holding the Iranian regime accountable.<sup>65</sup> The increasing protests and unrest, followed by the unprecedented killing of unarmed protestors, mainly in their 20s, makes one question the price being paid for a future democratic state – whether bloodshed in the street is the only way forward.

The simple answer is that the street *may* be the only space left for people to express discontent. However, this proposition leaves no room for creating alternative spaces that might become more effective forums for structural change while protecting lives. The street operates at two levels simultaneously – as public space in which democracy can be practiced and as a corridor that transforms individuals into crowds and targets to be shot dead. This is the trap of visibility *par excellence*.

### **Street protest and its representations**

With a GDP contracted by 6.8%,<sup>66</sup> an unemployment rate of 12.3% and 23–40% of the population below the poverty line in 2019,<sup>67</sup> Iran's currency continues to lose its value under US sanctions. In its October 2020 report of post-Covid Iran, the World Bank raised concerns about Iran's increasing poverty: "High inflation, increased gasoline prices in 2019, economic slowdown, and the economic shock caused by Covid-19 have given rise to concerns about household welfare and poverty."<sup>68</sup> The protests began on 15 November 2019 immediately after



the 50–200% fuel price hike was announced. Fixed-line and mobile provider outages, followed by an internet shut down for a week across the country, occurred on the same day and worsened as the protest intensified.<sup>69</sup> This meant that people in Iran were not only unable to communicate with each other, but they were also unable to report on the protests.<sup>70</sup> In the absence of a free press, it was left to protestors to report state violence in previous upheavals by posting amateur videos and photos on social media. This time, both the virtual and physical spaces were blocked. It took a week for news, photos and videos to appear online. In this instance I am referring to three videos in which the video footage can be seen as screenshots in Figures 23.1–23.4.

In Figure 23.1, we see a group of unarmed protestors chasing a few armed police from a green space in an urban square onto the adjacent street. A gunman turns around and shoots a protestor in the foot from a 1–2 m distance. The protestor does not appear to be threatening the life of the police officer. The investigation conducted by *Justice for Iran* used collated images as legal evidence in criminal courts to identify the criminals and hold them accountable (Figure 23.2). In Figure 23.2, which is based on the *Justice for Iran* report, the scene is cross-referenced with other images to locate where the event took place, showing the same event from different angles. All videos and photographs were taken by civilians, one at the top of a multi-story building and others on the street. Architecturally speaking, such events explicitly point to the inherent violence of the policed urban space. I suggest that identifying the repetitive spatial narrative these scenes (photographic or video) reproduce will allow us to go beyond the duality of oppression/liberation. For instance, Figure 23.2 provides images of streets filled with a crowd of people who presumably decided to voluntarily risk their lives. This is a typical act under a totalitarian regime and an act necessary in the fight for a democratic society, despite the fact it renders human lives disposable. Architecture in this instance is not only buildings, but a point of reference that situates events and gives them a point in time and space – *here* the



Figure 23.1 The shooting of an unarmed protestor in his foot based on video footage in Shahrriar, Tehran 25 Aban 1398 (2019) published at Manoto TV. Diagram by Jamikorn Charoenphan © Farzaneh Haghighi.

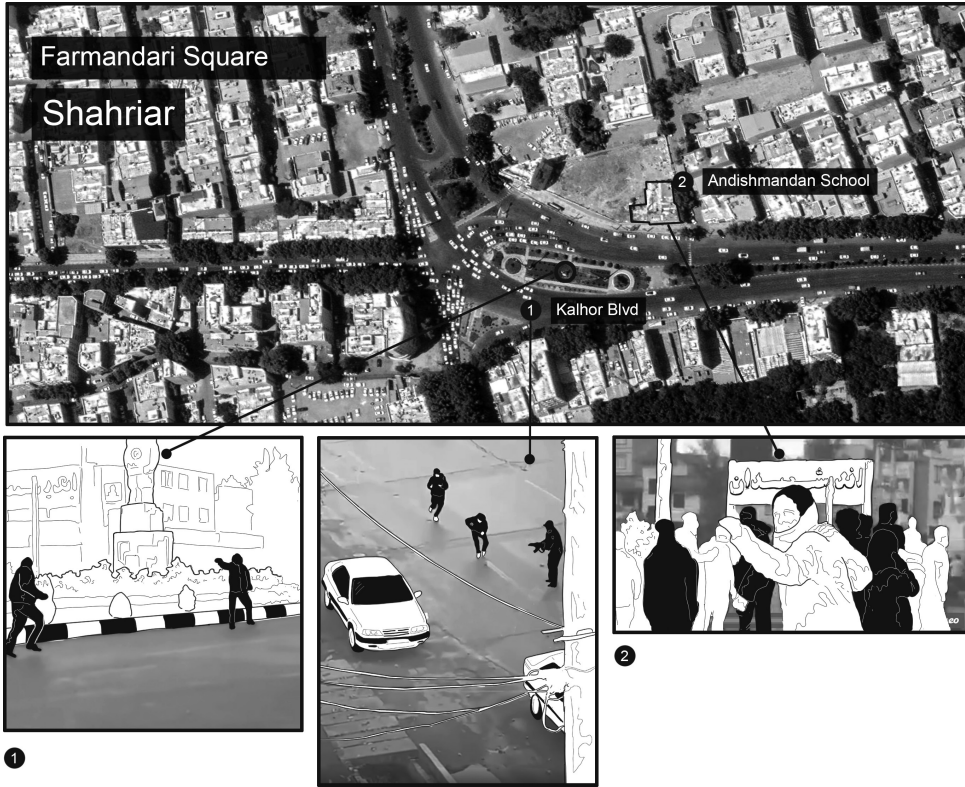


Figure 23.2 Spatial analysis of video footage based on the works of human rights activist Justice for Iran, derived from Shoot to Kill. Providing evidence that police shot directly at an unarmed protestor. Diagram by Jamikorn Charoenphan © Farzaneh Haghighi.



Figure 23.3 Individuals stationed on the rooftop of a governmental building, the Justice Department, using firearms against the protestors in the street below in Javanroud, Kermanshah, November 2019, based on video footage posted on YouTube by Freedom Messenger and Nazeran R.F.I. Diagram by Jamikorn Charoenphan © Farzaneh Haghighi.



Figure 23.4 Protest in Sattarkhan Street, Tehran, Iran, in November 2019, based on video footage posted by BBC. Diagram by Jamikorn Charoenphan © Farzaneh Haghighi.

shooting occurred. And in doing so, architecture and urban space give visibility not only to the contained and controlled crowd of people but also to the violence imposed on them. In other words, architecture gives a *form* to spatial violence.<sup>71</sup>

The same narrative, as a normalized practice in urban social movements, continues in another scene, where gunmen standing on the rooftop of a three-floor building shoot at the people on the street (Figure 23.3). In the original video, we also hear several gunshots and then the camera turns to the street, showing several people screaming and running in distress. The building is a governmental office – the Justice Department of the District of Javanrood in the city of Kermanshah – making it more probable that the gunmen were given access and the right to use the rooftop to kill people while remaining away from the street itself. The higher the building, the better the surveillance of the surrounds and the greater the opportunity for these unlawful forces to crush protests. Architecture here, in the form of a building, is used as a tool of oppression and as evidence for locating the crime – making it far from being a neutral container. It makes manifest the particular relationship between architectural dimensions and violence. However, the point of my investigation is to trace the repetitive spatial narrative in this scene too: the crushing of urban protests through human deaths becomes a normalized practice under a totalitarian regime when the masses use the streets to express discontent. I also found Judith Butler’s essay on the leaked torture photographs at the US detention centers illuminating as she explains the numbing effect of images of war that aestheticize the suffering of others to satisfy consumer demands. She also pays particular attention to the ways images are framed in order to include and exclude certain information, and in doing so to establish “who is human and so entitled to human rights and who is not.”<sup>72</sup> In fact, these videos and images create a numbing

effect toward the pain of the other – rendering life disposable, inevitably to be lost for a higher purpose.

After a week of internet shutdown, numerous videos and photos began to appear online and were sent to various news agencies by civilians – as reflected by the amateur video quality. Among these, a video published by BBC-Persian depicts a surreal scene that surpasses the previous shocking depiction of violent events (Figure 23.4). It does not seem real; it is as if it is an action sequence in a movie in which the actors are playing their roles. The camera is held by someone in a car, and the car is turning at an intersection of two streets in Tehran. We see multiple encounters occurring one after the other in the space of 35 seconds: several men attack another; a woman screams at a police officer – both are caught between two parked cars; police officers with batons chase a man; a police officer raises his baton in the air ready to knock someone out; we hear the voice of a woman (possibly the camera operator), telling the driver to go, go – to leave the scene as quick as possible.<sup>73</sup> It is hard to believe this scene is real rather than staged, as it reaches an aesthetic level that is far beyond the chaos of reality revealed in other amateur videos. Jean Baudrillard's notions of the hyperreal and simulation may explain this phenomenon, as he shows the disappearance of the distinction between copy/real, concept/being and map/territory. That is, we are left with the hyperreal because the real does not exist anymore – in fact, “the real is no longer possible.”<sup>74</sup> We live in the age of simulation in which all referentials have been liquidated, reappearing in a much more ductile sign system. The double of the real has substituted the real itself.

I am not suggesting that this video is forged in contrast to the *real* videos that preceded it, but rather that it is beyond real. The scene is situated in a street and the signs on the shops indicate *where* it is exactly, along with other signs such as police uniforms, people's clothes, types of cars, street signs and street curbs. As the car leaves the scene, we see a crowd amid the smoke of tear gas. The moving images in the video appear to be created in order to be captured by the camera, as if they preexist the real, as if we have seen these before not on the street but on the screen, in photos, in movies. As if the videos and photos were meant to be communicated from the start.<sup>75</sup> The photos and videos of people being shot, beaten or killed on the streets of Iran seem to reach an aesthetic level that is constructed as a spectacle within a practicing democracy and hence there is no international outrage when these photos and videos are published, circulated and consumed. In the age of simulation, what is essential is the production, reproduction and overproduction of the simulated for a consumer society. As such one could argue that the *street* and the *representation of the bloodshed in the street* both establish who is human and who is not. Therefore, it is an ethical obligation to analyze the street protests alongside their representations aimed at consumers' narcissistic desire to see, and to understand, as Butler writes, that “to learn to see the frame that blinds us to what we see is no easy matter.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Concluding remark**

This chapter was a preliminary attempt to create a link between two seemingly unrelated topics – *urban social movements* and *representation of the bloodshed in the street* – from a spatial point of view by drawing on the Iranian urban protests of 2009. The ongoing brutal suppression of protests in Iran was considered counter to narratives that construct the urban street as a conduit for political change. I listed and discussed the numbers of civilians who were killed and the complexity of reporting accurate data, in order to highlight the importance of not losing sight of the human lives lost. While analyzing how the street constructs a mass or a crowd, the chapter argued that certain people are rendered disposable; their death on the street is framed as the norm in the fight against a totalitarian regime and for democracy. Highlighting this problematic in the literature

that praises *pouring into the street*, I turned to the discipline of architecture in order to explore the potential tools for analyzing the inherent spatial dimension of such demonstrations, and to assess and capture the ambiguity of street protests. The chapter identified certain limitations within the discipline of architecture and urbanism when examining such collective urban dissidence centered on the following: materiality and form; mere documentation of examples of the militarization of urban space; and the duality of the oppressive/liberatory impact of space on our behavior and psychology. As an alternative, this chapter suggested a shift from street-violence-crowd to street-mediation-crowd, mainly because urban street protests essentially concern visibility and representation which are inherent to architecture as a discipline and as a practice. The crowd on the street is a potential target to be shot by the gun and by the camera simultaneously. Examining how this mediation operates, the chapter highlighted a specific deployment of architecture, not as a *container* but rather as a *critical lens*. In this way architecture as a discipline covers certain spatial aspects of social movements that the frameworks of urban sociology or political philosophy, for example, cannot capture. As a critical lens, architecture allows for careful analysis of forces, and interdependencies, while bringing together seemingly disparate sources – from anonymous street videos to gunshots and street signs as material witness.

## Notes

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- 6 Asef Bayat, *Street Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 184.
- 7 Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 180.
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- 15 Borch, *The Politics of Crowds*, 302.
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- 35 Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, 329.
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- 74 Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 180.
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- 76 Butler, *Frames of War*, 100.

# WESTERN FANTASY AND TROPICAL NIGHTMARE

## Spectacular architecture and urban warfare in Rio

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### Introduction: Boarding

The competitive management of contemporary metropolises promises a world of dreams through extreme architectural and urban forms, large real-estate projects and mega-events broadcast worldwide by mass media. Spectacular images of the cityscape and new buildings are produced to circulate globally, displaying a civic mobilization of achievement and overcoming. In Rio de Janeiro – host of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics – arenas, Olympic works associated with new museums, cultural centers and luxury buildings, designed by Jean Nouvel, Christian de Portzamparc, Zaha Hadid, Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio and Charles Renfro (DS + R), Norman Foster, Paulo Jacobsen, Santiago Calatrava, Bill Hanway (AECOM), among others, are framed by a paradisiacal backdrop. The architectural design in 21st Century Rio has renewed a tropical fantasy that has always titillated the western colonial imagination of conquest and domination, reinvented in the present through the global circuit of spectacular architectural works commissioned by cities in competition and mass media events. In this city of the spectacle, the control of impoverished populations through *cordons sanitaires*, the removal or ‘pacification’ of *favelas*, or their management and high-tech surveillance by militaries, paramilitaries and private security companies has brought Brazilian apartheid in line with 21st Century standards for urban warfare as a forgery of the real city that can be transformed (or falsified) into a theme park of global events, mass media broadcasts, tourism, business and new opportunities for real estate.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first presents the dreamworlds imagined and built by global architects who have landed in Rio de Janeiro in the last two decades since 2000. These are projects and works by architects with winning careers who, in their spectacular buildings and fantasies about the South, reiterate neocolonial asymmetries. As described by Milton Santos, globalization was positively announced by the hegemonic forces of global power but has landed in the Southern territories as a perverse farce.<sup>1</sup> Top-down imposed projects have appeared, forging a global spatial culture that disorganizes local spaces and communities. Such works have not only been imposed by outside forces, such as international corporations<sup>2</sup> and financial flows, but ordered and welcomed by the local elites. Almost all of the projects and buildings that we will present in this chapter (Guggenheim Rio, City of Arts, Casa Atlântica,



Image and Sound Museum, Aqwa Corporate Building, Rio Museum of Art, Museum of Tomorrow and Olympic Park) harmed public budgets by prioritizing controversial expenses over the implementation of urgent infrastructure such as sewage, water or hospitals. In addition to the immense and costly sculptural objects<sup>3</sup> that have been built (or not), the new images in circulation have unveiled a system of soft cultural domination and city branding in the age of financial globalization.

In the second part, the chapter presents the nightmares faced by a significant portion of the population – victims of violence, forced evictions, rights violations by the state and para-state militias – forced onto the edge of survival and destitution. Most are Black and Afro-descendants. The regime of urban warfare and control of territories, bodies and flows by the state power, corporations and militias are permanent in a Southern megacity like Rio. Control and its technologies are imported or created locally and have turned the old capital of Brazil into a testing ground for new forms of apartheid and intensive population control, under a dystopian regime.

These processes, which we summarize as the concept of *riofication*, are global trends that inextricably combine spectacle and control, real estate and paramilitary extortion, deregulation and privatization, global mega-events and regressive fundamentalism. It is a political and urban formula that transforms urbanscapes into a monstrous amalgam in which the speculative, security, mythical and predatory trends of contemporary capitalism are revealed. We use the term *riofication* to describe this phenomenon and its incarnation in an urban landscape that goes far beyond a local or specific city. Rio is not just a local ‘case study’ or another example of an ‘Evil Paradise’ whose archetype is Dubai, as proposed by Mike Davis.<sup>4</sup> Rio, and Brazil, are more the rule than the exception in a global perspective. In this sense, unlike Dubai, which is a *sui generis* (unique) case of “utopian luxury,” Rio is a powerful explanatory nexus of contemporary uneven capitalist urbanscapes. We lean on the formulation of the South African professor Alain Mabin, who considers that “events and ideas in the South are powerful for understanding the world as a whole, not only the South.”<sup>5</sup> As Mabin suggests, initiatives such as this chapter should preferably be considered as part of an effort to present theories from a Southern city, not as a “pure southern take” but as new research and writing on “transnational,” architectural and urban theory.<sup>6</sup>

Welcome to Rio.

## Part 1: Rio dreamed by star architects

### *A new French mission*

One of the events that fed coloniality that still affects the conception and production of the Brazilian space is the arrival of the ‘French Mission’ in the 19th Century. In 1808, the Portuguese court was transferred to Brazil escaping from the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal. Despite that, the Portuguese court brought to Brazil from France an artistic–scientific mission in 1816. Painters, botanists and architects instituted higher education in Rio through the installation of the National School of Fine Arts. In 1822, Brazil ceased to be a Portuguese colony, and French influences grew in the post-colonial period. Grandjean de Montigny, a French architect, instituted the teaching of architecture in Brazil and was influential in the spread of neoclassicism in several monumental buildings in Rio.<sup>7</sup> In 1860, the engineer Pereira Passos returned from Paris with the aim of implementing Haussmann’s urban reform – which is what he actually did when he became mayor.<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the century, Rio experienced a tropical *Belle Époque* (Beautiful Epoch), with mansions, parks and boulevards constructed following urban slum clearances, while tenements and epidemics of cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis proliferated across the rest of the city.<sup>9</sup>

Simultaneously, 19th Century Rio was the largest modern city in the world to extensively practice slavery<sup>10</sup> – with its lifestyle widely portrayed by another Frenchman, the painter Jean-Baptiste Debret, leader of the 1816 Mission. Hence, the contrast between, on the one hand, the ideology of the elites and the emergence of a bourgeoisie that pretended to be liberal, artistic and literarily refined, with cafés, salons, neoclassical architecture and urban renewal, and, on the other hand, the Black slaves serving their masters, transporting goods around the city and even functioning as water distributors and sewage and garbage collectors – evidences of a White *Belle Époque* dreamworld supported by a Black nightmare.<sup>11</sup>

Previous forms of primitive accumulation and looting, violence and control over unruly bodies, generally Black or Native, are reconfigured and maintained until today. Again, they are mixed with narratives, images and colonial dreams about the life and landscape of the tropics. They are, though, combined with softer and more sophisticated mass media and cultural strategies, such as the construction of museums, cultural and sports centers, that afford a lesser sense of violence and predation in the domination and subalternization process.

One of the most fabulous projects (in the sense of a fable) in 21st Century Brazil, although not built, was that of the Guggenheim Rio (Figure 24.1), commissioned in 2002 by Thomas Krens (the Guggenheim’s director from 1988 to 2008) to the architect Jean Nouvel. It aimed to serve as the ‘anchor’ of Rio’s waterfront renovation strategy and was to be named – based on a marketing fantasy – *Porto Maravilha* (Wonderful Harbor).<sup>12</sup> The project was presented to the city in early 2003 after two years of work by Jean Nouvel’s team, with work estimated at US\$200 million plus the cost of the contract with the Guggenheim Foundation and its brand. In this operation, the city of Rio would pay three times more than Bilbao in Spain. Public demonstrations and action by councilors blocked the operation.<sup>13</sup>

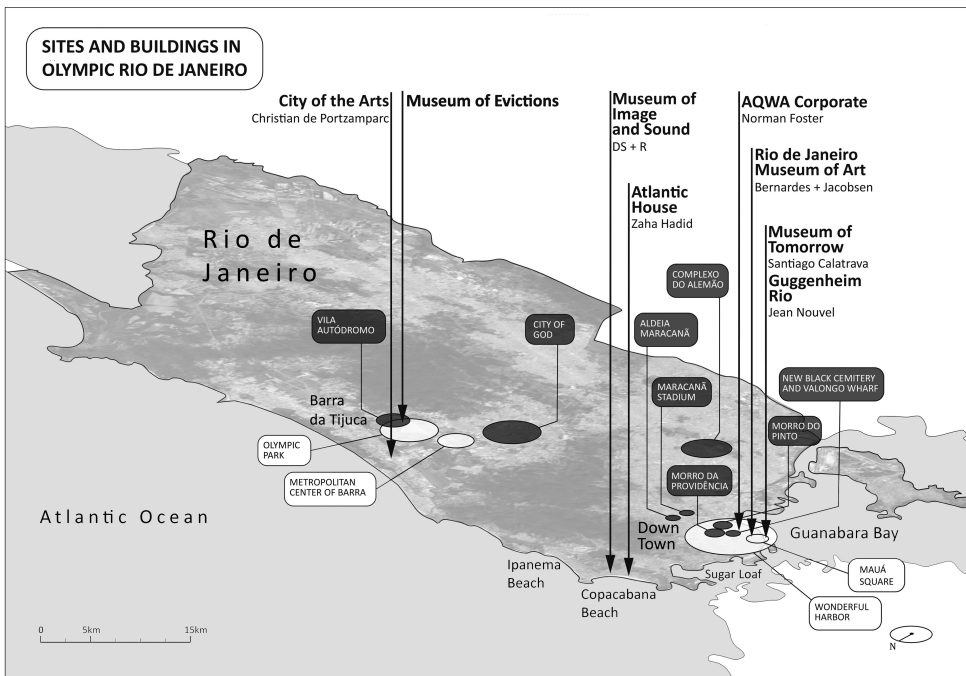


Figure 24.1 Rio’s map of architectural works and sites analyzed in the chapter. © Jaqueline Menezes da Matta.

In the Guggenheim Rio Nouvel project, besides the exhibition rooms, there was to be an underwater aquarium, water mirrors and, as the tropical fantasy climax, an artificial forest with a 12-story high waterfall in a hollow dugout below sea level. The French architect, as an “urban imagineer,” sought to reproduce a tropical “theme park museum”<sup>14</sup> – with wild images of South America created by colonizing Europeans, drawn from travelers’ narratives to the stereotypes of exotic tourism. In the project’s presentation the architect stated, without any inhibitions, that he conceived “dream territories” and that he was inspired by the “myth of Atlantis.”<sup>15</sup>

In 2002, a second French architect, Christian de Portzamparc, another Pritzker prize winner (as Nouvel), was also hired by a right-wing mayor César Maia to carry out a monumental work, Rio de Janeiro’s City of Arts and Music. In his press release on the project, Portzamparc strove for grandiloquent rhetoric:

The City of Music must have strong personality and great visibility; it must be magnetic, attractive. It must be conceived as an urban symbol. An equivalent of the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.<sup>16</sup>

This work was initiated as part of a huge operation of rent concentration in an already upscale neighborhood, bursting with new real-estate developments. The completed project is a Eurocentric reinterpretation of Brazilian architecture and landscape, at a cost of US\$230 million and numerous corruption scandals.<sup>17</sup> Its colonial reverie references another Brazilian cliché – Niemeyer’s architecture from the 1950s to the 1960s, especially the famous palaces of Brasília, where two horizontal planes are supported on curved and white pillars, with access ramps. The Portzamparc palace is full of formal acrobatics, excessive but typical of iconic architecture (of which, incidentally, Niemeyer, in his own way, was always a master of). At 87,000 m<sup>2</sup>, three times the size of the Planalto Palace and 12 times the size of the Alvorada Palace in Brasília, the building expresses a historical–geographical detachment that creates a sense of *farce* – a building that ultimately represents power and the current “system of hegemony.”<sup>18</sup>

### ***Let’s do the Copacabana***

Rio became internationally fashionable in the 1940s and 1950s, thanks to the two characters invented in the post-WWII period in Hollywood that were within the scope of the Alliance for Progress – the US imperial approach to Latin America. The characters were the singer, actress and dancer Carmen Miranda, and the parrot Zé Carioca (or, Joe Carioca), a Disney comic. In the 1947 musical film *Copacabana*, directed by Alfred Green, Carmen Miranda is pampered throughout the film by none other than Groucho Marx. In addition to recording the famous choro *Tico-Tico no Fubá*, Carmen Miranda appeared in another showcase, *Let’s do the Copacabana*, surrounded by sensual dancers with tropical fruit arrangements on their heads, singing: “Its tropical people go to your feet / And make you feel Latin / That’s cause the Copacabana comes directly / From the canyons of Manhattan / In the land that gives us the coconut and bananas.”<sup>19</sup>

In Copacabana, Rio’s famous urban beach area, two more star architectural offices have arrived in recent years, that of Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher, who proposed a luxury residential building, and that of Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS + R), who created the Museum of Image and Sound. Zaha Hadid’s luxury building, Casa Atlântica, was designed in 2014. This was her only project in Latin America, with plans for opening prior to Rio’s Olympic Games in 2016 – which did not eventuate. The building was designed to be on a narrow lot in front of the beach walkway, made striking by the succession of luxury apartment terraces. The exoskeleton design had Hadid’s elegance and artistic trait, with a feature that was both 1950s

retro and futuristic. The generous dream balconies, reflecting the sensual reverie of Carmen Miranda and Tom Jobim's Rio imaginary, were to open up to the wonderful view of the beach and mountains.

The Copacabana waterfront has yet another surprise, this one with construction underway – despite being temporarily halted due to new corruption scandals and embezzlement.<sup>20</sup> The Museum of Image and Sound (MIS), sponsored by the Roberto Marinho Foundation, is the result of a controversial contest<sup>21</sup> held in 2009, ultimately won by the New York office of DS + R. The challenge of the project was to integrate huge volume within enclosed spaces to house collections, exhibitions and projection rooms and make it commensurate with Copacabana's landscape. The design proposal by DS + R, which also won the MoMA expansion contest and The Broad in Los Angeles, was to bring lightness and movement to the building's façade with an ascending journey through external ramps. The promenade is designed to extend like a boulevard over the building, inviting visitors to the rooftop where there is space to show outdoor films and a gazebo at the end. The ascending path aims to take visitors away from the conflicting reality of the city and place them in the position of observer/colonizer. Colonial cities built by the Portuguese always included the element of the upper city as a point of surveillance and domination, and the vertical gaze of surveillance over the *favelas* is increasingly reinforced today.

Let's look at one of the digital images presented by DS + R (Figure 24.2). The visual depiction of the rooftop cinema shows spectacular views, and on the cinema screen, not by chance, a frame from a scene in the Brazilian film *Cidade de Deus* (City of God, 2002), directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund. In the frame, two boys appear, Dadinho and Benê – a frame with an ambiguous meaning. Those who do not know the film story recognize two children laughing, happily embracing each other, one Black and the other with a lighter skin, a *cliché* image of the fake myth of Brazilian *racial democracy*. However, the film script and real life are quite different. Dadinho and Benê are boys raised in the largest housing project in Rio, the result of forced evictions from 26 *favelas* in the city center during the military dictatorship, a ghetto without public services and far from employment. Why did DS + R choose this film frame for their digital architectural rendering and its screen? *City of God*, while based on field research by anthropologists Alba Zaluar<sup>22</sup> and Paulo Lins's novel,<sup>23</sup> is at the same time a commercial blockbuster (in 2004, it competed for an Oscar in four categories), with a great deal of violence that reflects an uneven, violent and torn country. The real-life nightmare for the Afro-Brazilian majority is presented on the museum screen as entertainment for tourists as is the



Figure 24.2 Museum of Image and Sound (under construction), Copacabana, Rio, 2009–present. © DS+R.

postcard landscape of Copacabana in the background. Would this shock produce a Benjaminian emancipatory conscience,<sup>24</sup> or solidarity with the oppressed?

### ***Misplaced ideas: From London to Mauá Square***

Colonial dreams have always been well accepted by local elites. The ability to incorporate foreign delusions as if from nationals is a kind of virtue of the Brazilian ruling classes. Roberto Schwarz calls this phenomenon *misplaced ideas* when discussing the circulation of ideas and their local incorporation that represent nothing but nonsense, like the enslaving elite reproducing the ideas of European liberalism, or Santa Claus making an appearance in Brazil's extreme December heat, dressed in a winter suit from the North Pole. Schwarz terms this a "false, inauthentic, imitated character of Brazilian cultural life" and a "feeling of contradiction between the national reality and the ideological prestige of the countries that serve as a model."<sup>25</sup> Schwarz completes his argument by indicating that ideas out of place on the periphery of capitalism also reveal their false and ideological background that lies at the very center of the system. The flagrant malaise of liberal ideas on the periphery is not just a tropical disease but can be understood as a "a sore spot of the world-historical process and for this reason a valuable clue to it."<sup>26</sup>

The latest constructions in Mauá Square (Figure 24.1), located in downtown Rio, can be identified as typical expressions of *misplaced ideas*. Cultural centers combined with high-tech urban equipment are designed to match the exuberant but extremely polluted Guanabara Bay, forming a kind of consensual apotheosis where presumably nature erases socio-spatial conflicts. The national elite appropriates a stereotype vision and discourse, typical of coloniality, where nature appears as an enchantment, legitimizing their spaces of internal domination. A wave of urban renewal took over this space at the end of the 20th Century, when city marketing proposals converted a region of the port, considered obsolete, into a preferential area for speculation in the wake of mega sporting events, including the removal of poor populations and a substantial increase in land value. Part of the *misplaced ideas* is the attempt to Europeanize, or 'civilize,' the richest Brazilian cities with architectural and urban styles in the French or English manner, from the 19th Century tropical *Belle Époque* to the present. The result will be to produce misplaced places, an attempt by local elites to make themselves and their cityscapes appear global.

This is how two well-known constructions imitating projects in London were recreated at the edge of the Rio port, although without the same dimensions and original quality of the work along the River Thames – a corporate building recreated by Norman Foster (but without the highlight of Swiss Re's London 'Gherkin') and a miniature copy of the London Eye, the Rio Star wheel. Foster's proposal for a set of high-tech and 'sustainable' twin towers called Aqwa Corporate (Figure 24.1) resulted in only one being built – like a ship stranded on the coast, matching the failure of the rest of the real-estate operations in the port region. Even with tax incentives and spending on land – as the urban operation of Porto has been carried out mainly on state-owned land (75%)<sup>27</sup> – almost all the projects in Porto Maravilha have not got past the proposal stage, like the five non-built Trump Towers.<sup>28</sup>

In the eastern part of the port, the Mauá Square project was developed by the Rio de Janeiro architecture firm Blac, together with their Catalan colleagues at ABR Arquitectes Associats, guaranteeing the Barcelona seal of approval. The new square reaches Guanabara Bay, opening a contemplation space for the Museum of Tomorrow that appears as a mirage generated by the merciless sun. Facing Mauá Square, the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Art (MAR – which in Portuguese also means 'sea') was inaugurated in 2013, designed by the famous Brazilian architecture firm, Bernardes + Jacobsen (Figure 24.1). This project connects three buildings through an imposing roof with a thin and undulating concrete shell. Symbolically housing the

entire museum, the gentle waves of the sea-MAR appear to dissolve the city's historic conflicts as if celebrating the city's exuberance in a sweet dream, paving the way for dialogue between the national and the global elite through the Museum of Tomorrow.

### *The future will be white and bright*

The same Mauá Pier that was offered to Guggenheim, whose project failed to progress beyond paper, embraced a new project years later, led by the Roberto Marinho (our 'Citizen Kane') Foundation, linked to the Brazilian communication and journalism mega-corporation, Organizações Globo. In the last decades, through the Foundation and its 'factory of cultural and educational experiences,' Globo designed new museums, while sponsoring, managing and defining the exhibitions and, of course, promoting them. Among the museums are the Football Museum and the Portuguese Language Museum (both in São Paulo) and, in Rio, the Museum of Image and Sound (MIS), the Art Museum of Rio (MAR) and the Museum of Tomorrow (Figure 24.1), designed by the Spanish architect, Santiago Calatrava. These are all interactive, media museums that resemble theme parks.

The Museum of Tomorrow focuses on the Anthropocene, environmental imbalances and a desirable sustainable future. However, the Anthropocene's interactive spectacularization is completely aseptic, with an expography based on media, games, data and little critical reflection. The special effects of its exhibitions draw a seductive but superficial way of denunciation that hides the social origin of the presented problems; thus, it represents the consequences of capitalist production as an evolutionary fatality on Planet Earth. The contradictions, conflicts and massacres produced by the unbridled expansion of capital and its new regimes of warfare (that we will deal with in the second part of this chapter) are transformed into a multimedia show presented to children who come from public schools situated in the peripheries, the *favelas* and the suburbs of Rio to play in the high-tech, white building of Calatrava, covered with shiny scales of photovoltaic plates.

The Museum of Tomorrow occupies the entire pier (Figure 24.3). It is an immense white structure, like an exoskeleton of a cetacean opening its mouth to create a public entrance of a huge structural span. The work is both futuristic and a ruin: depending on the angle in which it is viewed, it also appears as industrial rubble from the port, a decomposing ship. The museum anchored in Guanabara Bay does not hide the violence of its colonial conquest, like a ship docked



Figure 24.3 Left: The Museum of Tomorrow, Pier Mauá, Guanabara Bay, 2010–15. © Calatrava. Right: the military performing urban security during the 2016 Olympic Games. Photograph by Márcia Foletto. © Foletto.

at Praça Mauá, it unloads the future into the city in the form of a permanent and immutable exhibition – visual representations supported by an ecotechnical and Eurocentric environmental discourse. It is a museum for an “epistemicide” future, with no place for the “epistemologies of the South,” according to Sousa Santos – what would require providing visibility to practices of social groups that have suffered, in a systematic way, destruction, oppression and discrimination caused by capitalism, colonialism and all the naturalizations of inequality in which they have unfolded.<sup>29</sup> Alternatively, the museum could encompass “place-based imaginaries” and cultures as a multi-scale, network-oriented and subaltern strategy – including “local models of nature,” as Arturo Escobar proposes.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps a revealing detail of the Museum of Tomorrow – that cost the public US\$90 million in 2014 (twice the cost of the square meter of Portzamparc’s City of Arts and Music)<sup>31</sup> – was its illegal use of the money set aside for the slum upgrade of *Favela do Morro do Pinto* through the renovation of the sewage collection system, as confirmed by an audit in 2017.<sup>32</sup> Needless to say, most budgetary resources are not intended to support the operation and maintenance of Rio’s public museums. For example, the main museum, the National Museum, was the victim of a devastating fire in 2018 that engulfed almost everything on display and in storage due to lack of infrastructure directed at fire prevention.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Olympic dreams and nightmare evictions***

In 2009, with a promise by President Lula da Silva that the public budget would be able to fund all necessary works (US\$13 billion in total), Rio was elected to host the 2016 Summer Olympics. It was a process that also involved vote buying, corruption and the arrest of the president of the Brazilian Olympic Committee in 2017.<sup>34</sup> The Olympic Games are the most emblematic event of what Boykoff calls “celebration capitalism,”<sup>35</sup> at the same time, representing the most advanced capitalist production of experiential spectacle with the most severe forms of control over territories and bodies. The “economics of appearances” in mega-events presuppose “pacification and depoliticization,”<sup>36</sup> or “festive commercialism with military fortressification,”<sup>37</sup> Rio was the first place in the Global South to host the Olympic Games, with dramatic symbolism.

Through the Games, Rio experienced the mega-event exception system, whereby “celebration capitalism” is simultaneously “disaster capitalism” (even though Rio has not been the victim of a natural catastrophe), and control systems and social extortion are combined with market opportunities in a context in which, according to Friedman, the “politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.”<sup>38</sup> In this sense, a mega-event works as a disaster opportunity, producing a “shock doctrine” and suspension of rights in favor of business, in the sense exposed by Naomi Klein. Mega-events also include their own legislation and regulations, such as the World Cup Act, which established an exception regime dictated by FIFA, and the Antiterrorism Act, a condition for holding the Olympic Games and whose procedure has led to the prohibition of demonstrations and strikes, criminalizing social movements and unions.

The most emblematic work of this first Global South Olympic dream is the Olympic Park that brought together most of the arenas. The Olympic Park, designed by AECOM (with Bill Hanway, one of the architects of the London 2012 Olympics master plan), is located in an immense area of more than one million square meters, occupying the land of a disused racetrack (Figure 24.4). In Rio, Bill Hanway sought an exotic and festive landscape design, installing a colorful and immense organic rug, lights and fountains in the middle of organic paths on the edge of the Jacarepaguá lagoon. Despite the cost of more than US\$615 million (2016 rate), nowadays the area hosts only a few private events, such as Rock in Rio, and shows numerous



Figure 24.4 Left: Original design of the Olympic Park, 2011–2015. Architect: Bill Hanway (AECOM) © AECOM. Right: Museum of Evictions. Memory cannot be evicted (Museu das Remoções. Memória não se remove). © RioOnWatch/Catalytic Communities.

signs of abandonment. However, it is in front of the Olympic Park that the most important real-estate business happens: the Metropolitan Center of Barra, covering almost four million square meters and divided among three private companies.

On the western border of the colorful and festive Olympic Park, however, remained the Black and poor people. *Vila Autódromo* (Racetrack Village) began as a fishermen colony in the 1960s but grew under the Barra project. Many workers moved there to build the Jacarepaguá racetrack, hence its name. After years of receiving eviction threats alongside the arrival of residents from other evicted communities, in the late 1990s, the community received titles that ensured ownership of their properties.

The speculative wave surrounding the Olympic Games, however, renewed the Jacarepaguá nightmare of removals, proving that the rights of poor Black people in Brazil were only ever short-term. The original Olympic Park project did not envisage the *Vila Autódromo* displacements, but City Hall resumed its old practices of forced evictions. It is estimated that 67,000 people were removed from all over Rio in the era of mega-events and more than 500 families were removed from the Vila.<sup>39</sup> There was strong resistance that brought together social movements, alternative media, left-wing politicians and the academic community, culminating in the creation of a Popular Plan in 2012. However, Popular Plan was not able to guarantee the permanence of most residents. A spate of violence occurred, such as the invasion of the *Vila* by police forces who attacked residents and the scattered demolition of houses by the city government, creating a deliberate landscape of debris to destabilize the permanence of residents.<sup>40</sup>

It was time for the nightmare.

## Part 2: Dreams are white, nightmares are black

### *Urban warfare and the racialization of violence*

The critical debate surrounding Brazilian urbanization articulates the uneven production of urban space alongside the precarious conditions for the reproduction of the workforce.<sup>41</sup> In the production of space, the gigantic concentration of Brazilian wealth found a privileged place of accumulation, sustained by slavery until the end of the 19th Century.<sup>42</sup> As the decolonial theoretical framework supports, present time has a hidden but inseparable connection with colonization, whereby racialization becomes a primary factor of inequality.<sup>43</sup> Therefore,



understanding the contemporary elements of Brazilian urbanization means debating the racial issue that runs through its reproduction.

The memory of confrontations and massacres and, above all, the genocide of Black people, was symbolically (and sometimes literally) erased by the Olympic landscape, while, perversely, at the same time providing renewed authorization for the extermination of the poor. Global architectural buildings impose themselves on the territory based on a logic that reinforces their distance from the city's conflicts. Stephen Graham maintains that global urbanization has produced the urbanization of war, which implies an increasing substitution of social conflict with militarized confrontation.<sup>44</sup> In Brazil, this military urbanism that supports glitzy projects, electoral gains and private profits is permeated by historical elements of colonization that create profoundly unequal cities marked by 'structural racism.'<sup>45</sup>

This is highlighted well by Marielle Franco, a young Black woman, resident of the Maré *favela*, as well as an activist and city councilor in Rio de Janeiro. She studied the racialization of violence and became internationally recognized after being brutally murdered in 2018 by paramilitary militias. According to Franco, "for the *favela* residents, the police are what is left,"<sup>46</sup> which can be confirmed by the 741 deaths caused by police in the state of Rio de Janeiro in the first five months of 2020,<sup>47</sup> equivalent to five people killed every day. In 2019, 1814 people were killed in police operations, 726 in the state capital alone. Of these, 78% were Black or Brown, clear evidence of structural racism since the percentage of the state's population that declares itself Black or Brown is roughly 54%.<sup>48</sup> Brazil's ongoing pattern of strong urban social inequality has always depended on strategies of physical, legal or symbolic segregation between class, race and territory.<sup>49</sup> Given the degree of conflict and violence in Brazilian society, the elites and the White middle class use self-defense systems such as walls, railings, guardhouses, private surveillance, cameras, biometric reading, laser beams and armored cars in their private dreamworld within fortified enclaves.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the policy of repression, mass incarceration and extermination of the young, Black, peripheral and slum populations, who are characterized as potential enemies of the White middle classes, keeps the other part of the population under control.<sup>51</sup> The Brazilian apartheid system has been a classic theme of study, but it finds new configurations within the current model of urban warfare, as defined by Graham,<sup>52</sup> who points to the growing control of urban space and the everyday life of cities by military rationality and its practices, procedures and assemblies that are governed by the notion of urban warfare.

More recently, the so-called 'urban insurgency' has also become a state target, equally mapped and repressed by military forces. According to Vera Telles's hypothesis, in dialogue with Ananya Roy, while the territories of urban poverty sometimes appear as an opportunity to expand the frontiers of the market and financial capital, at other times informal practices and unlawful acts must be contained by police repression and forced evictions.<sup>53</sup> This dialectic between precarious inclusion and the containment of 'governable spaces' establishes a pattern of dispossession and repression that is calibrated by the state capital as a continuous and low-intensity urban war.

The state's 'Pacification Police Units' (UPPs, using the Portuguese acronym) in Rio's *favelas* use the slogan: "Security is the gateway to citizenship." However, what we see is quite the contrary, in that "in the absence of social integration due to the depletion of our incomplete modernization, part of the population is now being violently controlled by the most advanced military logistics and, at the limit, can be considered eliminable."<sup>54</sup> It is not by chance that at each of the operations and occupations, urban militarization proves to be, in the words of a colonel, "the best social insecticide."<sup>55</sup> The activist Marielle Franco recognized the social consequences of the semantic and political 'war on drugs,' seeing "war on popular spaces as a

way to justify military occupations permanently.<sup>56</sup> According to Franco, this represents the strengthening of the ‘police state,’ with “the goal of maintaining the unsatisfied or excluded from the development process, increasingly concentrated in city ghettos.”<sup>57</sup>

A Brazil-Israel collaboration on the management of impoverished populations through permanent containment is noteworthy – despite the differences between the control of another ‘nation’ under occupation (Palestine) and the administration of its own people (in the Brazilian case). From the occupied territories of Palestine under high-tech spatial and vertical domination<sup>58</sup> to the hills and slums of Rio, there continues to be an intense exchange of occupation and control tactics, territorial advancement strategies, weapons and drones.<sup>59</sup> ISDS, an Israeli arms company, has been selling weapons and security technology to Brazil for over a decade,<sup>60</sup> participating in the military occupation of a mega-slum called Complexo do Alemão (known as the Rio’s Gaza Strip) in 2010 and in security coordination for the 2016 Olympics.<sup>61</sup>

Within this police state, so-called ‘militias’ also operate. The militias started providing private urban security services and have internal connections with active police, politicians and arms and drug traffickers. Militias have increasingly assumed control of entire communities and territories, especially in Rio de Janeiro, becoming involved in the provision of public services, urban utilities, land grabbing and real-estate promotion.

### ***Under the pavement, the memory of slavery***

The spectacular production of space also appropriates the memory of slavery for its own valorization by producing innumerable layers of symbolic violence that exterminate landscapes of trauma in order to promote the consumption of ‘otherness’ and its tragedies. Valongo Wharf, next to Praça Mauá, has become a paradigm for the transformation works in the port area of Rio de Janeiro. The wharf, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was resurfaced in 2011 during the works in Porto Maravilha. The wharf was built in 1779 to support the trade of enslaved African peoples and allow their disembarkation, an activity that was carried out in the central region of the colonial city.

Next to the wharf lies New Blacks Cemetery, which was in operation between 1722 and 1830. More than 6000 trafficked people were buried there during the slave era (from 1500 to 1888), people who died in the barracks of Valongo before they could be bought.<sup>62</sup> The cemetery, rediscovered in 1996, is part of the New Blacks Institute, created in 2005. Material evidence has been converted into the Historical and Archaeological Circuit of the Celebration of African Heritage, bringing together points that refer to different aspects of the lives of enslaved peoples and their descendants, such as places of sale, death, as well as resistance and celebration. According to the Urban Development Company of the Port Region of Rio de Janeiro, the Circuit has received special attention from the Porto Maravilha Cultural Program; however, the budget allocations reveal unequal treatment: while 73.3% was allocated to MAR and the Museum of Tomorrow (institutions sponsored by the Roberto Marinho Foundation), only 4.9% was spent on the African Heritage Circuit.<sup>63</sup>

Close to the wharf, 142 houses were removed in the neighboring Morro da Providência, considered the first *favela* in Rio de Janeiro, to provide space for a cable car aimed at giving tourists another enjoyable viewpoint. While a small amount of the Porto Maravilha budget was invested in memory policies relating to the enslaved population, poorly paid Black workers removed Black residents to produce corporate towers and museums of White enchantment. This kind of concealment of memory, reinforced by the way projects were carried out during the Olympic process, authorizes the extermination of Black people by state and police forces. Thus, echoing the old cemetery that remains in the center of the city, Black lives that are

made invisible through the consumption of White memories reappear populating several *Black cemeteries* on the periphery, where countless executions of young people take place, whether by police forces or organized crime.

### ***A museum of evictions***

The traumatic remembrance of experiences by a community, we argue, strengthens their resistance against potentially new forms of submission. The countless projects and interventions, the destruction of neighborhoods and *favelas*, the attacks on human rights, and all the social counter-reforms that occurred in the decade of mega-events represent a kind of urbanist 'shock doctrine.'<sup>64</sup>

Although fading through the lack of maintenance, the Museum of Tomorrow remains a symbol of a White future and of the epistemicide as killing of knowledge systems in the present. Like a steel visor, it domesticates the imagination, pushing its visitors into a linear reading of the future. A monument to progress, it despises place, memory and its differences.

But even so, those in the resistance recognize each other in time and space. They share nightmares, but, even in the midst of this vertigo, they do not allow the erasure of the memory of those who fought. They return, like the occupations that were removed from Wonderful Harbor operation but regrouped in other areas of the city and, above all, like Vila Autódromo. Popular resistance, after all, won the permanence of some residents, despite only 3% of the buildings in the Vila Autódromo still standing. But, above all, it guaranteed the permanence of their memory by converting the demolished houses into a Museum of Evictions (*Museu das Remoções*, Figure 24.4). The museum was inaugurated by Vila residents and supporters on 18 May 2016 (International Museum Day), a few months before the Olympic Games. It consists of an open-air visitation circuit which exhibits are located in the demolished area of the Vila and are arranged over the landscape of debris left over from the various evictions. As an anti-Museum of Tomorrow, it is a space where the absence of form reveals the presence of a struggle, the implementation of large urban projects not through consensus, but as a repetition of inequalities that for centuries have accompanied the uneven urbanization.

The Museum of Evictions, a landscape of the ruins of forced displacement, has a special meaning when the future does not look promising for the vast majority of the population. As Walter Benjamin observed, ruins indicate the trail of catastrophe left by progress.<sup>65</sup> Or, in the terms of Andreas Huyssen: "Why are we building museums as if there were no tomorrow?"<sup>66</sup> In Rio, there has been an attempt to transform tomorrow into a memory of seduction that celebrates the urban experience as a theme park for the happy few. The resistance landscapes are witness of the displaced and dispossessed. They show another possibility for the politics of memory, a rupture that makes evident 'uncomfortable places' so that tomorrow will no longer be 'selective forgetting.'

### **Conclusion: For a conscious perspective**

Globalization presents itself as a phenomenon that is usually analyzed from the point of view of its driving agents and its subsequent winners. One of the consequences of this process is that its categories of analysis derive from a relationship whose direction is historically oppressive. Criticism is not exempt from coloniality.<sup>67</sup> The global transformations must be rethought through the spaces, histories, epistemologies and knowledges of the peripheries of the world in

order to produce what Enrique Dussel terms a new “transmodern” perspective – a “worldwide ethical liberation project in which alterity, which was part and parcel of modernity, would be able to fulfill itself.”<sup>768</sup>

The architectural and urban expression of uneven and unfair globalization is evident in the transformation of Global South megacities, where a privileged place for observation, experience, criticism and for a new imagination have been created. We argue that the case of Rio, subject to countless interventions (although not all have been discussed in this chapter) supports a critique that does not end in a local case analysis. The inequalities and violence presented here must serve as a synthesis of a phenomenon that is repeated in numerous cities across the planet.

The relationship between the spectacularization of the city and violence is not always obvious – it can be hidden in the fragmented visions that are usually observed separately. Once recognized, it allows us to understand how the violence of coloniality, which is expressed in the form, materials and design of spectacular buildings, supports and reinforces the everyday violence on the bodies and places of Black people and the poor by reproducing an unequal landscape, displacing and controlling communities and erasing collective memory and the diversity of knowledges and epistemologies.

The metaphors of dreams and nightmares have a strong association with the contradictory processes involved – the narratives, ideologies, and the symbolism of architectural images in contrast to the deprivation imposed on the urban poor and Black majorities. Rio presents a paradigm that expresses the complex spatial and political amalgam of dreams and nightmares, architecture spectacle and lack of social protection, racism and militarization, increasing control of the population, permanent security, aestheticized threat, human rights violations, displacement and spatial violence. The *riofication* of many cities and megacities around the world also highlights the urgent need for both social resistance and renewed criticism from a global and ‘conscious’ perspective.

## Notes

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- 6 Mabin, “Grounding Southern City Theory in Time and Place,” 24..
- 7 Julio Bandeira, Pedro Xexeo and Roberto Conduru, *A Missão Francesa* (Rio de Janeiro: Sextante, 2003).
- 8 Over the next few decades, Passos became a railroad engineer. In 1903, he was elected mayor of Rio and promoted urban reforms inspired by Haussmann. He modernized the port area, opened large avenues, new squares and expanded the sanitation system. Maurício de Abreu, *Evolução urbana do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: IPP, 2006).
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- 17 Some of the corruptions include: overbilling that led to a parliamentary investigation in 2009; early inauguration, which meant that the equipment had to be closed again before its full opening to the public; and management/maintenance difficulties due to the unfeasibility of the project, including its inaccessible location.
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- 19 Excerpt of the movie with *Let's do the Copacabana* by Carmen Miranda available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny13fGjoBXU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny13fGjoBXU).
- 20 Construction has been halted since 2016 due to a funding disagreement that culminated in the breach of the contract between the construction company responsible for the work and the State of Rio de Janeiro.
- 21 The contest had a tight deadline, unknown jury, little information about the selection of teams, projects presented without details, etc. – see questions regarding the suitability of the competition by João Masao Kamita, A cathedral do século XXI: o caso do novo MIS em Revista *Vitruvius*. 115.02, 2009, <https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/minhacidade/11.122/3>.
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- 24 In his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin analyzes the dream-producing machine that was the nascent cinema, which could both stimulate the emancipatory imagination and the adhesion to fascism.
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# THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF MEDELLÍN'S GLOBAL IMAGE

## Strategies of replacement, erasure and disconnection via urban and architectural interventions

*Christina Deluchi*

### **Medellín: An idea of a city portrayed by images**

Images of Medellín, Colombia, have played an integral role in the reconstruction of the city's identity over the last 20 years. Changes to the urban realm have produced a striking landscape composed of state-of-the-art architectural and infrastructural projects that shape the physical, real-time image of the city. Simultaneously, pictorial images have captured the city's clear aesthetic vision, disseminating photographic representations of the polarity between informality and new buildings and precincts. Together, physical and pictorial images have produced a contemporary portrayal of Medellín foregrounded on rapid urban development and the spectacle of transformation. Made and used by the state, architects, politicians, corporate bodies and the media in professional, journalistic and touristic contexts, these images have shaped contemporary understandings of the city's urban renaissance. Power and influence have consequently been given to architecture and urban space, bringing into question the role that images play when it comes to reorienting perceptions of the city.

Looking at images of Medellín's architecture and urban space, it is not difficult to ascertain how they have been paramount in the reorientation of the city's perception, or how the structuring of the city's identity continues to be a critical subject today. Photographs of the city are politicized and carefully construct a history of the present, supplying the current global era of information and image-based economies by ensuring narrative discontinuities and divides between Medellín's recent and traumatic past and its contemporary urban vision. At a local level, changes to the physical image of the urban realm have reinstated the state's presence on the city's political periphery – areas where governance has historically been absent. For these reasons, state-of-the-art urban and architectural projects feature heavily in representations of the city by the state, in media and in architectural publications. Exploring how politics operates via representation, this chapter critically examines images of Medellín's urban and architectural phenomena. A sample of images sourced from the municipality of Medellín, its planning department and official media agency, professional photographers, newspapers and



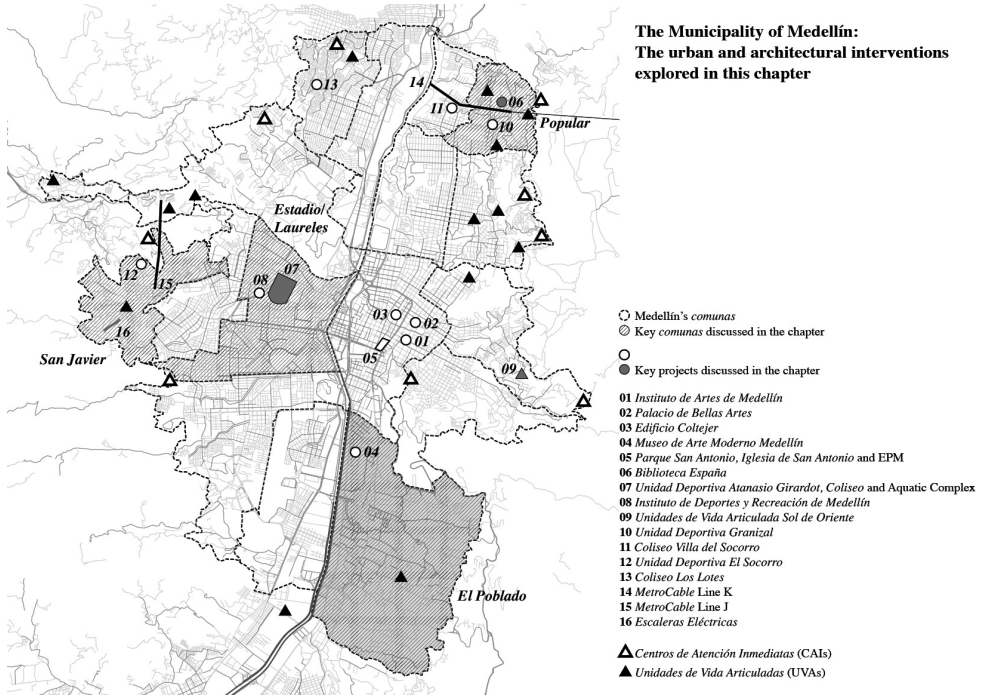


Figure 25.1 A map of the architectural and urban interventions included in this chapter's study of Medellín's images. Map by Christina Deluchi.

tourism platforms are used to examine three representations of architecture in the city: sports complexes, transport and mobility connections and commercialized housing precincts. The images analyzed feature the *Unidad Deportiva* (Sports Unit) *Atanasio Girardot*, the city's *Unidades de Vida Articulada* (Articulated Life Units, UVAs) system, the *MetroCable*, the *Escaleras Eléctricas* (electric escalators), *El Poblado's* apartment hotels and Medellín's *Centros de Atención Inmediatas* (Immediate Attention Centers, CAIs) (Figure 25.1). Together, the images of these projects explore the account of Medellín's transformation while identifying narrative parts purposely left absent, questioning the political objective of each image by exposing their hyperbolic nature. Ultimately, this chapter's examination of targeted and didactic images reveals how the notion of absence puts into question the city's celebrated transformation by reinforcing the inconsistencies between its perceived urban identity, which illustrates sociocultural and political reform through architectural intervention, and the physical reality of everyday conditions.

### The Medellín model: Politics, the architectural image and city-branding

In a world saturated by images, representations of cities steer the development of urban strategies, defining and shaping the form they take through the promotion of successful urban renewal projects that conscientiously structure their global perception. Aihwa Ong explores this political objective as a modeling technique whereby the renovation of cities "has given rise to the circulation of urban models" that establish "exemplar sites of new urban normativity" that are understood as *desirable* and/or *achievable* templates for urban innovation projects.<sup>1</sup> The common

narrative of Medellín, both national and international, portrays the city just as Ong describes, “as a historically successful urban model” known as the ‘Medellín Miracle’ or the ‘Medellín Model.’<sup>2</sup> The international press has played a significant role in the model’s dissemination and identifies its two primary modes of urban intervention as: (1) transport infrastructure such as the *MetroCable* gondola system and (2) the revitalization of areas on the city’s periphery through the construction of state-of-the-art urban/architectural projects.<sup>3</sup> This narrative is accompanied by images that portray the city’s projects via spectacular visual depictions. In the *Guardian*, Alex Warnock-Smith even suggests that the major success of the Medellín model has been the architectural “balance between the embedded and the iconic – integrating spaces, places and systems into the social fabric of the city, on the one hand, while also creating buildings of international quality which would be photographed again and again.”<sup>4</sup> Effectively, transformations in the physical landscape have become responsible for the perception of Medellín’s urban reality through photographic representations of architecture.

Neil Leach argues that the ongoing obsession with images and image-making in architecture traps the discipline within the logic of aestheticization, decontextualizing the image so that everything it records or articulates is divested of original meaning.<sup>5</sup> This problem lies in the evolution of the image from a direct representation of reality to a targeted transfiguration of a specific reality. Tracing this lineage, Leach draws upon Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord’s critique of aesthetics and the image’s role in society. While there are significant differences in their ideology, both explore the image’s symbolic dimension, but also its impact on collective consciousness, by examining its ability to purposely manipulate and transform lived experience.<sup>6</sup> For Benjamin, as discussed by Leach, this occurs in the analysis of the relationship between aesthetics and politics where processes of aestheticization cause ethical concerns to be replaced by aesthetic ones.<sup>7</sup> This replacement leads political agenda to be assessed not by its ethical merit, but rather the allure of its outward appearance.<sup>8</sup> And for Debord, the relation between images and representation amplifies how everything that is lived has been coopted into a commodity, and how society’s obsession with images has caused it to become a spectacle.<sup>9</sup> Leach draws from both theses to explore how aestheticization in architecture takes on a political dimension. He identifies the commonalities between aestheticization and the spectacle in the discipline’s strategies of image production and image use. Extending on Benjamin and Debord’s theses, Leach claims that aesthetics does not replace politics; rather, the relationship between aesthetics and politics is reconfigured – political thought becomes embedded within the aesthetic and vice-versa. In consequence, “aestheticization induces a form of *anaesthesia*” in the architectural discipline, resulting in a consistent diminishing of critical awareness by architects, and mindless consumption by architecture’s users.<sup>10</sup> This notion leads to concerns for the sociopolitical repercussions of architecture in contexts where it might be the result of decisions made on purely aesthetic grounds. Here, the spectacle is at large, conveying targeted representations that tailor the perception of a given place by dictating what audiences see.<sup>11</sup> Urban depictions are thus built by constructed images – by constructed spectacles – that overwrite any true sense of experiencing a city or its architecture.

Comparably, Anne-Marie Broudehoux emphasizes the importance of the spectacle in new urban economies, namely, how “event-cities” are the result of “complex image-construction endeavour[s]” by critically examining how images are constructed and then mobilized.<sup>12</sup> Stressing that “images remain first and foremost visual representations,” Broudehoux provides further insight into the composition of successful urban models through projections of illusory images.<sup>13</sup> Concentrating on two cities whose urban transformations have been framed by mega-events – Beijing and Rio de Janeiro – she examines imaging strategies to trace each city’s journey

toward improving their global recognition, politically and economically. In both cases, images have been responsible for curating and packaging the idea of the city by evoking stimulating narratives of paramount visual impact. In the same way, the effects of such imaging techniques can be read across the verbal and visual descriptions of Medellín's 'miracle,' primarily in accounts that detail how the city has forged a model for its resurgence through consistent and targeted messaging around urban transformation. Here, Leach's concerns regarding architectural imagery stands to reason as it is exactly in the city's messaging that we can identify how aestheticization has taken on a political impetus.

Claims for power and recognition at a global scale are "political statements that are inseparable from the processes of urban development."<sup>14</sup> Ong deems these politicized urban interventions as "worlding practices."<sup>15</sup> These practices are spatial and drive a city's urban coding through intervention, experimentation and built projects that "attempt to establish or break established horizons of urban standards in and beyond a particular city" often in attempts to remedy problematic situations.<sup>16</sup> Worlding practices are clearly visible in the rebranding of Medellín. For Medellín – that in 1988 was dubbed "the most dangerous city in the world" by TIME magazine – the rebrand of its urban identity has shifted international focus away from the violence of the city's (and the country's) recent civil wars (from 1964 onwards) by highlighting the radical changes made to its physical environment to address long-standing political conflicts and citywide social and economic disparity.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the rhetoric of Medellín's model recasts portrayals of complex political crises with a simplified, "more relatable" and "replicable" binary narrative for a global context: violence versus transformation.<sup>18</sup> This shift is the result of the media's long-standing institutional alignment to local government that was established in 2002 with the foundation of the city's own media agency, *Agencia de Cooperación de Inversión* (Investment Cooperation Agency, ACI).<sup>19</sup> The ACI has been key in the city's internationalization process and the shaping of its global identity. It promotes the city's transformation, and best strategic practices, to position it as a global precedent for mobilizing public administration. It does this by utilizing labels such as *innovative*, *transformative*, *inclusive* and, most recently, *resilient* to attract foreign investment and tourism as part of the city's renewal project.<sup>20</sup> Further, the ACI organizes corporate and media events, promotes journalistic and social media and oversees award postulation and the city's image management. These efforts have been "instrumental in enabling Medellín to be recognized as a city that reinvents itself from its past" by showing the world its "complex history" and its ability to recover and move forward.<sup>21</sup> But the overlaps and tensions between the city's 'violent' and 'transformative' periods are not often explored since the city's eagerness to secure its new image in the global scene has required a separation from the political complexities of its 20th Century history.

### **A brief history of architecture and urban politics in Medellín**

The subsequent account of the relationship between architecture and politics in Medellín is framed by Forrest Hylton, Nazih Richani and Eduardo Moncada's studies on systems of urban violence in Colombia. Their studies are punctured by narrative parts from academic, state and institutional sources spanning urban planning, tourism, culture and the arts. Further, while Medellín's urban history can be traced back to the colonial regime (1500s), this account focuses on the 20th Century. This period sets the context for exploring how the city has come to attribute value to urbanity as historical continuities and discontinuities, and parallel political trajectories such as urban development, economic growth, industrialization, mass displacement by rural violence and urban warfare are antecedents for the rationale behind Medellín's rebrand and celebrated transformation.

Known as the 'city of eternal spring,' Medellín is the capital of the Department of Antioquia and sits in the Aburrá Valley.<sup>22</sup> Its urban area is divided by a river and contains six zones comprising 16 *comunas* (local government districts) divided into *barrios* (neighborhoods).<sup>23</sup> It is Colombia's second largest city after the capital, Bogotá. Since the 1870s, its position on the coffee axis has been strategically important, as Antioquia's highland frontier provided optimum conditions for the cultivation of coffee. Thus, coffee established production and distribution networks whereby the commercialization of crops – known as the 'coffee export boom' – became responsible for instituting the region's urban and rural infrastructure, giving way to urban-based politics.<sup>24</sup> Coffee's transport, credit and distribution networks became Medellín's economic foundation, expanding the manufacturing industry and, thus, developing modern banking, to become the country's industrial epicenter. For the first time, governmental and political bodies, like the *paisa* elites, sponsored public works and education to further increase coffee exports and local industrial production.<sup>25</sup>

Historically, in Medellín (and across Colombia) the elite have been more important in spreading belts of power than municipal, departmental and even national governments. Dedicated to public improvement, the *Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Medellín* (Public Improvement Society of Medellín, SMP), founded in 1899, and its *Cuadro de Honor de la Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas* (Public Improvement Society Honor Roll), have been integral to Medellín's civic development through the promotion of educational campaigns and social events linked to cultural institutions founded by the SMP like the *Instituto de Artes de Medellín* (1910) and the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* (1926).<sup>26</sup> Importantly, in 1910, the society's *paisa* elites and the municipality together undertook a project to restructure the city, called *Plano de Medellín Futuro* (Medellín Future Plan).<sup>27</sup> Attempts to institute the project were made throughout the 1920s and 1930s, like the plan for *El Gran Medellín Futuro* (The Great Future Medellín) of 1927.<sup>28</sup> The plan led to Austrian academic and urban planner Karl Brunner's invitation to give continuity to the imagined project in 1937.<sup>29</sup> Since then, Latin America's three urban paradigms have seen corresponding developments in Medellín's planning projects such as CIAM's comprehensive urban plan for Medellín (1950), which utilized principles from Josep Lluís Sert's *Functional City*.<sup>30</sup> Marking the beginning of Medellín's urban transformation, the 1950s saw the construction of new buildings and campuses and the establishment of corporate headquarters across the city. Further, in the late 1960s, Medellín's largest textile company *Coltejer* funded a series of emblematic biennials: the *Bienals de Coltejer* (1968, 1970 and 1972). Founded in 1907, the company is also known for its modernist tower *Edificio Coltejer*, Colombia's tallest building until 1977. Thus, interest in the biennials led to the emergence of the city's cultural market and instituted the *Museo de Arte Moderno Medellín* (Museum of Modern Art Medellín), building a respected creative industry. Later, in 1985, Medellín established one of Colombia's pilot *Plans de Desarrollo* (Metropolitan Development Plans) to address diverse social and economic urban issues, setting a precedent for the city's participatory planning mechanisms from the 1990s onwards. Effectively, the 20th Century saw exports, industrialization, planning projects and the cultural market place value in Medellín's urbanity, infrastructure and institutions.

At the same time, production, trade and property ownership shaped by coffee capital led to contestations over land underscored by major shifts in power structures among elitist groups, industrial merchants, politicians, militias, paramilitary groups and cartels. But it was the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 – the leader of Colombia's first radical popular movement – that further fractured Medellín's political landscape. His assassination led to public riots, civil war and urban terror, institutionalizing violence and the privatization of coercive order as the primary model for administering political control, marking the beginning of Medellín's contemporary wars.<sup>31</sup> From the 1950s, the professionalization of gangs as armed paramilitary

groups and private self-defense units for trade and land owners triggered an urban crisis, as new political brokers became more criminal and corrupt, fueling new industries such as rent control, real estate speculation and, above all, illegal exports.

Since 1903, the Colombian–Caribbean trade corridor (coffee, gold) has been maintained by contrabandists and narcotraffickers, and from 1968 to 70, Colombian contrabandists first connected with US traffickers, their networks providing the logistical infrastructure for the export of marijuana, coca and opium.<sup>32</sup> The development of alternative economic regimes stemmed from the “steep and almost uninterrupted decline of the agricultural economy” and Antioquia’s textile industry, leading to illicit drug plantations in rural areas.<sup>33</sup> Marijuana was the first *cash crop*, but the emergence of cheaper and more potent variants caused a shift to coca plantations and cocaine production.<sup>34</sup> Producers, traffickers, guerillas, paramilitaries and the narcobourgeoisie (Medellín Cartel) rose to control cocaine operations directly from Medellín – their relationship with the state, corporations and elites oscillating between coexistence, alliance and conflict.<sup>35</sup> The industry’s continuous expansion during the late 20th Century intensified the overlap of crime and politics, causing perpetual urban terror at local, citywide and regional scales. Thus, economic, institutional and political violence established an international discourse about ‘homicidal’ and ‘urban violence’ in Medellín.<sup>36</sup> This state of affairs explains the city’s classification as the most dangerous city in the world and the violent image that rendered it politically unstable and dangerous throughout the 1990s.

Power struggles between legal and criminal bodies continue to impact everyday scenarios in Medellín and the media surrounding its urban transformation. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, overwhelmingly negative international media created an unfavorable perception of the city, prompting a state-led rebranding exercise and internationalization strategy led by the ACI.<sup>37</sup> Yet, this period (1980–2002) was not a time of economic and/or urban decay, as profits from the illegal export industry filtered into construction, and efforts to inspire state-building and recover public space were already in effect. For example, the Medellín Cartel invested in infrastructure and social housing, there were national civic movements (*Coordinadora Nacional de Movimientos Cívicos*, CNMCs); President César Gaviria (1990–94) established a Council representative in Medellín on issues of violence, security and local development; and large-scale urban recovery projects like Mayor Luis Alfredo Ramos’s (1992–95) *Parque San Antonio* (San Antonio Park) project, which rehabilitated the *Iglesia de San Antonio*’s (San Antonio Church) plaza and surrounding public precinct.<sup>38</sup> In essence, the political rationale behind Medellín’s rebrand continues the economic and sociocultural importance attached to urbanity.

Today, media and travel guides portray a more utopian image of the city: once a city laden with violence, Medellín is now a vibrant and culturally rich destination for locals and internationals alike. The success of the city’s celebrated urban miracle has been attributed to its social urbanism project implemented by Major Sergio Fajardo (2004–2007) with the support of key political allies – such as the economic group *Grupo Empresarial Antioqueño* (Business Group Antioquia, GEA) – and civil leaders.<sup>39</sup> Given continuity by subsequent mayors, the project is internationally recognized for its radical architectural interventions and urban policies founded on education, innovation and inclusivity.<sup>40</sup> But this is a selective representation of the city forged by staged, improved and constructed images of architecture and public space. This representation is no longer clearly rooted in civic history; instead, it is spectacularized, serving to overwrite, replace and even erase, recent traumas. While it dismisses the city’s important and long-standing spatial dimensions, it has firmly established a new perception of Medellín’s urban condition using a strategic visual rhetoric. Thus, images of architecture are key to understanding the political discourses and urban-centric structures that have given form to Medellín’s contemporary identity.

## **Images and the production of visual narratives in Medellín**

The images presented in this chapter are signifiers of physical space: architecture and urban scenarios. Such images operate in two ways and have become essential tools in the development of public policy throughout Medellín, especially when establishing new social contracts in urban areas of systemic violence, marginalization and exclusion. First, the juxtaposition between informal neighborhoods and state-of-the-art architecture and infrastructure is strategically important, as it exemplifies notions of locality in a global context through visual contrast. Second, at the community level, this contrast manifests the municipality's commitment to transforming – or upgrading – informal districts by remodeling ideas of state presence on the city's political periphery.<sup>41</sup> For instance, this dual condition occurs in images of Medellín's *Biblioteca España* (Spanish Library). The library is emblematic of the municipality's efforts to instill social and political agency in historically violent and marginalized territories locally and internationally but, at the same time, the spectacle of transformation increases the city's attractiveness through both real and imagined perceptions of the urban landscape. Images of the library circulate widely despite the reality of its current condition – in 2017 it was closed indefinitely for repair due to collapsing façades and water damage – epitomizing the paradoxical nature of the vision it creates for the city.<sup>42</sup> The library reveals that images are often neither accurate nor empirical representations of Medellín's urban reality, and, therefore, borrowing the words of Broudehoux, are “simultaneously based on fiction and reality” with the capacity to stabilize and give structure to new forms of urbanism in the city by producing targeted visual narratives.<sup>43</sup>

The following three representations of Medellín underscore how images of architecture have amplified perceptions of its physical transformation. At the same time, the analysis of images identifies absences in the city's visual narratives by charting the various political bodies who have sought to alter or enhance urban space through aesthetically oriented decision-making. Giving continuity to the long-established relationship between architecture and urban politics, this exploration articulates how aesthetic visions have become normative goals for policymakers to physically and visually depict political agency, while concealing the residues of recent traumas. The representations explain the rationale behind efforts to ground portrayals of Medellín in images of new, state-of-the-art urban/architectural projects. But they also recognize the consequences of these images, like the production of counter-factual expressions of current urban realities as seen in the *Biblioteca España*.

### **Architecture and sport: Aesthetically oriented and socially driven governance in support of urban transformation**

Like Beijing and Rio de Janeiro, the transformation of Medellín's identity has been framed by a series of mega-events and mega-awards. The lead-up to the city's hosting of the South American Games in 2010 marks a critical moment in repositioning Medellín on the global stage. The games were the first edition to be held in Colombia and came only six years after the city's social urbanism project, which made visible the state's commitment to upgrading its urban environment in efforts to reclaim its public spaces after decades of political unrest. Thus, the *Unidad Deportiva Atanasio Girardot* sports complex in *comuna* 11, *Laureles-Estadio*, is a model planning project and icon for the city, as it exemplifies the political belief in designed innovation and urban upgrading strategies (Figure 25.2). Its new facilities, the *Coliseo* (coliseum) and aquatic complex, are the result of international architectural competitions and public tenders, coinciding with the city's efforts to achieve political transparency – both winners were prominent Colombian architects. The competition resulted in a collage of superimposed



Figure 25.2 The Unidad Deportiva Atanasio Girardot complex in Laureles-Estadio with Plan: B and El Equipo Mazzanti's Coliseo (or Four Sports Halls), Paisajes Emergentes' aquatic complex and INDER's stadium bleachers. Photograph by Iwan Baan.

architectural interventions that constitute an upgraded image of the city through the production of spectacular photographs.

In the years following the games, Medellín won its most prestigious award – it was named 'City of the Year' by Citi (Citigroup), the *Wall Street Journal* and the Urban Land Institute in 2012. Medellín then hosted the 7th UN World Habitat Forum in 2014. These global media events and accolades immediately became paramount to the city's branding strategy, attracting touristic and investment capital. In 2015 alone, the ACI confirmed Medellín had consolidated its international image after winning 22 awards – including the Global Holcim Award, World Travel Award, Green World Award and Premio Mobil Prize – and participating in 19 events showcasing its progress in addressing governmental issues.<sup>44</sup> The maintenance of this mediatized image has resulted in the perpetual amassing of new public buildings and precincts like trophies. Sporting facilities occupy a significant portion of these new constructions and, as this chapter suggests, have been historically used as spatial mechanisms to test and expand the demarcation of urban territory by government and criminal agents in the city.

As part of Paul Weiner and Josep Lluís Sert's *Plan Piloto de Medellín* (1950), a modernization project that aimed to institute an industrial image for the city, the *Atanasio Girardot* stadium first opened in 1953, initiating urban changes of significant impact across the *comuna* and the city.<sup>45</sup> However, Medellín's sporting culture flourished from 1973 when its team *Atlético Nacional* won the Colombian soccer league for the second time in history. Soccer rapidly grew in popularity and *narco-barons* saw its potential, seizing the opportunity to involve facilities in property portfolios while simultaneously leveraging them to demarcate political territory and secure patronage, in marginalized neighborhoods, through public investment.<sup>46</sup> Thus, large numbers of pitches appeared across the city. Later, in 1993, the Mayor's office created the *Instituto de Deportes*

y *Recreación de Medellín* (Medellín Institute of Sport and Recreation, INDER) to promote sport as a recreational activity by formalizing city infrastructure and programs in urban and rural territories to improve “citizen culture” and “quality of life.”<sup>47</sup> But, for decades, in contexts where the state has been absent, communities themselves have fulfilled needs by collectively financing and actively building their own sports fields, schools, roads, churches and infrastructure.<sup>48</sup> This process created solidarity between community members and, importantly, a sense of belonging. Remarkably, of INDER’s 836 public sports facilities, 118 are soccer pitches, of which many are upgrades of existing neighborhood infrastructure.<sup>49</sup> Examples of upgrades include *Unidad Deportiva Granizal*, *Unidades de Vida Articulada (UVA) Sol de Oriente*, *UVA Huellas de Vida*, *Coliseo Villa del Socorro*, *Unidad Deportiva El Socorro*, *Coliseo Los Lotes* and scores of pitches.<sup>50</sup> Yet, these upgrades, which are architecturally designed, brightly colored and clearly branded by municipal logos, can be problematic as they foreground the contrast between ‘then and now.’ While upgrading projects are core to the city’s social urbanism project, they replace existing structures established by community organizations. For this reason, their value does not lie in their ability to provide more services, “but rather in the ability to look and perform at the same level, or better ... than any other public infrastructure of the formal city.”<sup>51</sup> Polishing the public image of informal communities suggests that state intervention is an act of emancipation. But small-scale initiatives like *Medellín Mi Hogar* (Medellín My Home) are actively working against the erasure of community perspectives by comparing state-led rhetoric with the collective memory of the *barrio* to render visible decades of labor and expertise associated with the building of communities. In effect, Medellín’s contemporary sporting regime over-performs and overwrites existing infrastructure, the images of its upgrades working as operative tools that stabilize and enrich transformative, socially oriented discourses on the city.

While both large- and small-scale sporting projects are founded on inclusive urban tactics, it is evident in their physical form that they sit distinctly separate from the reality of their urban contexts, demarcating areas of urban intervention (Figure 25.2). Their iconic forms reinforce their singularity through spectacular imagery. The image that the *Atanasio Girardot* complex produces evidences this notion. The *Coliseo*’s ‘mountainous’ roof structure, the aquatic complex’s flooded geometric landscape and the stadium’s new curved bleachers create a sharp contrast against the more conventional structures that surround them (Figure 25.2). Here, Leach’s concern for the sociopolitical consequences of aesthetically driven architecture becomes pertinent. He argues that “the seduction of [architecture’s] image works against any underlying sense of social commitment.”<sup>52</sup> While the complex’s pools are open air and the *Coliseo*’s walls are porous to allow for inclusive spectatorship, the pools are elevated and the walls require face-to-wall contact – obscuring the public’s view. Thus, architecture’s social impact is compromised by processes of aestheticization. Further, to create new icons for the city, the sport complex’s image promotes a physical and pictorial sense of difference, or alienation, between architecture and context (Figure 25.2). The complex’s architecture mobilizes consumerist and capitalist ideologies via the value of its image. Its image is precisely tailored for promotional opportunities related to the coverage of Medellín’s mega-event while simultaneously giving further international attention to Medellín’s large-scale rejuvenation project. For Broudehoux, such image-construction strategies are opportunities for the instrumentalization of “local and political elites to reconfigure power relations [and] strengthen their hold upon the urban territory,” potentially excluding minority groups from decision-making processes.<sup>53</sup> How these opportunities have unfolded in Medellín is evident in sports infrastructure, as it depicts notions of worlding and aestheticization utilized and endorsed by diverse political partnerships when imagining the city’s future. But, while planners, architects and state officials do engage participatory planning methods, the outcome of community collaborations and perspectives are rarely included in the city’s rhetoric.<sup>54</sup> For



this reason, images of sport infrastructure are key to demonstrating new modes of inclusive and socially driven governance as images of new and/or upgraded facilities are easily folded into strategic, mediatized accounts of urban transformation.

### **Erasure via transport and mobility connections: Community tourism and its effects**

The image of transport and mobility infrastructure heavily populates representations of Medellín in global media. The city's celebrated overground metro system services all major urban intervention sites across the city and includes the famous *MetroCable* gondolas, whose image is mediatized by governmental and touristic agencies alike in narratives of transformation (Figure 25.3). The gondolas are global symbols of the city's urban upgrading efforts whereby their image produces "a sense of inclusion" by demonstrating municipal "legitimacy and governability" in marginalized territories.<sup>55</sup> Simultaneously, the displacement of gondola cable transport from typical contexts produces a gimmick through constructions of the spectacle – causing it to become a popular sightseeing mechanism. For this reason, images of transport and mobility infrastructure assist to mitigate inequality and segregation while manifesting the transformative abilities of contemporary leadership models locally and internationally.

Another popular mobility project that expresses Medellín's novel and aesthetic prowess is the *Escaleras Eléctricas* of *comuna* 13, *San Javier* (Figure 25.3). Described as the first mobility system of its kind, the 384-meter-long bright orange escalators replace approximately 350 concrete steps to help over 12,000 residents climb the steep 28-story hillside.<sup>56</sup> Comprising six sections, the journey between each end takes, on average, six minutes. Once again, a system used out of context, the escalator connects hillside *barrios* to the *comuna's* main street, community facilities, the metro and gondolas. Together, the escalator and its surrounding colorful, densely packed, small informal buildings make *San Javier* one of the most well-known *comunas* in Medellín (Figure 25.3). It is also the last area governed by urban militias before the municipality's *Compro la Guerra* (I'll buy the war) program was initiated. The program's main objective was to open peace dialogues and reincorporate armed actors into civilian life – disarmament was to be exchanged for employment and educational opportunities.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the program was not formally instituted and was unable to create a serious impact on municipal policy despite public interest, leading to government intervention and the largest military operation in Medellín's recent history, *Operación Orion*.<sup>58</sup> However, the expulsion of militias led to paramilitary takeover until their brief, albeit unsuccessful, demobilization (2003–06) as members were reconverted into street gangs commonly known as *combos*.<sup>59</sup> Despite this violent context, *San Javier* has quickly become a key symbol in the city's transformation after the implementation of its *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (Comprehensive Urban Projects, PUIs) development strategy, which included a library, parks and plazas, street upgrades and sports fields.<sup>60</sup> In efforts to shift the *comuna's* representation, the PUI intervention sought to cultivate a more vibrant and culturally engaged neighborhood. But, making use of the contrast between the *comuna's* violent history and its contemporary rejuvenation, political actors have used the escalators as a mechanism to not only stimulate local cultural practices but, simultaneously, develop 'community tourism.'<sup>61</sup> Tourists ride the escalators daily – the function of the escalator has shifted from "mobility to city-branding and then [to] tourism."<sup>62</sup>

Further, while transport and mobility infrastructures are said to be in place to empower the community in demonstrated efforts to improve the quality of everyday life, these projects also operate as architectures of control – physically and pictorially. The escalator is managed by 15 'pedagogical managers' who guide users and instill its proper use.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, a system of rules



*Figure 25.3* Top: Line 1 of the MetroCable gondola system. Photograph by John Crux @ Shutterstock. Top: The Escaleras Eléctricas located in San Javier. The bright orange segments of the escalator system slice through a densely populated informal neighborhood. Photograph by James Wagstaff @ Shutterstock.

or *agreements* states that heavy objects cannot not be carried on the escalators; prams cannot be used; the public platform between each set cannot be occupied; it is forbidden to lean on or place heavy items on the hand rail; you must always look ahead; and you must carry your children and/or pets and have your shoelaces properly tied.<sup>64</sup> These agreements are in place to “protect spaces for the realization of community” as both an element of control and as an urban reference for residents and visitors, but they read as they are in place solely to maintain their upkeep and image.<sup>65</sup> Here, contradictions are rife as the agreements suggest that the escalators are not for the benefit of public and community needs, bringing into question their real, everyday impact. While some residents see the urban object as a positive intervention, a growing number have expressed “discomfort with the internationalization and touristification of their neighbourhood.”<sup>66</sup> This criticism is focused on the escalator’s daily usage – by tourist groups and guides – and the growing involvement of local gangs in the economic success of the *comuna*.<sup>67</sup>

Photographic images of the *comuna*’s spatial interventions portray a positively changed community, as their urban objects – namely the escalators – divert attention away from endemic political undercurrents through aesthetic constructions. Leach’s notion of decontextualization is apparent here: the relationship between aestheticization and politics causes the neighborhood to become a stage for Medellín’s urban vision whereby the escalators, street art, colorful façades and polished public zones redecorate the urban realm, transforming it into a space for international applause and touristic consumption (Figure 25.3). Political thought is clearly embedded in the *comuna*’s image. It is also here, in this representation, where differences between the narrative of the state and the community are most evident, as the problems that arise from the aestheticization of politics, recognized by Benjamin, are at large. In the context of *San Javier*, the replacement of ethical with aesthetic concerns results in the *comuna*’s sociocultural milieu being overlooked. In reality, high tourism traffic, increasing territorial conflicts between street gangs and the expansion of outsider tour guides has caused a sense of displacement and dispossession of history, territory and memory for the *comuna*’s residents, leading to new social inequalities. Further, efforts of local NGOs advocating against gang recruitment and rehabilitating youth culture through music and graffiti art are overshadowed by outsider travel companies who visit the *comuna* on ‘transformation’ or ‘social innovation’ tours.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the images that interventions such as the escalators produce emphasize the confidence in physical transformation through affirmations of popular political discourses rather than attempting to diffuse them by engaging with local, everyday perspectives and practices. Ultimately, representations of the *comuna*, and its transformation, reveal processes of erasure underscored by political rhetoric, aesthetics and the spectacle of the new.

### **The periphery versus the international village: Disconnection by way of otherness**

Images of *El Poblado* are fairly homogenous, consisting of a sea of modern apartment towers soaring high above the city, surrounded by lush green vegetation, mountains and blue skies (Figure 25.4). Appearing regularly in digital and printed media promoting local and international tourism, *El Poblado* is described as “timelessly aesthetic” in appeal, a “hotspot” filled with cultural institutions, malls and culinary delights and, most importantly, as the “epicentre of Medellín’s nightlife.”<sup>69</sup> On the touristic front, it is used as an example of how urban public policy can generate positive experiences and exchanges in the contemporary spaces of the city. However, the quality of urban life presented by this image is circumstantial, seeking to attract capital, affluent residents and high-paying visitors by concealing the social and economic disparities occurring throughout other parts of the city – even its neighboring *comunas* (*Villa Hermosa* and



*Figure 25.4* Top: An image showcasing the international style of the El Poblado's apartment hotels and traditional style villas. Photograph by Oscar Garces @ Shutterstock. Bottom: A CAI sits on the hillside surrounded by informal housing. Photograph by EDU.

Buenos Aires) comprising large informal settlements. Ultimately, the representation of the city that *El Poblado* constructs is a misleading and purposeful rendition of a targeted reality.

Located in the south of Medellín, *El Poblado* has historically been the city's wealthy core industrial and commercial precinct, and expanding urban infrastructure and increased industrialization has caused it to continuously accrue land value.<sup>70</sup> By the 1970s, the *comuna* was officially established as Medellín's second urban and commercial center and has since been consistently developed for business and touristic purposes. Its most recent construction boom (2000 onwards) has been funded by business elites after an agreement with municipal leaders ensured financial transparency through increases in local taxes. At the same time, public and private sectors were coordinated into clusters to foster emerging markets, professional services, health, tourism and information technology.<sup>71</sup> This economic restructuring resulted in the *Medellín Cluster City* initiative, which dramatically increased municipal tax revenues.<sup>72</sup> It consolidated key partnerships between political, industrial and corporate bodies who saw opportunity for collective benefits from neighborhood revitalization strategies, setting forth state-assisted commodification and privatization of the city's formal urban precincts. But tax increases have amplified contextual disparities concerning inflation, financial security, land grabbing, property ownership and demolition among the city's citizens, underscoring the government's planning failures when forecasting urban growth. Fiscal imbalances throughout the city's *comunas* make visible deficiencies in formal leadership, education, employment opportunities, resources, mobility and "the inability of the formal housing market to reach all sectors of the population," especially recent arrivals, displaced by territorial conflict with no financial resources, residing on the city's fringe.<sup>73</sup> Thus, peripheral neighborhoods still experience the effects of systemic power imbalances and social inequalities daily through the legal and criminal erasure of houses and lives. Yet, they are essential for supplying the global market with images that spectacularize notions of reconstruction through explicit contrasts and public displays of state presence. Conversely, *El Poblado*'s physical image is universal and entirely different from the remainder of the city's representations, as it targets corporate bodies, economic elites, expats and wealthy tourists by promoting a more recognizable international urbanism.

The reasoning behind the projection of such an international style of living stems from the urban impact of new economic regimes – both legal and criminal – during the second half of the 20th Century. These regimes established a geography of fear causing an expansion of "passage-point urbanism" and protectionist and preventative architectures and technologies like gated communities, doormen, security gates and CCTV.<sup>74</sup> For Teresa Caldera, these "fortified enclaves" present "new alternatives" for urban life that reinforce notions of *otherness* by asserting social difference and inequality, separating criminals and victims of urban warfare from the upper- and middle-class.<sup>75</sup> Using Sao Paulo as a case study, Caldera identifies how such environments of control deepen segregation through physical barriers, surveillance systems and inward-facing designs that produce internalized "social homogeneity and isolation ... which proscribe an exterior life, evaluated in negative terms."<sup>76</sup> The proliferation of apartment towers of uniform appearance in *El Poblado* indoctrinates the same style of urban development described by Caldera, one imbued with fences, bollards, cameras and private security, constructing a fortified territory for luxury lifestyles. Thus, obvious and hardened security measures emphasize notions of exclusivity contingent on capacities to afford elite resort-style living, perpetuating a different kind of violence that visibly rejects openness and equality through constructions of urbanity defined by pristine, uniform imagery (Figure 25.4).

In contrast, recent citywide security measures have sought to re-establish the representation of the police and the state in areas of systemic violence. For example, Medellín's security and coexistence program – the *Política Municipal de Seguridad y Convivencia Ciudadana* – initiated the

construction of nine *Centros de Atención Inmediatas* (CAIs) in precarious hilltop neighborhoods between 2008 and 2011 (Figure 25.4).<sup>77</sup> Small concrete structures that are illuminated at night, the CAIs have “become a milestone in safety” by establishing a visible and permanent “brand in the territory.”<sup>78</sup> Here, the design of policing is “open and friendly,” creating a space for community engagement by hiding activities of “greater security” in private areas to eliminate “unpleasant connotations” like walls and gates.<sup>79</sup> This architecture produces a counter image of safety to that of *El Poblado*, but one that is all too familiar: a state-of-the-art architectural object superimposed in contexts of informality (Figure 25.4). Just like images of the city’s touristic ‘attractions’ (those linked to urban transformation), images of the CAIs leverage urban contexts in constructions of the spectacle. *El Poblado*’s image, on the other hand, provides a reprieve through a targeted and more ‘international’ style of urbanism (Figure 25.4). Clearly a worlding practice, this polarized representation of the city uses the logic of seduction in two ways. First, it triggers ‘mimetic desires,’ encouraging people to partake in the everyday culture of the city.<sup>80</sup> Here, the spectacle is experienced through otherness: the existence of informality and architectural innovation foregrounds popular discourses on the city, exacerbating socio-spatial inequalities. Second, associations with “quotidian practices of tourism, shopping, museum going” legitimize new forms for organizing socioeconomic differences.<sup>81</sup> Thus, *El Poblado*’s image serves the market by providing a more recognizable, commercialized and appealing representation of the city (Figure 25.4). This image further underscores the disconnect between the reality of everyday life and hegemonic city-branding practices. It reveals significant tensions in the city’s representation by reinforcing notions of exclusion through a homogenizing visual discourse that instrumentalizes citizens to benefit dominant urban narratives.

### **Representations of Medellín: New kinds of violence?**

The representations of Medellín outlined in this chapter analyze three image-construction strategies fundamental to the city’s narrative of transformation: replacement by sports infrastructure, erasure by transport mobility and disconnection by internationalized urban precincts. By examining the structure of physical and photographic images, these strategies emerge from an emphasis on scale, form and color, creating a contrast between urban/architectural interventions and their sites (replacement); tourism that promotes exoticism in localized, informal contexts (erasure); and the city’s globally recognizable commercial district (disconnection) (Figures 25.2, 25.3 and 25.4). In addition, the images use similar approaches to composition, demonstrating how montage and superimposition are used by architects, the state and the media to redirect perceptions of the city. Effectively, they operate to give value and meaning back to high-risk urban environments through the production and consumption of spectacles. However, this image-based operation further demarcates urban territory by instituting new forms of political violence: violence by architecture that actively separates notions of the past from the present, old from new, and community solidarity from state-driven social initiatives (replacement); violence by state-led interventions and services that have quickly been monopolized by outsiders, local gangs and illicit actors as “new resources for control and clientelism” (erasure); and violence by difference, whereby notions of otherness continue to facilitate the demonization of criminal underclasses via physical reconfigurations of *barrios* located in frontier zones and, simultaneously, affluent neighborhoods (disconnection).<sup>82</sup>

While image-construction techniques operate at the meta-level, examining specific image subjects unravels auxiliary narratives that recompile professional, academic and archival landscapes, complicating Medellín’s dominant urban discourse. In effect, images emphasize the importance of more nuanced, and often contradictory, timelines that comprise complex networks of actors,

revealing how the relationship between politics and aesthetics, and images and representation, construct political rhetoric. Thus, this chapter's analysis of images renders visible other types of foundational narratives that chart social, cultural, economic and community perspectives, to further underscore the tensions between dominant state-led discourse and different, equally important, histories. Such narratives call into question Medellín's global representation by countering the absences, erasures and disconnections produced via hegemonic city-branding exercises and homogenizing urban discourses.

## Notes

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- 2 Isabel Duque Franco and Catalina Ortiz, "Medellín in the Headlines: The Role of Media in the Dissemination of Urban Models," *Cities* 96, no. 1 (2020): 6.
- 3 Franco and Ortiz, "Medellín in the Headlines," 6.
- 4 Alex Warnock-Smith, "The Story of Cities #42: Medellín Escapes Grip of Drug Lord to Embrace Radical Urbanism," *Guardian*, May 13, 2016, [www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/may/13/story-cities-pablo-escobar-inclusive-urbanism-Medellin-colombia](http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/may/13/story-cities-pablo-escobar-inclusive-urbanism-Medellin-colombia).
- 5 Neil Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 1999), 10.
- 6 In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, as Leach discusses, Benjamin formulates his critique on the aestheticization of politics in relation to his experience of fascism both personally and studied. Debord, in his *The Society of the Spectacle*, claims that reality is so deeply obscured by accumulations of images – of spectacles – that it is now impossible to experience it, as all that is directly lived has become a representation. Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 18; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970), 1.
- 7 Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 19.
- 8 Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 19.
- 9 Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 56; Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1.
- 10 *Anaesthesia* is a term Leach uses to describe the narcotic effect induced by an image that "diminishes social and political awareness" in architecture. Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, viii, 55.
- 11 Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 27.
- 12 Anne-Marie Broudehoux, *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction: Beijing and Rio De Janeiro* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.
- 13 Broudehoux, *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction*, 3.
- 14 Ong, "Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global," 3.
- 15 Ong, "Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global," 4.
- 16 Ong, "Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global," 4.
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- 18 Franco and Ortiz, "Medellín in the Headlines," 1.
- 19 The ACI is an association comprised of various public entities including the Medellín Mayor's office and the *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM). Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana, Informe de gestión 2017: 15 años creando lazos con el mundo para el desarrollo de Medellín (Medellín: ACI Medellín, 2017), 23.
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- 22 Lucy Sherriff, "Best Things to Do in Medellín, 'the City of Eternal Spring,'" CNN Travel, accessed February 17, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/Medellin-colombia-things-to-do/index.html>; "Medellín, the City of Eternal Spring," PROCOLOMBIA, accessed February 17, 2022, <https://colombia.travel/en/blog/Medellin-city-eternal-spring#:~:text=Medellin%20is%20Colombia's%20second%2Dlargest,warm%20weather%20all%20year%20round>.

- 23 Over time, the city has expanded, and its edges now meet the city of Bello in the north and the cities of Envigado and Itagui in the south.
- 24 While the cultivation of crops was managed by peasant families, their commercialization was managed by wealthy elites.  
Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (London: Verso, 2006), 25–26.
- 25 *Paisa* is the term used to identify an Antioquian person. Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia*, 27.
- 26 The *Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Medellín* (SMP) is a private, not-for-profit civic entity dedicated to the preservation of “cultural and environmental heritage; public space; civic awareness; improvement of the quality of life in culture, arts, recreation” and leisure through sustainable social development. “Misión, Visión y Objetivos,” Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Medellín, accessed February 17, 2022, <https://smp-medellin.org/mision-vision-objetivos/>.
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- 28 Cuervo Calle, “Karl H. Brunner y Medellín,” 4.
- 29 In 1933, Karl Brunner was hired by the municipality of Bogotá (Colombia’s capital) as the principal advisor of its new Department of Urbanism. Brunner published two volumes of his *Manual de Urbanismo* (1939–40) while in Bogotá.  
Christina Deluchi, “The Politics of Social Architecture in Medellín: A Reading of the Parque Biblioteca España,” *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and the Arts* 20 (2020): 61.
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- 32 Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 89.
- 33 Richani, *Systems of Violence*, 90.
- 34 Richani, *Systems of Violence*, 90.
- 35 Richani, *Systems of Violence*, 97.
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- 37 Alcaldía de Medellín, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), Medellín, Transformación de una ciudad (Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín & BID, 2009), 203, 207.
- 38 *Coordinadora Nacional de Movimientos Cívicos* (CNMC) were citywide civic strikes that utilized new modes of public protest to campaign for improvements to urban space, public services and transportation throughout the 1980s. Moncada, “Medellín,” 56.
- 39 Fajardo and his successors represent a new type of politician that emerged after the 1991 Constitution decentralized democratic government and administered “the devolution of responsibility for local administrations and development.”  
Humphrey and Valverde, “A Tale of Dual Cities,” 163.  
The GEА joined leaders of economic sectors in a cross-sectoral collaboration. Moncada, “Medellín,” 62, 73.
- 40 Alonso Salazaar (2008–11), Anibal Gaviria (2012–15), Federico Gutiérrez (2016–19) and Daniel Quintero (2020).
- 41 Deluchi, “The Politics of Social Architecture in Medellín,” 66.
- 42 Deluchi, “The Politics of Social Architecture in Medellín,” 72.
- 43 Broudehoux, *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction*, 5.
- 44 Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana, Informe de gestión 2017: 15 años creando lazos con el mundo para el desarrollo de Medellín (Medellín: ACI Medellín, 2017), 34–35.
- 45 INDER Alcaldía de Medellín, Unidad Deportiva Atanasio Girardot: 60 años 1953–2013 (Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín, 2012), 11.



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- 51 Samper and Marko, "(Re)Building the City of Medellín," 260.
- 52 Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture*, 45.
- 53 Broudehoux, *Mega-events and Urban Image Construction*, ix.
- 54 Samper and Marko, "(Re)Building the City of Medellín," 261.
- 55 Peter Brand and Julio D. Dávila, "Mobility Innovation at the Urban Margins: Medellín's MetroCables," *City* 15, no. 6 (2011): 657.
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- Lorenzo Castro and Alejandro Echeverri, "Bogotá and Medellín: Architecture and Politics," *Architectural Design Special Issue: Latin America at the Crossroads* 81, no. 3 (2011): 100.
- 61 Naef, "Resilience as a City Brand," 2.
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- Brand and Dávila, "Mobility Innovation at the Urban Margins," 657; "Escaleras Eléctricas Comuna 13," *Terminales Medellín*.
- 65 "Escaleras Eléctricas Comuna 13," *Terminales Medellín*.
- 66 Naef, "Resilience as a City Brand," 12.
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- 79 Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano EDU, *Alcaldía de Medellín, Arquitectura Pública e Innovación Social*, 83.
- 80 For Benjamin, the concept of *mimesis* “allows for identification with the external world” by offering “a way of finding meaning ... through the discovery of similarities.” Neil Leach, “Mimesis,” in *Walter Benjamin and Architecture*, ed. Gevork Martoonian (London: Routledge, 2009), 124–126.
- 81 Richard Ingersoll, “All the World’s a Stage: Architecture and the Spectacle,” *Architecture* 89, no. 8 (2000): 79.
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## PART VI

# Mapping landscapes and big data



# INTRODUCTION TO MAPPING LANDSCAPES AND BIG DATA

*Ate Poorthuis*

## Introduction

Cities and technology have always been intricately connected. Human ingenuity and technological advancements enabled cities to grow into dense and diverse assemblages. Today, the high-rise buildings in our cities are quite literally supported by innovations in building materials – steel and concrete – and masses of people in the urban core are efficiently moved around by metros, trams and trains. At the same time, urban landscapes are also a productive seedbed for inventing, testing and rolling out these new technologies, as the continued prominence of Silicon Valley in our collective imagination shows. This reciprocal relationship between cities and technology has continued to play a role during the first two decades of the 21st Century, with one big difference: today, technology is *digital* – with computation and data at its center stage. Digital technology has permeated many, perhaps most, aspects of our daily lives. And as a result, computation and data have become an inseparable part of the urban landscape in both visible and more subtle ways.

Feeding today's new technological chapter is a seemingly endless thirst for data. People, companies and governments alike are trying to collect and use ever larger, ever richer data sets about all possible aspects of our lives and the places we live in. Supermarkets log our consumption habits through loyalty card and payment tracking, mobile phone apps – whether we realize it or not – might track our location as we go about our day, and social media platforms monitor and analyze our social interactions and preferences. To capture the idea behind this large appetite for data in a simple term, we often speak of *big data*. The term is used to indicate a contrast between the new types of data that we create and use today, compared to the data commonly collected in the 20th Century and before. The difference between this *old* and the *new* data does not limit itself to just the size of today's datasets alone. Data is now also more varied, capturing more aspects of our lives. It is created at greater speeds, sometimes in very messy and unstructured ways. On top of that, we can now often link many different datasets together based on common elements, such as mailing addresses, locations or other bits of information that uniquely identify people and are present in multiple datasets at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

However, focusing on the exact definition of what *big data* is, versus what is not, can become a bit of a distraction. The crux of the entire shift to digital technology is that data – in all its shapes and forms – and its effective use through computation has become more important than

it ever was before. This importance of data has even led to the expression that data has become “the new oil”<sup>2</sup> – greasing the wheels of our cities, societies and economies. On the surface, it would indeed seem that the more data we collect, the more efficiently those wheels turn.

As such, it is no surprise that data played a key role in the worldwide response to the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic response contains some clear success stories of the benefits of digital technology for our society. For example, the coronavirus’ genome was sequenced within mere days of its discovery, and subsequently, the sequence data was openly published and shared around the world at lightning speed.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, data about cases, hospitalizations and other relevant indicators was shared, analyzed and visualized in countless maps on national and international dashboards that are updated in near-real time.<sup>4</sup>

However, the pandemic has also brought the limits of technology and data to the forefront. Despite the availability of real-time and ubiquitous data, we have experienced that our understanding of the unfolding pandemic was nonetheless always incomplete, partial and inadequate.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes there are innocuous reasons for this, such as technical outages or the difficulty of comparing incomparable metrics across jurisdictions. But, more worrisome, we also witnessed the paradoxical, simultaneous existence of an abundance of data on one end and, on the other end, a ‘post-truth’ withholding of key information<sup>6</sup> or even the deliberate broadcasting of ‘alternative’ perspectives and conspiracy theories<sup>7</sup> that spread online not unlike the virus itself.<sup>8</sup>

The pandemic highlighted limits in other aspects of our relationship with technology as well. Many governments envisioned mobile phone applications as a technological fix for the difficult task of tracking and tracing the spread of cases,<sup>9</sup> but citizens pushed back against this use, as they have become increasingly aware of the (privacy) issues that surround state and commercial surveillance through such technologies.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the pandemic has shown that there are indeed limits to the adage *the more data, the better* that you might hear from technological optimists.

In this introduction, I will detail this mutually dependent relationship between big data and urban landscapes. I will first outline how landscapes, particularly urban landscapes, have always been directly and indirectly, affected by data. At the same time, data also helps researchers and practitioners deepen their understanding of social and urban processes. Data and the urban landscape are inseparably connected in a social process in which they continuously produce and reproduce each other. This also means that data cannot be a simple ‘solution’ to our social problems, as is sometimes argued. Instead, while it might help to address some issues, it is likely to increase others – contributing to the increasing unevenness of the urban landscape across the globe. I will end this introduction with a closer look at the limits – the social and ethical implications – of the increased use of data and computational technology.

### **The control room of the real-time city**

The initial response to the advent of big data has often had optimistic or even triumphant undertones, especially in the context of city planning and governance. This is understandable, as big data comes with a big promise: if data becomes large and versatile enough, it will allow us to understand urban issues better and faster. Based on that better understanding, we can design and plan smarter, more efficient solutions to social problems.<sup>11</sup> This promise is most vividly illustrated in the concept of the ‘smart city.’ The smart city, so goes the idea, leverages computational technology and big data to provide a more efficient – ‘smart’ – approach to urban governance.<sup>12</sup> In practice, the smart city might be more of a smart marketing idea<sup>13</sup> than an actually existing city.<sup>14</sup> In other words, city governments and consulting companies often leverage the *idea* of the smart city, for example, to gain access to funding, or to push through political projects. But in practice, many smart city technologies only exist in marketing

brochures or pilot projects and not at a city-wide, fully implemented scale. Nonetheless, smaller aspects of the smart city have indeed made their way into cities and city governments around the world, which is perhaps most noticeable in those parts of urban government that deal with real-time response and management.<sup>15</sup>

Taking a cue from the real-time control rooms that we are familiar with in the context of air traffic or space exploration, urban governments have been trying to apply the same approach to managing the city.<sup>16</sup> With digital dashboards and rooms filled with big screens, such control rooms can be created for all manner of urban issues.<sup>17</sup> Traffic can be monitored with sensors and cameras and managed through parking guidance systems, variable road tolls and smart routing suggestions,<sup>18</sup> while the production and consumption of energy can be dynamically managed in ‘smart’ energy grids.<sup>19</sup> Waste trucks are another example of this approach, as they can be outfitted with GPS and other sensors to dynamically decide on their deployment and routing from a central headquarters.<sup>20</sup>

In the context of the real-time control room, policing deserves specific attention. Predictive policing – the deployment of law enforcement based on model predictions that often rely on previous crime statistics – is a poster child of ‘smart’ urban applications but is born out of a much longer history of cross-over between computation and urban governance that has labored to make police work measurable and quantifiable.<sup>21</sup> This history goes back to at least the 1990s, when several police departments in the US started to use spreadsheets and the nascent power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to predict in which areas specific crime trends might unfold.<sup>22</sup> Potential implications arising from such an approach to policing have been analyzed in academia but are also vividly illustrated in Spielberg’s 2002 adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s *Minority Report*, in which criminals are arrested before they have even committed the crime.<sup>23</sup>

Farzin Lotfi-Jam, in the chapter “Infrastructures of urban simulation: digital twins, virtual humans and synthetic populations,” gives us another example of a control room-like environment provided by Replica, which is an offshoot of Google’s parent company Alphabet. Replica sells a completely virtual, simulated copy of the urban landscape, its buildings and its people, to city governments. Another example of such a ‘digital twin’ is provided by Virtual Singapore, which replicates the city-state’s built environment. However, the people in these virtual environments tend to lead very limited lives: they work, sleep, shop and eat, which is only a small fraction of the experiences that make our lives, well, human. This limited complexity might ostensibly hamper the usability of such virtual simulations, but if they get used despite these limitations, we might want to consider the potential impact on our urban landscapes. Just as in Dick’s *Minority Report*, might the simulation become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and will the real city start to mimic its simulation?

Real-time collection and use of data are also pervasive outside of the walls of city government. For example, insurance companies increasingly collect detailed, individual-level data about the insured through sensors placed in cars and mobile phone apps, enabling *Insurtech*<sup>24</sup> to come up with ever-more granular models of prediction.<sup>25</sup> We are even inviting data collection into our own homes, through ‘smart’ and connected lights, thermostats and other electronic devices<sup>26</sup> that not only provide convenience for the user but also a continuous stream of data about the user that is uploaded to the company that produced the smart device. With the ability to link many of these datasets together, including those pertaining to our online behavior, private companies are then able to construct detailed profiles about people. These profiles can be used for different commercial purposes and even allow the individual or ‘micro’ targeting of advertising campaigns.<sup>27</sup> For example, your grocery store might send you a weekly set of promotions on products that are designed to entice you, and specifically you, to purchase them. But less innocuous uses exist too: health insurance companies can use the health data from your



phone and the data from your smart home about your daily habits to adjust your insurance rates to what they deem to be your specific risk profile. Importantly, the use of these profiles can change how we perceive the world around us and how we behave within it. To understand how this works, one only needs to think about how much of our TV viewing is determined by what the streaming platform's algorithm chooses to highlight for us.

### Making landscapes

Although many of the prominent applications of data and technology in our cities focus on real-time use cases,<sup>28</sup> digital technology also has a more long-term impact on how our cities work. Such technology – the countless apps, software and data points – has become so intertwined with everyday life that the city and technology are now practically inseparable. Software is essential for the city to function.<sup>29</sup> This interaction between the social and digital world is aptly captured by theoretical concepts such as *digiplace*<sup>30</sup> and *code/space*<sup>31</sup> that emphasize how digital technology is now an integral part of how urban spaces are forged in a continuous social process of creation and recreation.

On an individual level, you can recognize elements of this in many aspects of our lives. Data and algorithms have an impact on where we choose to eat and shop (through online reviews and recommendations), how we get around (through routing and transportation apps), and even how we connect to friends and family (through online social networks). But when you sum all this individual data together, then it is also data that makes the city 'knowable'<sup>32</sup> to government agencies and companies alike. Aspects of city life that were previously almost invisible to these institutions can be made – literally – legible by collecting and mapping more and more data. When a social process becomes legible, it also becomes possible to exercise some form of control over it. For example, Singapore Electronic Road Pricing 2.0 system outfits every car on the island with a sensor that continuously tracks its position.<sup>33</sup> Having a complete view of all cars in a country, and how many trips those cars take where and when, enables a government to design new, granular policies to manage traffic and pollution. Governments might thus use this data in an attempt to govern better, while companies leverage data to extract or create more value. This is another reflection of the vernacular expression that *data is the new oil*. The human experience is now increasingly encoded within data, and this data has become a form of capital. Companies seek to extract this data, just as they seek to extract other forms of capital.<sup>34</sup>

Ignas Kalpokas, in the chapter "Posthuman urbanism: datafication, algorithmic governance and Covid-19," describes how the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increase of this *datafication* of our world and allowed aspects of our health and body to be further codified, analyzed and governed as bits of data. Importantly, this datafication has also enabled governments to look for solutions to the pandemic in technology, what Kalpokas calls *techno-solutionism*. In other words, the availability of certain types of data has directly impacted how we collectively respond to an event like a pandemic. The ensuing techno-solutionism was intensified by the data-driven rankings and evaluations of each country's approach, so that politicians and policymakers could continuously compare their performance against other countries or *competitors*. However, this comparison might not always be based on indicators that actually matter, but rather on what has been made (easily) measurable.

Another clear example of the impact of data on our urban landscape is through the process of *redlining*. Redlining, the exclusion of certain residents or residential areas from financial services such as mortgage lending, predates digital technology by many decades and has well-documented effects on the urban fabric, especially in American cities (for example, redlining might give rise to increasing spatial inequality and concentrated disinvestment).<sup>35</sup> Today, with the increased

amount and detail of data about our financial lives, classifying and categorizing people's *credit risk* has become commonplace in many countries. This automated classification allows software to, quite literally, sort people and affect whether they can buy or rent a home, and in which area they can do so.<sup>36</sup> For example, in South Africa, mortgage lenders and corporate landlords determine the suitability of a tenant or borrower based on an algorithmic credit scoring that includes financial behavior (e.g. spending patterns) and location.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, software and data are reproducing, and potentially exacerbating, existing social and spatial unevenness in cities.

This reproduction of unevenness can happen in more subtle, less obvious ways as well. For example, neighborhood platforms such as the US-based Nextdoor can be seen as empowering neighborhood residents to come together and form communities at first. However, these platforms can also serve as ways for residents to create their own 'digitally gated communities'.<sup>38</sup> Platforms like Nextdoor allow residents to self-segregate into neighborhoods drawn with sharp lines on digital maps that have real-world implications, such as racial profiling.<sup>39</sup> Other digital platforms play similar roles in the reproduction of the urban fabric. The digital mediates – as a sort of interface between people, institutions and the city – our social world. This mediation happens in messy, or *glitchy*, ways.<sup>40</sup> For example, the short-term rental platform Airbnb has created opportunities for property owners to 'share' their home and for tourists to rent accommodation outside of the regular tourism industry. But it has also reconfigured urban policies and housing markets around the world as it enables corporations and large-scale landlords to extract more capital from their property,<sup>41</sup> with increased real estate prices in specific neighborhoods as a consequence.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, ride-sharing companies have enabled new drivers to offer taxi services and break through existing monopolies but they have also engendered exploitation of these gig workers as they are unprotected by conventional (labor) institutions, such as in the *tuk tuk* (motorized rickshaws) industry in Cambodia.<sup>43</sup> The example of the tuk-tuk industry underlines that the effect of these digital platforms – and data in general terms – has global reach and the 'gig' economy enabled by these platforms has a distinctive impact in the Global South as well.<sup>44</sup>

As data and technology have taken a mediating role in our cities, they have also introduced a specific set of ethical implications. For example, it has become clear in recent years that many of the algorithms employed on top of big data are kind of a 'black box'.<sup>45</sup> Very few, if any, people know or can explain how and why these algorithms work or how exactly they come to make specific decisions. While this might be OK for a commercial company trying to optimize sales of their widgets, when such algorithms have social implications, this can become a serious issue. Because of this potential impact, increased attention is being paid to how algorithms are designed, how they work and what (perverse) effects they might have.<sup>46</sup> This new field of inquiry, sometimes labeled *critical data studies*, has already unearthed how algorithms can exhibit racial and gender bias and reinforce these issues, for example through the 'training' datasets constructed to teach algorithms how to categorize images.<sup>47</sup> What is more, academics and citizens alike are starting to question whether everything indeed should be captured as digital data and subsequently mapped, and whether privacy can continue to exist, even if it is 'just' an algorithmic machine that does the watching instead of a human.<sup>48</sup> Under all this pressure, Silicon Valley has now started to take ethics into account in the creation of new products and the formation of business departments, although whether the technology industry can address these ethical issues by itself remains an open question.<sup>49</sup>

## **Mapping landscapes**

So far, this introduction has mainly focused on the effect of data and technology on urban landscapes. But, of course, data and technology also change how we study and understand the

world around us. This aspect of data – as a lens on the landscape – is leveraged by government and commercial actors to enact change, but it can just as well be used by researchers to understand and map that landscape.

In their chapter, “The sociocultural construction of urban wasteland: mapping of the Antwerp Southside,” Cecilia Furlan and Manola Colabianchi analyze this continuous relationship between the map and the landscape by tracing the history of wasteland representation on maps in Antwerp, Belgium. Prior to the industrial revolution, wasteland was simply ‘unproductive’ land that was neither built-up nor agricultural. In the 18th Century, the Belgian government tried to incentivize the development of such land and maps were used in this process to inventory the available wasteland. But subsequently these same maps are used to plan new development, and thus they have a direct impact on the landscape (after which the map will need to be updated, and so on). This cycle of representing *and* producing the landscape through maps continued in and after the industrial revolution, when *wasteland* took on a new meaning. Now it is the abandoned industrial site that is considered to be ‘wasteland,’ which is indicated by blank or white spaces on more modern maps. Perhaps in their turn, these white spaces will serve as magnets for property developers and speculators looking to turn ‘unproductive’ into ‘productive’ land, and the cycle will repeat once more.

Beyond the historical example of land use in Antwerp, the proliferation of urban data over the last 20 years has instigated a new wave of research that utilizes new and unconventional data sources to analyze different aspects of the city. For example, humanitarian mapping has drawn on the open and collaborative global map data from OpenStreetMap as well as other platforms to increase the efficiency of disaster response.<sup>50</sup> When a disaster such as an earthquake or flood strikes, volunteer mappers can use satellite and drone imagery to quickly reflect the new situation ‘on the map’ and help authorities assess where to send resources. But that same OpenStreetMap data, in less acute contexts, can also be used to analyze the urban morphology of cities worldwide.<sup>51</sup>

In transportation and mobility research, mobile phone data is now used as a proxy for measuring the flows of people. Such flows have been used to determine the functional edges of urban systems (that is, where does a city start and stop?),<sup>52</sup> and the polycentricity of cities (that is, does a city have a single center, or perhaps multiple?).<sup>53</sup> Social media data from platforms such as Twitter can be used in similar ways and has been used to study everything from gentrification<sup>54</sup> to quality of life.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, Google Streetview imagery can be used to estimate greenery on streets at a scale that extends to every street visited by Google’s cars around the world.<sup>56</sup> Cars can also be outfitted with specific sensors so, for example, urban pollution can be mapped from street to street in an efficient manner.<sup>57</sup> Higher in the sky, satellite imagery has become so detailed that, in combination with machine learning algorithms, it can be used to create detailed maps of worldwide population density with 30-meters resolution<sup>58</sup> and even identify building footprints across an entire country.<sup>59</sup>

Endriana Audisho and Francesca Hughes, in their chapter titled “The bomb, the circle and the drawing undone,” caution us against thinking that such maps or views of the world are omniscient or infallible. Each map is yet one of many representations of the underlying territory and – no matter the size of the underlying data – is certainly not an all-encompassing perspective. They illustrate this by discussing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 which disappeared from the air traffic maps that were specifically designed to monitor and control its movements. The long search for the lost plane that subsequently started, and the many digital models and maps created to aid in that search, show that our maps can be fragile and often fail to capture

the underlying reality of the social world. In the case of MH370, this is evidenced by the sad outcome of the search: despite all efforts, only small fragments of the airplane were found.

We can find these limits to the data-driven view on the world also in Shiloh Krupar's chapter, "Brownfields as climate colonialism: land reuse and development divides." Krupar describes how in Emeryville, CA an early version of GIS was used to map brownfields – similar to the wastelands in Antwerp in Furlan and Colabianchi's chapter – and identify specific parcels for redevelopment. But what the GIS map showed as merely wasteland, abandoned industrial sites, was also a site of great cultural significance to the Ohlone/Lisjan people who were subsequently expropriated through eminent domain. Comparably, in the case of the redevelopment of overseas military bases, Krupar describes how the military might see these bases as one particular landscape (that is, with specific amenities and opportunity for gain) but another landscape that exists simultaneously is not seen at all (that of the colonial legacy of America's military presence).

Just as the impact of new forms of data on the landscape has received significant academic attention, so too have these new forms of data engendered entirely new methods and approaches to academic inquiry. Digital technology has sparked a revival of quantitative analysis in the urban field,<sup>60</sup> which has been labeled *urban analytics*,<sup>61</sup> *urban science*<sup>62</sup> or, more generally, *geographic data science*.<sup>63</sup> This upswing in new research methods illustrates that data has not only radically transformed social life, but it is reshaping scientific practice as well. Indeed, data affects many aspects of the urban landscape: our daily lives, our governments and the built environment of our cities. But it is also changing how we understand, through analysis and mapping, those very same landscapes.

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# THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN WASTELAND

## Mapping of the Antwerp Southside

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### Introduction

Maps are often considered as tools of territorialization.<sup>1</sup> They embody landscape variations in a specific moment and represent each component of the dense surface of the earth (for example, urbanization, infrastructures and agricultural land). Contemporary urbanism and landscape disciplines consider territory as an element in continuous transformation enduring interruptions, cycles of abandonment and crisis of former structures, followed by new phases of territorialization, in which the material and immaterial resources constantly assume new meanings.<sup>2</sup> Maps, as inclusive tools of information,<sup>3</sup> register instant frames of these processes of territorialization. However, as Brian Harley and Paul Laxton stated, maps are constructions of reality embodying intentions and consequences that can be observed in the societies of their time.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the association of maps with neutrality and objectivity, supported by technical skills and topographical symbols, in the transcription from the structure of the world is “the cartographic illusion.”<sup>5</sup> Maps are far from being apolitical, they are tools of measure and supervision; “like books, they are the products of both individual minds and the wider cultural values in particular societies.”<sup>6</sup> The choice of elements to be represented, and the simplified manner in which the act of mapping is performed, allow the cartographer to have a significant level of control and manipulation of how others should perceive that space. As affirmed by Chandra Mukerji, maps were increasingly used as capital goods to facilitate land classification and consequently the pattern’s reorganization of political control, as state formation progressed.<sup>7</sup> Land classification departs from the illustration of the terrain to describe its uses and occupation.<sup>8</sup> In map-making, land classification involves the use of symbols, words, colors and abstract patterns to represent different typologies of soil, vegetation or human practices. The systematic use of these graphic symbols follows a hierarchy, which establishes clarity and description and simultaneously translates the social interpretation of the landscape into a drawing. Therefore, the act of mapping not only depicts the space, but it also reshapes this space and the way we perceive it. Space is indeed a social product, a complex social construction that affects spatial practices and perceptions.<sup>9</sup>



This chapter specifically examines the representation of a contested landscape: urban wasteland. The text aims to understand, through historical cartographic explorations, how the concept of the wasteland has shifted and been simplified according to the construction of spatial value. By observing the cartographical language of the past, this contribution focuses on the evolution of interpreting fundamental issues, namely time, processes and changes of land representation in relationship to the concept of urban wasteland. We consider urban wastelands as abandoned spaces of modernity,<sup>10</sup> resulting from a social–cultural value construction that only exists in temporary and relative terms related with the society of the time. In maps, wastelands are either interpreted as polluted, overregulated sites or as untamed marginal areas – although always classified as an unproductive spatial element.<sup>11</sup> Hence, by understanding maps as a representation of social, cultural and technological intention on the territory,<sup>12</sup> this chapter addresses how the notion of wasteland transforms accordingly with the technological and cultural concept of productivity. The cartographic analysis of a specific case study in Flanders (Belgium) intends to reveal and exemplify the cumulative change of a western European perception on wasteland and political–cultural intention on land classification. In densely populated and highly industrialized areas, such as Flanders, where since the 18th Century, the transformation of the ancient landscape structures has been devastating,<sup>13</sup> land classification is a tool that strongly affected the territorial transformation in the *enclosure of the commons*<sup>14</sup> by landed elites.

To achieve this aim, the chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section introduces the shifting meaning of wasteland according to the transformation of the productivity understanding, agricultural first and then industrial. The time subdivision has been chosen according to similar studies developed by Sabine Barles, Vittoria Di Palma, Susan Strassen and Mira Egler, where wasteland is manifest as: (1) wild, untamed and unproductive nature; (2) industrial waste disposal area; (3) brownfield and blank space. Furthermore, through the observation of wasteland representation in the territorial portions of 15 × 15 km of the Antwerp Southside in Flanders, the second section shows how an active historical analysis of cartography is inquiring about societal changes. Lastly, the chapter discusses the limitations and benefits of the active historical cartography analysis, fostered by the case study results.

### Wasteland: A historical paradigm

The development of the concept of *wasteland*, the genealogy of the word and its representation are inseparable from each other.<sup>15</sup> The ancient English precursor of the term wasteland was the Saxon word *weste*, or more commonly *westen*. It was initially used as an adjective to indicate an inimical place for human life characterized by desolation, lack of temperate climate and lack of sustenance.<sup>16</sup> Around the 13th Century, the ancient English word *weste* was replaced with the word *waste*. The term *waste* derives from the old French terminology *wast* (in ancient French *gaster*), which means devastated, damaged and spoiled. While *westen* referred to the current status of the land, the new term, *wasteland* (*waste* + *land*), was adopted to indicate the character of land resulting from a natural or human demanaging action.<sup>17</sup> Slowly, the connotation of *wasteland* was replaced, or merged, with the idea of a place of depletion and became associated with *waste matter*.<sup>18</sup> This perception led to *wasteland* being considered as part of the landscape of fear.<sup>19</sup> Landscape of fear referred to the ancient Roman culture where everything and everyone not related to the urban and agricultural lives, were considered beyond logic, frightening and untamed.

*Wasteland* locations, often marginal in respect to urban centers and its various landscapes, have nurtured the idea of impenetrable spaces inhabited by obscure presences.<sup>20</sup> *Wasteland* included different kinds of landscapes that can be reduced to roughly three main conditions:

wetland, heathland and peatland.<sup>21</sup> These three conditions similarly stand in opposition to ideas of a benevolent and traceable nature. Without being wholly abandoned or desolate, they harbored vegetation or life forms resistant to domestication or that impedes vast and systematic agricultural activities. Wetland, heathland and peatbog areas were condemned as wasteland because of their inefficient agricultural productivity, challenging the meaning of *productive use* of the land. This perception remains such until the productive shift introduced by the Industrial Revolution first and by the rise and spread of environmental sensibility afterwards.

Since the 18th Century, transformations induced by the Industrial Revolution supported fast urbanization processes, causing radical changes in the concept of production and in the use of the land.<sup>22</sup> Early descriptions of the phenomenon of industrialization emphasized it as the “great inventions.”<sup>23</sup> The principle of mechanization was at the core of this innovation, producing an identifiable change in economic structure and growth: the shift from a society mainly based on an agricultural economy toward a manufacturing/industrial one. However, although industrial innovation has facilitated land-use transformations, it was not the driving agent. It was the interaction among state power, expanding economic demand (expressed by integrated market logics), population growth and technological development that shaped the consumption of resources and transformed the use of land.<sup>24</sup> Land use shifting over time is not a new phenomenon in Western Europe, which has occurred in several waves, causing changes in the landscape that have profoundly influenced and interfered with the traditional rural lifestyle.<sup>25</sup> The speed and magnitude of landscape transformations depended proportionally upon technological innovations, developments and cultural changes.<sup>26</sup> According to John F. Richards,<sup>27</sup> land use and its appearance changed dramatically between 1700, 1850 and 1950, showing an increase in surface occupation by urban tissue and agriculture, as well as the growth in scale of timbering and industrial activities. Rapidly, the necessity to allocate the new industrial activities to (cheap) available land in close proximity to existing infrastructures and resources emerged in time. Thus, many regions adopted a specific approach: the reclamation of hectares of former wetland and heathland areas, still considered as wasteland.<sup>28</sup> If, as shown by Martina De Moor and until mid-19th Century, wasteland in Belgium was mostly common land used for pasturing, cutting peat and turf,<sup>29</sup> then the reclamation supported the *de-commoning* process. The reclamation processes, associated with modifying land productivity and use, have changed land value and its market demand. In a context where market and land speculation have been the main drivers of a densely built territory,<sup>30</sup> the ‘enclosure of the commons’ by Belgian landed elites is not a surprise. The combination of reclamation and privatization of former wastelands with industrial technological development led to improved, more organized and salubrious living conditions.<sup>31</sup> Salubriousness and recovery of wasteland indeed went hand in hand. However, as Barles<sup>32</sup> highlighted, industrial technological developments did not simply improve the living conditions but also transformed the western society from a *user* of fuel, raw materials and even land to *consumer* of the same – due to overuse. In many western European countries, processes of urbanization and industrialization had indeed strong environmental consequences. Waste and pollution have exceeded nature’s ability to effectively absorb them.<sup>33</sup> Historically, waste has always been an integral part of urbanization processes; by being constantly reintegrated in the (de/re) construction cycles of cities and urban territories.<sup>34</sup>

The industrial technological development was powerful enough to break these self-renewing cycles and change them. Due to the production of industrial goods and materials, industrial waste disposal became an urgent issue that needed to be addressed. Waste was an element that needed to be immediately disposed of and gotten out-of-the-way, buried or sunk in specific areas, notably wastelands. The few documents addressing this argument consider wasteland as a waste disposal area and as a matter out of place, as defined by Mary Douglas.<sup>35</sup> For Joel A. Tarr,

wasteland was detected as an unproductive space that needs to be restored to the natural world where *waste* apparently did not exist.<sup>36</sup> So what we can deduce from the literature, with the Industrial Revolution until the first half of the 20th Century, is that wasteland was conceived as a temporary space in which an absorption of waste by natural agents was expected.<sup>37</sup> However, the necessity to dispose of large amounts of industrial waste and the associated soil contamination revealed the fixed condition of this new type of wasteland in the western industrial society of the 20th Century. Since then, areas close to industrial sites were designated as dump sites for metals, rocks, slag from coal extraction and polluted water. By trying to graphically imitate the characteristics of the territory and the displaced materials, these lands took on distinct forms, names and patterns on maps and cartographies.

The second half of the 20th Century marked a radical shift in the western cultural perception of landscape and consequently on wasteland. According to Hall, up until the 1960s wasteland was demonized.<sup>38</sup> The ecological movement recognized the opportunity of restoring the essential role of nature, by protecting it against the rampant processes of industrialization and urbanization. Moreover, the movement gave a new interpretation to the current western system of values toward wild vegetated areas, wetlands and heathlands, suggesting a new relationship with and perception of nature and the built environment.<sup>39</sup> Finally, this new perception of the environment has imbued untamed, uncultivated land with a new wealth of meaning. Modern ecological perception justifies agricultural unproductivity and sees ecological characteristics as societal values by recognizing untamed environments as necessary, if not essential, to the maintenance of the ecosystem as a whole.

In Western Europe, environmental sensibility increased alongside the closure and the consequent abandonment of industrial activities due to mainly technological and economical shifts. After almost two centuries of industrial expansion, the last third of the 20th Century was marked by a rupture and breakdown of industrial production.<sup>40</sup> The exposure to internationalization, technological development, changes in energy supply, the higher competition for private investments and the consequent relocation abroad of the manufacturing industry generated the decline and, in some cases, the disappearance of larger industrial manufacturing based on the Fordist model of production.<sup>41</sup> The majority of western European countries were affected by this phenomenon of deindustrialization, which profoundly changed their industrial activities without completely erasing them. According to Albert Schweinberger and Jens Suedekum *deindustrialization* is defined either as a fall in the share of industrial output in GDP or the share of industrial employment in total employment.<sup>42</sup> Historical studies instead describe deindustrialization as a series of processes that permit the shift from a society constructed on manufacture and resource extraction industries toward a society whose economy is based on the advanced tertiary sector.<sup>43</sup>

Across Western Europe, the closure and resulting abandonment of given industrial sites processes were not homogeneous: they developed in different periods of time and according to regional territorial structures. Although very specific, the processes of deindustrialization have left a shared legacy, which includes the decommissioning and abandonment of structures previously integrated with the built environment.<sup>44</sup> Old industrial, textile manufacturing, mining, steel and chemical works that for decades symbolized “technological progress,” once abandoned, started to be considered as wastelands.<sup>45</sup> Western European countries initially looked at the industrial wasteland as one of the collateral effects of the deindustrialization processes, which constituted a rift or an exception in the built environment. However, abandoned industrial structures soon became the structural elements of a different urban condition of living and working in proximity.<sup>46</sup> Despite the widespread presence of disused industrial structures, no formal or standardized definition of industrial wasteland exists.<sup>47</sup>

The concept of wasteland is often associated with various descriptions of objects, structures and surfaces that perform effectively during the industrial period and afterwards lose their original functions or are abandoned. Besides, the rapid turnover of properties leads to difficulties in obtaining an accurate account of the abandoned structures. This leads to a lack of reliable, comprehensive information, meaning that the data censused does not give a precise measurement of the divestiture or abandonment, hence showing the impossibility of representing wasteland as an objective spatial category on a map.

Many Western European countries, like Belgium, Germany, the UK and France, adopted the brownfield category in the official land-use cartographies to indicate industrial wasteland especially.<sup>48</sup> Specifically, this category includes abandoned polluted industrial sites, hostile to any human activity.<sup>49</sup> However, not all the maps present brownfields as spatial categories. Philippe Vasset observed that western topographical cartographies tend to represent abandoned land, industrial ruins and unused infrastructures either under their former uses or as white undefined space.<sup>50</sup> Sara Marini adds that in ancient maps, “white symbolises the color of fear, and often this fear and this color coincide with something we know little about, the unknown.”<sup>51</sup> Blank spaces on maps represent the emptiness and a void in the land use system of classification, where every plot is depicted with many symbols, colors and patterns symbolizing either the type of occupation or the land characteristics. However, these lands are far from being unoccupied spaces. They correspond to unconventional, transitional spaces, covered with ruderal vegetation which also perpetuates the misunderstanding about property rights. In the lack of conventionality, white spaces mark the antithesis of a fully consolidated urban condition.

The sequence of the three main categorizations highlights the social and cultural transformation of the conceptual perspectives of spatial usefulness (agricultural and industrial), related to the historical and social construct. The development of these different categorizations principally follows alternate waves of production and consumption, firstly agricultural and secondly industrial. This alternation was either intentional or otherwise.<sup>52</sup> By reconstructing wasteland alternations, three main observations can be deduced. Firstly, wasteland, as a landscape element, has been simplified through time. With action over land classification and regulations as cadaster maps, tax proceeds, lists of land ownerships and land records, society simplified wasteland characteristics. Secondly, the attitude toward what is meant by wasteland changes according to the changing and contradictory relationship between land use, productive activity and the user–consumer. This for instance reveals the conflict of economy versus ecology that we can observe today. Since the increase or decrease in wasteland is closely linked with the performance of the economy in general as we have seen above, several successive periods of decline and growth can be discerned.<sup>53</sup> Lastly, despite being a well-known concept and a land classification, wasteland has never been represented as such. Izabel Gass affirms that the changes around the ways in which wasteland is defined and interpreted reveal the cultural relationship between society and the environment, in which wasteland simultaneously represents our environmental consciousness and a terrain of contestation.<sup>54</sup> However, an in-depth observation of different historical cartographies helps us to explore how maps register the sociocultural understanding of wasteland and landscape in general.

### **Active historical cartography analysis as an approach**

The analysis of active historical cartography consists of a selective observation of historical contemporary maps associated with a historical understanding of societal changes. In this chapter it is adopted as a research tool to make visible the social practices and spatial patterns and their interactions in space. By interpreting the maps, we collected latent data, each map

is in fact a fragment of data used to make the invisible (or the obvious) visible. According to Di Palma, each action on the territory leaves traces, and we “cannot wish them away.”<sup>55</sup> In a particular way, and at a specific moment in time, maps depict these traces. If wastelands are traces of spatial opposition to transformation and change, maps have registered, altered, justified and absorbed these conditions.<sup>56</sup>

Exploring the concept of wasteland through the ‘language’ of mapping permits the analysis and comparison of wasteland forms within sites and between sites. The task is ambitious because it concerns the exploration of a large portion of a territory and covers several centuries. Thus, the active historical cartography analysis is conceived as a systematic inquiry of specific portions of the examined regions in which each section adopts distinctive techniques to observe wasteland in the cartographies. The use of distinct techniques reflects the awareness of the study about the different intentions and logic behind the construction of each chosen map. As Franco Farinelli maintains, the cartographic reason depends on: (a) the primary goal to be achieved (military, land use, topographical, cadastral representations); (b) the correspondence between “things” and signs (conventions); and (c) the reduction of the complexity of the reality to a phenomenal form.<sup>57</sup> Here, maps are conceived simultaneously as an instrument to conquer a territory, a tool of power, an agency of knowledge and a means of interpreting the systemic relationship between signs.

### *Case study*

The active historical cartography analysis is tested here on the wasteland representation within a specific case study: the Antwerp Southside (*Zuidrand*, Belgium). The Antwerp Southside is a peri-urban area that belongs to eight municipalities located in the Metropolitan fringe of Antwerp and was defined in 2012 with reference to the Landscape Park Antwerp Southside (*Landschapspark Zuidrand*, LZ) project. Its boundaries are defined by the external borders of the eight municipalities involved, and it has a total surface of 10.674 ha – of which 54.7% (5.845 ha) are open spaces – and a total population of approximately 121,388 inhabitants, as stated by the Flemish Spatial Plan (STATBELG).<sup>58</sup> The site is selected for its relevant presence of open spaces in a regional contest of diffuse urban sprawl and for being representative of what Peter Rowe calls “middle landscape.”<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the frame dimension of 15 × 15 km seems to be an optimal dimension to observe different interpretations of wasteland’s representations manually. The case study is investigated by framing the theoretical understanding of wasteland interpretation within the Flemish sociocultural context and how it changed over time. Simultaneously, this framing is compared with a systematic analysis of pattern, signs and colors adopted in three different and emblematic sets of historical cartographic representations of the selected area.

Firstly, a portion of the Ferraris map (1770–78) is analyzed which reflects the detailed state of the southern Netherlands just before the start of the Industrial Revolution and the end of the *Ancien Régime*. The map was produced by Joseph de Ferraris in response to a request by Prince Charles Alexander of Lorraine for a systematic, large-scale cartographic representation of the northern Austrian empire. The topographic survey was performed on a territory corresponding to today’s Belgium and Luxembourg as well as some parts of German and Dutch territory, includes 275 sheets and was drawn up to a scale of 1/11.520. The realistic representation of the Ferraris map reflects a general cartographic process toward a vertical vision of the object and utilization of geometrical signs. This process, developed during the 18th Century due to the development of topographic works commissioned from military engineers, was the first to be conditioned by the ‘new’ geo-mathematical method.<sup>60</sup>

Secondly, a topographical map of the Nationaal Geografisch Instituut (NGI Belgie-ING Belgique) is considered. The cartography is located in the Belgian historical archives of the Royal National Library in Brussels. It is drawn on a scale of 1:20.000 and exemplifies the situation between 1881 and 1904, despite being completed in 1939. Since the end of the 19th Century, NGI Belgie-ING Belgique maps were developed to create, collect and disseminate maps of areas of military interest. Since 1848, due to their scientific precision, these maps have provided information on topography, land use, field patterns, settlement patterns and infrastructure.<sup>61</sup> Topographic maps constructed illustrations of a portion of the earth's surface, showing distribution of physical features, in which each element corresponds to an exact geographical position, following a fixed scale and projection.<sup>62</sup> In a topographical map, every element is symbolized by lines, colors, patterns and their conventional signs. These elements are codified and readable through the use of a legend.

Lastly, a more recent topographical map from Nationaal Geografisch Instituut (NGI Belgie-ING Belgique), relative to 1989, is considered. This model features the digital landscape model with a precision of 1 m. It contains all vector information in color for producing topographic base maps at 1:25 000, such as networks, buildings, woodlands, setpoints, agricultural lands, etc. Written text, symbols and abstract patterns help the reader to understand spatial quality and specific elements better.

The three maps are selected as representative of different historical periods, each characterized by specific political and socioeconomic patterns. The Ferraris map represents the Napoleonic era when Belgium was still under French rule, and the economic structure was mainly agricultural. Until the mid-1800s, the use of space was mainly organized using techniques of private law.<sup>63</sup> Around 1800, however, local governments – triggered by the Napoleonic urge to enforce the French legal system – promoted a campaign of reclamation and land de-commoning.

The second map represents the period after the Industrial Revolution, when the liberal practices of privatization (or commodification of the common land) and the arrival of machinery and factories decisively changed the Belgian territory in favor of economic growth. The need for a workforce forced many peasants to migrate to the industrial towns, the urban tissue grew and the farmlands decreased. The last map depicts the period after WWII and the shift in Belgium from heavy, large industrial production toward small and medium enterprises. The shift from the large industrial production model appeared in the saturation of the basic market of durable industrial goods. In addition, the oil shock produces a crisis of resources: the increase in the price of oil has shown that the inputs of the production system are not inexhaustible, and their abuse creates irreversible environmental consequences.

### **Unfolding wasteland in the Antwerp Southside**

This section presents the results of the active historical cartography analysis of the Antwerp Southside area. Three cartographic representations within a specific interpretation of wasteland – common unproductive land, industrial waste disposal area and blank space – are considered.

#### ***Wasteland as common uncultivated land***

Starting from the 1660s until the Industrial Revolution (1860), wasteland was generally associated with unproductive agricultural space managed in a collective way and used for pasturing, cutting peat and turf and digging loam. In 1770, almost 15% of the national territory of Belgium was wasteland, in the form of heathland, wetland and peat bogs.<sup>64</sup> The official commons' classification – mapping and counting – became necessary due to the Belgian government's

interest in promoting wasteland clearing. The necessity to map wasteland came with the need for new arable lands. From local initiatives of the religious congregations to governmental ones, several campaigns were promoted to transform uncultivated land from wasteland areas to areas of productive use. Between the 16th and the 19th Centuries, these actions were registered in the landscape through a broader set of agricultural changes, bearing witness to the quest for land through land reclamation.<sup>65</sup> The decree of 25 June 1772, established the private acquisition of common/uncultivated land within the first six months and the sequential “development” within the following two years.<sup>66</sup> However, a conservative reaction of local municipalities, economic considerations and heavy resistance of local inhabitants prevented the ordinance from having significant results. A few years later, the *Décret concernant le mode de partage des biens communaux* (Decree on the method for dividing communal property, 1793) assigned common land ownership directly to Flemish municipalities.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, local authorities were greatly stimulated to sell and turn these spaces into productive areas. As Pieter Van den Broeck argues, the central government has played an active role in the history of the common land, starting with the “naming the common land as *res nullius* (no-man’s land) instead of *res communis* (common land), expropriating it and giving it to the private sector or selling it at low cost.”<sup>68</sup>

The dissolution of commons that led to the partition of land and privatization not only radically modified the landscape and the property regime but “hit not only rural collective property but also other forms of collectivities.”<sup>69</sup> The cooperatives took the form of guilds in the urban context and “communal land tenure arrangements” between communities of users/producers in the countryside.<sup>70</sup> These latter were systems for collective use and management of land or other natural resources, such as water or forest wood, where the commoners defined the modes of use and production, distribution and circulation of these resources through horizontal and flexible forms of governance. According to Daniel R. Curtis and Michele Campopiano, commoners aimed to keep the agricultural system in balance, limiting risks and costs. In fact, they limited the impact of crop failures due to unpredictable weather conditions, floods or disease, while saving on investments – for example, in fences and drainage systems. Property institutions, and the commons in particular, created social security provisions for their members, as can be seen in the guilds’ provisions for widows and orphans. The cooperative strategy allowed the members to share the costs that arose from uncertainty, but when “abundance turns into scarcity” common lands started being threatened with privatization.<sup>71</sup> As claimed by De Moor, there is a clear link between these cooperatives, land privatization and evolution of the European market economy from 1100 to 1800.<sup>72</sup>

In the Flemish context, productivity turned out to be the main parameter with which to establish land value. Settled cultivation and urbanization upon lands became the defining feature of the passage from a state of land use “efficiency” to a state of land lying “waste.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, productivity not only influenced the administrative status of the land but also what kind of vegetated spaces should be represented in the cartographies and how this should be done. As exemplified in Figure 27.1, land use cartographies of the 17th Century differentiate ‘efficient’ functional spaces, such as agricultural lands, productive forest and water infrastructures from unproductive lands, namely heathland, wetland and peat bogs. In the Ferraris map, “all three categories are represented just as they are,”<sup>74</sup> painted with a color gradient technique that seems to underline their variable and inconsistent character. A realistic representation is indeed adopted, with conventional symbols and color patterns commonly used in 18th Century map-making. Landscape features were meant to be easily readable and clearly provided information on productivity and land use. In Ferraris map several categories for land are defined, namely fields, prairies, moors, swamps, marshes, polders, dunes, orchards, vineyards, parks, heathland and ponds, to name a few. In particular, heathland tended to be constituted by soil with low

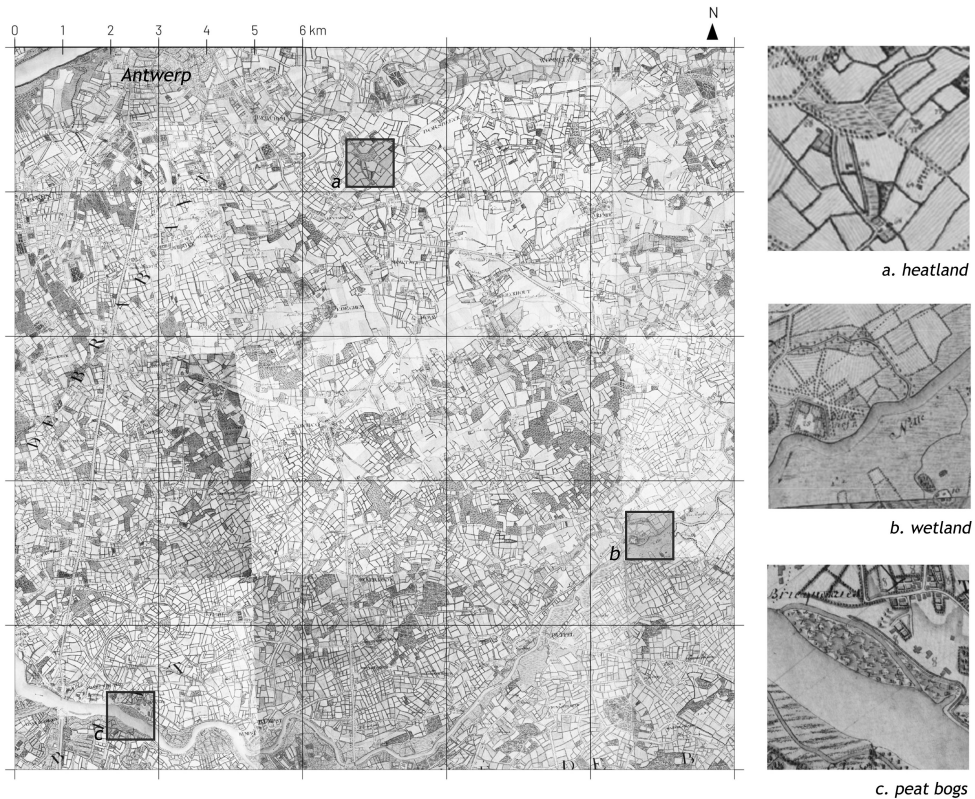


Figure 27.1 Historical cartography analysis of Antwerp Southside through the Ferraris map (1770–1778). Source: Historical map database © Public domain.

fertility and low pH.<sup>75</sup> This type of land was characterized by low grassland, mixed with calluna flowers and by sandy soil. Due to the low-quality soil condition, heathland could not be cost-effectively cultivated, urbanized or afforested, and thus it was considered wasteland. However, on such meager types of soil, flower or fruit vegetation could thrive – though not for long and not without human intervention.<sup>76</sup> Wasteland was not a stable denomination to identify greenfields, but more a phase in a succession of vegetation, which would eventually result in wild afforested lands, characterized by oak and birch. In the Ferraris map, heathland is drawn with undulating lines simulating grass, on a brown and yellow background to indicate the type of soil. Wetland was perceived as a space in which the water does not seem to flow and spreads out in marshy pools over the immense stretch of wasteland and is sometimes characterized by small bushes.<sup>77</sup>

The ambiguity of the soil condition, neither ground nor water, neither solid nor liquid, together with the unproductive character, influenced the perception of wetland as wasteland. Indeed, wetland was often located at the margins of urban conurbations, becoming one of the ideal habitats for criminal, poor and diseased populations, and consequently by the moral connotations related to it.<sup>78</sup> “A place for outsiders,” as David Sornig says of West Melbourne Swamp, where “uncanny, liminal quality” persists as it transforms from fertile wetland to modern-day docks.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, wetland is either illustrated with thick short vertical lines, on a colored base where hues of light gray gradually transitioning to dark gray (or black) to indicate the varying degree of water’s presence (Figure 27.1). Bog areas or peat bogs are represented using



vertical irregular short lines, portraying tussocks, indicating the presence of wild vegetation with a brown and green pattern, reproducing the marshy condition of the soil. Each of the cases mentioned above is presented (Figure 27.1). Cartographers considered wasteland as land devoid of intellectual values, characterized by an absence of human ‘rationality’ and, simultaneously, land on which to act in case of necessity.<sup>80</sup>

### ***Wasteland as waste disposal area***

After the 1860s, new legal instruments were introduced to encourage wasteland reclamation in Flanders toward a virtuous climate of investment. The law of 25 June 1847 – *Loi sur le défrichement des terrains incultes* (Wasteland Clearance Act) – ordered the forced privatization and reclamation of public-owned wastelands,<sup>81</sup> which in combination with other decrees on irrigation and canalization made possible the sale of thousands of hectares of wasteland in Antwerp’s province.<sup>82</sup> The prices for heathland boomed after the law of 1847, consequently the lands were predominantly bought by non-residents who were not active in agriculture (urban bourgeoisie). High prices and the fact that the heathlands were sold in big portions prevented local peasants from participating in the sale. In the Antwerp Southside, only in a few municipalities, the urban bourgeoisie remained absent because the local council decided to sell in very small parcels, to the advantage of the locals. The implication was that most of the vast common land in the rural outskirts ended up in the hands of families based in Antwerp, who later appropriated the land for recreational purposes, as a retreat from the city. One may consider this as the start of urban infiltration from the city to the peripheral agricultural territory, depriving peasant livelihood of the merits of the land. The possessive individualism is affirmed at the expense of collective properties (commons), and the public–private dichotomy takes form. “The laws of the land are, in this vision, dependent upon the rightful ownership of the soil,”<sup>83</sup> and land ownership becomes the principle of the new social structure.<sup>84</sup> Privatization and industrial development encourage the progressive transformation of uncultivated land. Rapidly, industrial development became the new economic source and the new paradigm for productivity. The majority of industrial companies needed to dispose of waste from industrial production, the ideal place to dispose of industrial refuse was on the few remaining *green wastelands*. At the end of the 19th Century, waste was accumulated on heathland and wetland or dumped in former pits. The process of filling was initially considered an optimal situation, in which unproductive land was unconventionally reclaimed. Furthermore, and in some respect, using agricultural wasteland was contemplated as a way of transforming and inserting fallow lands into the industrial production chain. Thus, wasteland was simultaneously considered as uncultivated green spaces and landfill areas formed from industrial waste or other rejected raw materials.

For about a century, the territorial image of the Antwerp Southside pictured by the Ferraris map (1770–1778) did not radically change. Nonetheless, in 1859 the fort system for military purposes was built. The military structures took their strategic positions outside the city wall and procured other agricultural land expropriation. Only in the last quarter of the 19th Century and in the first of the 20th Century did the beginning of heavy industrialization and mining activities show their effects. On the topographic maps of 1939 of Antwerp Southside, the landscape appeared different, demonstrating how in less than 50 years wetlands and heathlands were reclaimed to host mainly industrial sites and infrastructures. The construction of the dense railway network – including the line from Hoboken to the Rupel stone quarries – aided the factories’ establishment and accelerated the land consumption of the area. In the Antwerp Southside, the majority of the wasteland that bordered the Rupel – a tributary river of the Scheldt River – was progressively reclaimed and transformed into factory sites, sometimes oriented toward mining.

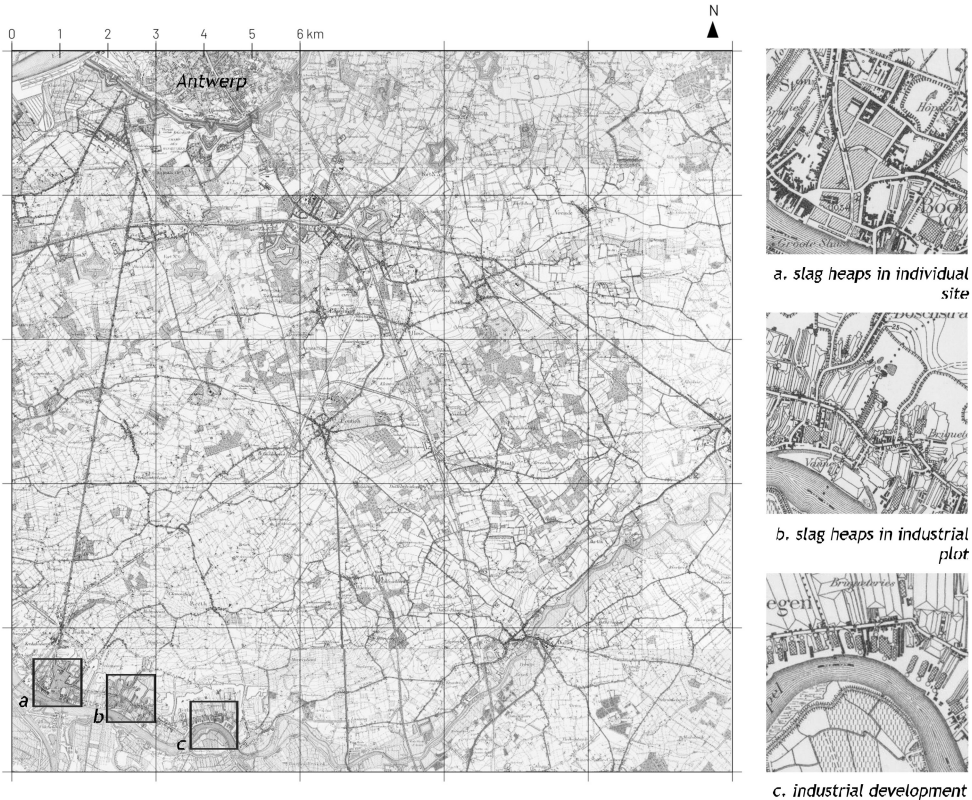


Figure 27.2 Historical cartography analysis of Antwerp Southside through the Nationaal Geografisch Instituut map (1881–1904). Source: Historical map database © NGI.

The industrial areas and mining sites were mapped as white areas surrounded by dashed lines with triangles. Cartographers also introduced contour lines to represent their three-dimensional landscape within the two-dimensional space of a map. Land uses and/or occupants were then identified with standardized graphic symbols, which helped build both a real and perceived image of the territory. Observing the cartography of the Antwerp Southside, the industrial waste disposal areas appear marginal compared to urban centers, however, easily accessible and located in a dedicated site or within the same plot of the factories. In both cases, plot borders are clearly defined in the map with a bold edge (Figure 27.2). This representation marked how cartographers tried not to neglect waste space, but on the contrary, making some first attempts to categorize waste places. Moreover, a cartographic observation allows us to understand the extent and presence of waste disposal areas and their related value within the Flemish society of the time.

### ***Wasteland as blank space***

In less than 40 years (1950–89), the Antwerp Southside territory shifted from a mainly rural region to one of the most industrial areas in Europe. Its economic performance has resulted from the internal dynamics of Flanders, the mining extraction of coal and car-oriented manufacture.

Technological progress, industrial development and strong capital investment were the drivers for modernization and development. This consequently brought monetary wealth to the region and generated one of the most flourishing urban/industrial landscapes in Europe. The 1960s were led by the slogan “100 kilometers of highway per year!” by Minister Jos de Saeger.<sup>85</sup> However, by the 1970s the motorway program also began to be reduced due to the oil shock and the crisis of resources. The economic recessions of the 1970s–1980s forced the Antwerp Southside industrial activities to reduce production, accelerating the decline of Antwerp Southside’s large industrial sector. However, several complex causes influenced this structural change, including the proximity to the residential areas preventing the expansion and renovation of the majority of industrial sites;<sup>86</sup> even if the industrial production was relatively decentralized, the mixed urban condition impeded a fast-track business connection with a modern infrastructural road network.

The 1972 report “The Limits to Growth” by the Club of Rome highlights the consequences of the Fordist model and questions the axiom of the possibility of indefinite growth. An MIT team affirms that “[t]he earth’s interlocking resources – the global system of nature in which we all live – probably cannot support present rates of economic and population growth much beyond the year 2100, if that long, even with advanced technology.”<sup>87</sup> Since the 1960s, in Belgium, many regional and national laws have been passed for environmental regulation, “establishing a wide variety of prohibitions and restrictions.”<sup>88</sup> Federal environmental legislation, for instance town and country planning (1962), nature protection (1973), the management of risks of heavy accidents with certain industrial activities (1987) as well as regional Flemish environmental legislation, such as waste management (1981 and 1994), groundwater management (1984), environmental permits (1985, 1991 and 1995), environmental impact assessments (1989), protection of forests (1990) management of gravel extraction (1993), environmental policy agreements (1994), environmental planning (1995), environmental care at the plant level (1995), soil sanitation (1995) and spatial planning (1996), established a wide variety of prohibitions and restrictions, to name a few. In addition, with the free-trade agreements instituted in the 1980s and 1990s, many industrial companies relocated the production to other countries with much lower wages and lower standards. Belgian environmental legislation intervened in an already largely industrialized and highly urbanized territorial context (in 1995, 97% of the population was considered urban).<sup>89</sup> The early settlement patterns and landscapes, characteristic of the late 18th Century in Flanders, have been erased from the recent urban agglomerations. As stated by Veerle Van Eetvelde and Marc Antrop, the impact of urbanization and transport infrastructure on the traditional landscape – or landscapes of the preindustrial period – is “extreme.”<sup>90</sup>

The environmental issues and the economic recession, therefore, fostered the process of deindustrialization and, as it intensified, empty and polluted areas gradually accumulated in Flanders and Western Europe. Abandoned extraction sites, closed landfills and decommissioned airfields entered into the category of wastelands, conventionally named as *brownfields*. In Flanders, this term is used as a synonym for contaminated land. The Belgian (Flemish) definition of brownfield states it as “abandoned or under-used industrial sites with an active potential for redevelopment or expansion but where redevelopment or expansion is complicated by a real or perceived environmental contamination.”<sup>91</sup> However, the wasteland categorization of brownfield is still ambiguous, due to the lack of a common definition across different western European countries.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, the brownfield categorization is not present in the topographical map from the Nationaal Geografisch Instituut (NGI Belgie–ING Belgique) but only in the 2006 Corine land use representation. However, according to Vasset, within topographical maps wasteland areas are nevertheless presented.<sup>93</sup>

Modern Western European cartography, and in particular Belgian representation, is inclined to represent abandoned land, underused infrastructures and abandoned polluted industrial land

either under their former use or as white space. They are blank because they are unoccupied, unqualified, excluded from the overall design or they are difficult to portray – or they are wasted.<sup>94</sup> This way of representation indicates a degree of simplicity which is far from reality.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, these spaces are often transition zones and dynamic areas. Due to the lack of conventionality, white spaces mark the antithesis of a fully consolidated urban condition, representing free, empty spaces in between building structures as well as identifiable transition zones between public and private properties.<sup>96</sup> According to Vasset, these are not merely empty areas. They are abandoned areas, often of unspecified ownership, whose boundaries have been erased, the fencing torn down, featuring ruins of former industrial structures, often covered by ruderal vegetation.<sup>97</sup> Rather than filling a void, modulation, materials of surfaces, full and empty spaces, structures and natural infiltration of vegetation uniquely shape the wastelands. Using the words of Rem Koolhaas, white spaces on maps are “highly charged with nothingness.”<sup>98</sup> If void is associated with the negative of the built mass, for Koolhaas *nothingness* defines a created urban landscape without the necessity of formal construction. By using the word *nothingness* as the outcome of eliminating architecture from urban space, Koolhaas opens up new possibilities for architectural landscape programs and users. Therefore, the white representation of wasteland embodies simultaneously the lack of definition as well as potentiality of future imaginaries becoming a terrain of design and appropriation from human and nonhuman activity. This is especially true for former developed areas that are now abandoned or underused. Wasteland can indeed be reevaluated and given new life, new meaning achieving a more sustainable urban setting.<sup>99</sup>

The NGI Belgie-ING Belgique map representative of the period between 1961 and 1989 contains morphological colored information relative to natural and built environments. Symbols and patterns help to understand spatial quality and specific elements. However, not all the information is represented, as some areas are left blank, without any written descriptions, color or pattern. By observing three samples of approximately 500 × 500 m in Figure 27.3 we aim to unfold this nothingness of white representation of the NGI Belgie-ING Belgique map. All three coincide with the leftover spaces in between different plots, parts of city construction and infrastructures or industrial zones.<sup>100</sup> Specifically, they are (1) fragments of land with low intensity of land use, (2) underused infrastructures and (3) abandoned industrial land. The latter ones mainly concentrated on the Rupel, the tributary river of the Scheldt River (Figure 27.3).

## **Reflections and conclusions**

Reflecting on meanings and manifestations of the wasteland, this chapter questions how processes and changes in land cartographical representations are the results of sociocultural, socioeconomic and military constructions. The observation of three different historical maps of the Antwerp Southside territory reveals how the concept of wasteland was always present as a spatial element and its meaning–representation relationship changed over time. Before the Industrial Revolution, urban-type wasteland engendered a variety of responses, ranging from delight or indifference to forms of fear and hostility.<sup>101</sup> Afterward, the wasteland concept slowly shifted from the idea of ‘wild nature’ toward the complexity of human interactions with surrounding environments. It became a by-product of age-old land use of industrial abundance, an unproductive spatial element yet to be understood.<sup>102</sup>

The sequence of wasteland categorizations – common uncultivated land, disposal waste area, blank space – highlights the social and cultural transformation of the conceptual perspective of spatial usefulness in terms of economic productive value of space. The development of these different concepts principally follows alternate waves of production and consumption, first

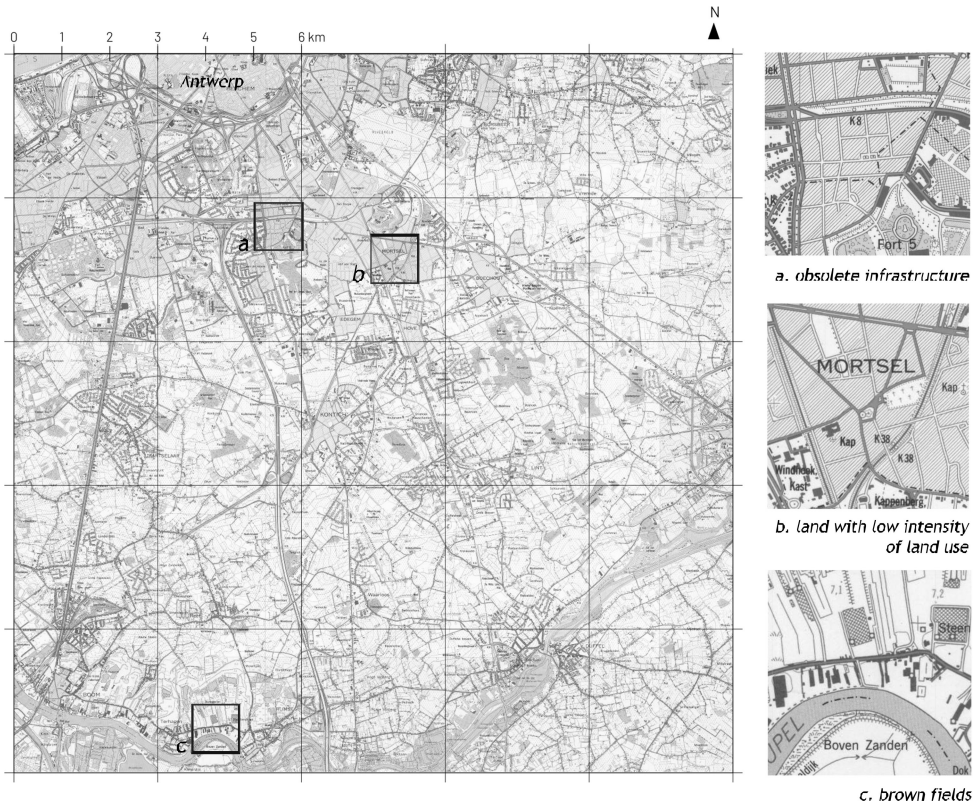


Figure 27.3 Historical cartography analysis of Antwerp Southside through the Nationaal Geografisch Instituut map (1961–1989). Source: Historical map database © NGI.

agricultural and afterward industrial. The Flemish territory has been affected by suburbanization for more than 50 years. As shown in the Antwerp Southside, this process includes land fragmentation, persistent privatization and a significant decrease in open land.<sup>103</sup> Land and its use rights are also being increasingly commodified in Belgium as elsewhere in Europe. Land is increasingly privately owned and sold; it has turned into a global asset and an object of speculation.<sup>104</sup>

Unfolding wasteland and land classifications through a cartographic analysis allows for the perception of maps as constituting synthetic devices that measure the territory, make its qualities readable and embody the interpretation of the society toward landscape.<sup>105</sup> This cartographical study discloses the metamorphosis of the sociocultural and planning perception of wasteland, describing not only the spatial value transformation but by understanding the processes whereby spatial value is constantly being created and destroyed.<sup>106</sup> As André Corboz highlights in one of his famous texts, representing the territory already means mastering the same.<sup>107</sup> Yet, this study highlights how the obtained representation is not a cast, but a construction. You make a map first in order to gain knowledge, to subsequently act upon it. The operation of reconstructing the discourse on wasteland through maps was not conceived as a way to identify a *true* perspective but as a way toward understanding the diverse positions that coexist and as a way toward highlighting alternative meanings and values. As Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson affirm, the alternation of meaning and value highlights how wasteland is an expression of political, cultural and social value construction made upon the landscape and mirroring the history of the society

that produced it.<sup>108</sup> Society changes, and consequently the meaning given to wasteland also transforms.

The current policies and initiatives for a socioeconomic sustainable transition (for example, European Green Deal) of EU countries encourage a rethinking of the territory including attentive environmental protection to avoid other consumption of green and agricultural land.<sup>109</sup> However, as Alan Berger affirmed, focusing on wasteland with a projective eye does not mean envisioning a world without wasteland.<sup>110</sup> Envisioning means imagining – first generally and then with increasing specificity about what one really wants.<sup>111</sup> It implies divesting all the constraints of assumed ‘feasibility,’ of doubt and past disappointments, allowing one’s mind to conjure up and imagine the most uplifting scenarios, counterbalancing the same with all due skepticism. Nevertheless, envisioning is useless if it does not lead to the development of new forms of collective management of goods, assets, services and lands, mostly bottom-up. As for the land, the 21st Century form of wasteland – abandoned and polluted former industrial sites and infrastructure – is once again gaining new attention. Due to its undefined, vague status within the contemporary urban environment, wasteland is once again seen as land of possibility, a common good.

In conclusion, this chapter shows how the way in which society labels certain spaces as *wasted* can be considered questionable, leading to an oversimplification of the complexity of land and territory, without considering its quality as a landscape form. Accepting wasteland as a form of landscape also means accepting the passing of time and the changes it inevitably brings. In its form, shape, structure and materials, wasteland narrates the story of something that has been lost as well as something that has possibly yet to be, in which the past and future coexist in terms of the life cycle of natural environments, people and space. By opening the door to the possibility of seeing wasteland not merely as a blank space but as a bearer of numerous values, and accepting its role in our everyday urban landscape, the potential of the urban territories would be considerably increased.

## Acknowledgment

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# BROWNFIELDS AS CLIMATE COLONIALISM

## Land reuse and development divides

*Shiloh Krupar*

### Introduction

This chapter explores the racial politics of contaminated land reuse. Industrial practices have left widespread contamination impacting land, water, air, human and nonhuman bodies. Dealing with contaminated land has necessitated mechanisms of land conversion that serve as the foundation for development projects. Land conversions involve complex shifts in meanings, investment structures, policy proposals and physical arrangement: from legislation aimed at liability for site remediation, to financial instruments that parlay land redevelopment risk between private and public agencies, to discourses of extraterritorial denial or, conversely, environmental benefit. Due to the uncertain presence of waste, contaminated land is always *potential* in terms of economic viability. This potential for economic productivity is a colonial way of understanding contaminated land within the structural context of racial capitalism. As this chapter will explore, techniques of inventorying contaminated land and collecting environmental data can facilitate and perpetuate racialized property frontiers and economic inequities. The discussion interrelates the role of mapping in the reproduction of the property system and its attendant financial mechanisms, with the ways that development spectacles – from banal box stores to iconic museum architecture – sustain environmental, racial and technopolitical futures of corporate capitalism and empire. Thus, the chapter implicates architecture in the racial politics of contaminated land frontier and the violence that redevelopment projects involve. Property development of contaminated land seeks to produce a surface of seizure, transfer and exchange that allows for the burial, monitoring and/or forgetting of waste and for the imposition of urban and architectural plans.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last few decades, local, state, federal and transnational policies have promoted the redevelopment of contaminated land using voluntary and market-based policy instruments.<sup>2</sup> Brownfields have emerged as a widespread and prominent mechanism of land conversion. *Brownfields* refers to industrial and commercial sites that are, or are perceived to be, physically, chemically or biologically contaminated; they are reused land or property complicated by the (potential) presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant. Such land may stem from former military occupation and its hazardous remains, or from industry's contaminated properties. A comparative view of brownfields reveals that the category references idle, abandoned, underused, derelict, damaged, vacant land or buildings with poor ground conditions, and known

or suspected pollutants.<sup>3</sup> Such a flexible assembly of land characteristics alludes to prohibited sites, quarries and mines, unfinished megaprojects or remaining land parcels with no use. This broader view, then, reveals the ambiguity of the definition: that brownfields may include land with known documented pollutants and hazardous wastes, or to land that is not being used to the potential of its perceived or imagined value. Accordingly, much of the international discussion of brownfields stresses standardization and classification issues, often with the goal of solidifying a global governance practice, rather than questioning the market basis and historical geographies of contamination and colonialism that contribute to contemporary climate crisis.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter takes a different approach and situates brownfields within the broader context of racial capitalism and colonial development imperatives, delineating the power relations of this techno-financial policy field and associated capital planning and mapping. It draws on several US domestic and transnational cases to explore some of the ways brownfields mobilize and entrench territorial logics of climate colonialism. Using this case study-based methodology to generate broader insights and impactful analysis through site-specific investigation, the empirical terrain unfolds in two parts: first, brownfields policy and mapping based in a US genealogy of land dispossession; and second, US military base conversions that claim environmental benefits aligned with redevelopment projects over the last two decades. The chapter tracks brownfields and base conversions across US contexts and the *development divide* of the Global North and South, connecting the diverse contexts of Denver, Colorado and the San Francisco Bay Area, California, with the former US military-occupied Panama Canal Zone (as one prominent example of a repurposed former US-occupied territory). Methodologically the chapter uses critical geographical analysis of racial-capitalist property and political economy, to explore the material organization, discourses, technological applications and effects of contaminated land redevelopment projects.<sup>5</sup> It employs a geopolitical lens domestically and internationally on the racialized operations and impacts of land reuse; it shows how colonial power relations mark these development projects wrought within US empire, and calls for transnational studies of land conversions.<sup>6</sup>

By basing the discussion of brownfields in early US policy context, the first section considers how brownfield projects implement specialized appraisal techniques, including spatial demarcation and accounting produced by Geographic Information Systems (GIS) databases and other forms of data optimized for capital planning. Extending from the historical colonial understanding of land or wilderness as *waste*, because it had not yet been drawn into colonial or national development capitalist relations, contaminated land mapping often catalyzes a violent feedback loop of land repossession as dispossession. Physical contamination of land articulates with racialized colonial notions of *improvement*: devalued land is perceived to be available for development projects, property renewal and new enclosures of surplus value production.<sup>7</sup> This allows for the expanded application of eminent domain to the racialized logics of blight and industrial wasteland, intensifying the everyday dispossession experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.<sup>8</sup> Brownfield policy affirms the goals of environmental and human health enhancement, yet may paradoxically entrench health inequities and environmental hazards stemming from segregation. As a result, vulnerable populations already exposed to contaminated land, pollution and economic insecurity may be further stripped of assets and development opportunities via renewed rounds of climate colonialism.

Turning next to the Pentagon's role as a major contributor to global climate change, the second section addresses brownfield land reuse associated with US military base conversions. The chapter analytically moves from domestic bases to an historically prominent overseas base to reveal racialized inequality linked to military land reuse projects that equivocate the relationship between environmental sacrifice and spectacle. Domestically, base conversions over the return of military land to

public use yet frequently entail massive state-subsidized private redevelopments that offload pollution on marginalized populations. Within conditions of dependency and debt tied to military occupation, former overseas US military bases offer the grounds for spectacular development projects in ways that illuminate the highly racialized and militarized context of brownfield projects in the US: overseas base conversions often take the form of foreign tourism and investment zones that promise trickle-down benefits to local populations. In the context of the Global South, the US military eschews the application of US environmental regulatory structures through claims of extraterritoriality, extending a transnational sacrifice zone of US Defense that exacerbates the kinds of negative effects seen in the domestic context of land reuse projects.<sup>9</sup>

The politics of blight and climate collapse explored in the chapter shows the need for antiracist South-South studies of the inequalities and racial differentiation that mark land conversion in the Global South and the postindustrial austerity conditions of the Global North – from racist eco-gentrification to biodiversity development aesthetics that obscure contamination. The chapter concludes with an alternative extrapolation of brownfields as a heuristic of racial justice, and as an opportunity to develop *decolonial physical geographical studies* of land, for the purposes of galvanizing explicitly antiracist land reuse policy.

### **Brownfields: One-stop shop inventorying and targeting blight**

In the early 1990s in the context of the United States, big city mayors and legislators from urban industrial states pressured the US Congress and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to start a pilot program to redevelop land that was considered to be underutilized and/or damaged in highly desirable urban infill areas.<sup>10</sup> Far cheaper than comparable non-polluted properties, such vacant or depleted lands became sites of potential for rebranding and reuse as new factories, businesses, housing and other job- and tax revenue-creating endeavors. To that end, the EPA launched a pilot Brownfields Program in 1995 to support the agency's land revitalization goals of reusing contaminated properties to jumpstart local economies, preventing sprawl, preserving green space and protecting the environment and health.<sup>11</sup> The program was given statutory footing by the 2002 Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act. This Act provided the EPA pilot with a congressional mandate, clarified liability issues to make redevelopment more attractive and adopted new tools to promote land conversion and increase funding up to a level of US\$250 million per year.<sup>12</sup> Brownfield legislation sought to remove barriers to redevelopment stipulated in existing environmental laws, such as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) – also known as Superfund – and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). In contrast to federal programs that rely predominantly on liability and enforcement to initiate cleanups, brownfield voluntary programs permit site owners and developers to approach the state to identify potentially valuable sites, especially within inner cities.<sup>13</sup> Numerous states, such as New York, Illinois, California, as well as the non-state District of Columbia, have proposed and enacted their own brownfields programs, with different mixes of incentives, regulatory pressure, information provision and public involvement. These programs typically limit cleanup costs and responsibility for adverse consequences of land conversion, while implying there will be job creation in economically distressed areas along with improvements in environmental health.

The central premise of most US brownfield redevelopment programs is that “regulatory flexibility is necessary to remediate contaminated properties and bring them back onto the tax rolls.”<sup>14</sup> Brownfield programs wed environmental risk reduction to economic development, as part of the broader integration of economic priorities in federal government environment and hazardous waste policy. For advocates, brownfield policies “promise to transform distressed sites

across the US from blight to valuable economic and environmental resources.”<sup>15</sup> Brownfields may involve more risk, but potentially offer higher rates of return because of the potential for increased property values and resale prices. They usually require special financing, as well as risk transfer mechanisms that enable developers to limit environmental and financial liability. Brownfield developers can qualify for a range of subsidies, including tax increment financing (TIF), revolving funds (loans), trust funds (tax or fee-based accounts), real estate trusts (private investments), tax credits and deferrals, state grants and so forth. The 1997 Federal Taxpayer Relief Act enables developers to immediately reduce their taxable income by the cost of their eligible cleanup expenses: the law includes “allowances for the costs of environmental cleanup to become fully deductible in the year they are incurred,” thus helping to offset short-term cleanup costs.<sup>16</sup> To receive this incentive, the property earmarked for redevelopment must be located in a census tract area where more than 20% of the population resides below the mean poverty level and where 75% or more of the area’s land is zoned for commercial or industrial use. Because these areas are often located within cities experiencing industrial-manufacturing decline and devaluation, developers “reap the rewards of reusing inexpensive, urban, contaminated waste landscapes and enjoy limited liability and high resale value.”<sup>17</sup>

Many brownfield sites lie in minority communities, where lower-income and poor people have been relocated to devalued land or left underserved for decades. Yet scholars have found “negative correlations between the proportions of local populations that are nonwhite or low-income and the likelihood of receiving an award” for brownfield redevelopment.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the EPA’s explicit commitments to equity with respect to land revitalization, applicants from localities with higher concentrations of poverty and higher numbers of self-identified nonwhites have been historically less likely to receive an EPA Brownfields award.<sup>19</sup> There are major barriers to entry: cities and other planning authorities draw on federal seed funding and state programs to apply advanced appraisal techniques to prospective brownfield site projects, including spatial demarcation in GIS databases and other parcel/property listings. This technological work subsidizes private industry’s acquisition, remediation and adaptive reuse of brownfield sites by optimizing data production for effective capital planning. While sharing data on brownfields has faced opposition due to the stigma and potential liability associated with revealing contamination, brownfields programs have deepened private sector presence through innovative ways of inventorying, mapping and incentivizing land conversions and immunizing the private sector from financial risk and biopolitical consequences. The brownfields framework assembles a new property frontier that aggregates and homogenizes a diverse array of land types under a new label of *underutilized potential* – a category that has existed in many national land systems since an earlier colonial era. This category assembles and communicates land availability and potential via depoliticized technical data on risks and spaces; in doing so, it renders such lands as commensurable and available for redevelopment projects, with the potential to generate a high rate of return due to financial subsidies and liability caps.<sup>20</sup>

For example, the city of Emeryville, formerly home to large manufacturing industries and chemical production, and located in the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay, CA, developed a one-stop-shop online interactive map service of brownfield information. Part of a national brownfields pilot program in the 1990s, the map service included parcel-specific ownership and land use data for each parcel, environmental information such as soil borings and groundwater wells, regulatory agency data and use restrictions, layered on aerial photographs, and street and zoning maps.<sup>21</sup> Emeryville’s successful early application of GIS reveals its ontological power: simulating the positivist epistemologies of cartography and detached view of colonial military operations, GIS is a means for visual persuasion and geographical imagination that streamlines site selection and revaluation via an assembled base map projection of the property grid, to highlight

brownfield parcels as project opportunities through the integration of land use records and property management data. GIS also offers a privileged master view of space as an interactive geo-visual frontier to the private investor/developer, in which parcelized squares, codes and other data stand in for populations and reduce conflict to a matter of geometry and layers of dehumanizing space that facilitate property availability/taking and land repossession.<sup>22</sup> The spatial fetishism of the brownfield enclosure that enables city officials and developers to search for and select delineated properties via a base map and data layers supports the political-economic calculus of space as an exchangeable and interchangeable abstract space on a map and, in doing so, negates any site uses or meanings that may be important to existing communities. In Emeryville, this entailed taking control of a hallowed shellmound of the Ohlone/Lisjan people through eminent domain proceedings that considered the site merely as postindustrial urban wasteland.<sup>23</sup>

Dubbed a poster child for brownfield redevelopment, Emeryville conducted urban renewal of this sacred ground by digging into the massive human-made mound of shells, tools, bowls, animal bones and human burials of the previous millennia mixed with the industrial waste of the previous century, to construct the Bay Street retail and entertainment complex (Figure 28.1). At one time standing more than 30 feet high and 300 feet long, the shellmound had been desecrated by earlier land conversions, including the occupation of the site by an amusement park/dancehall, followed by heavy industry in the 1920s that left vats of toxic chemicals and polluted soils from a defunct pigment plant.<sup>24</sup> Emeryville's redevelopment agency subsequently stripped the ground of toxic dirt and hired a developer to create the Main Street commercial village that is now hailed nationally as a model of urban land reclamation. Annually on Black Friday, shellmound descendants and



Figure 28.1 Bay Street Mall, Emeryville, CA. Developer: Madison Marquette. Photograph by Mike Linksvayer (2011). Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

protestors converge near the intersection of Shellmound Street and Ohlone Way to honor the site's significance and remind shoppers that they are standing on a living cemetery, where reportedly one hundred human burials were taken from the metered parking lot behind Victoria's Secret and several other hundred were reburied on site in an unmarked grave anchoring the mixed-use development (Figure 28.2).<sup>25</sup> While the EPA now acknowledges brownfields may be Tribal lands, it remains unclear how brownfield programs will have the capacity to include land reparations for Native communities: the productivity imperative of the racial-capitalist property system actively organizes and maintains *the social death of land* to the extent that, in Emeryville, a strip mall now contains ancestral burials and toxic waste in an active cycle of repudiation and erasure.<sup>26</sup>

Development authorities praise the potential of GIS to coordinate resources and data publicly across technical, infrastructural and environmental domains. Yet brownfield programs pose significant problems for public participation, intensifying already curtailed participation in governance by minority communities. Brownfield mapping effectively naturalizes and communicates a dominant idea of who/what belongs within particular boundaries, and who may make decisions and determine what is important information on behalf of a community or area. Moreover, heightened reliance on private investments and private property controls to address residual site hazards and contamination means decisions about future land use increasingly rely on proprietary information. Private investors and stakeholders who advocate brownfield redevelopments may seek to curtail or eliminate public input in order to limit liability and facilitate faster turnover of the site, even as citizen groups demand a say.



*Figure 28.2* Emeryville Shellmound Memorial at the Bay Street Mall, Emeryville, CA. Photograph by Smerdis (2015). Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International. No changes made to image; no endorsement implied by use of this work.



In addition to data control, deed restrictions enshrine private ownership of property, leaving the public at risk. The economic calculus of brownfield redevelopment restricts – even obstructs – a knowing and involved public. Brownfield developers receive state-certified liability releases for cleanups in the form of covenants not-to-sue after cleanup, no-further-action agreements and gag order clauses in property sales documents. Freeing developers from any further responsibility for adverse environmental and biopolitical effects, the state agrees it will not require or impose additional cleanup requirements at a later date if criteria are followed and the accepted cleanup standards are implemented. Such standards are tied to a risk-based understanding of anticipated land use. Because different end uses of the site require distinct levels or tiers of remediation standards, land recycling efforts enlist remediation options that range from minor remediation needed for limited human contact, such as future use as a parking lot, to widespread waste removal from the site (*dig and dump* somewhere else) and/or on-site underground waste containment required to support future housing or premium infrastructure. Governance of remaining on-site contamination hinges on what are considered safe levels of risk based on the type of land reuse and ongoing hazards. The process essentially locks communities into a future of permissible contamination tied to a specific site use with little-to-no public discussion. Moreover, local governments often have little incentive to restrict land use and impose controls, few resources and limited financial capacity to monitor or enforce controls and, in many cases, face strong political pressure for unrestricted use of a site.<sup>27</sup>

Affixing contamination on site and treating space as mere coordinates in database entries and GIS-layered renderings, brownfield programs disembody the land market from material conditions of waste, converting waste's stubborn presence/excess into mere financial, legal and technical matters. While brownfield redevelopers strive to limit and contain their liability for responding to lingering contamination and changing land uses, such property redevelopment schemes rely upon an underlying binary of waste/society to establish "the conditions for [the] revival of profitability," predicated on a racialized logic of *cheapening* and improvement.<sup>28</sup> Private developers are invited to invest in brownfields as an opportunity to turn a profit on converting economically 'unproductive' land to 'public use.' The process draws on long-standing practices that repudiated and appropriated environmentally degraded, economically divested and racially marked lands.

Building on the entrenched relationship between waste, race and space in the US, brownfields facilitate and obscure "conjoined processes of racialized property making and property taking," by ambiguating technical inventorying of land and predatory targeting of marginalized communities.<sup>29</sup> Brownfield programs deepen the racialized operations of the private property system by expanding the opportunity for land dispossession to areas of actual or perceived contamination, uncertain environmental hazards and risks to health. The policy framework ultimately expands the potential to seize land based on blight – a long-standing methodology of removing poor people and communities of color from land. Cities are increasingly designating property as blight when the city views that land as unproductive from a tax-revenue perspective.<sup>30</sup> Municipalities and local governments in the US can opportunistically define blight according to their own city or regional planning interests. Scenarios wherein an urban renewal authority or city agency attempts to impose eminent domain on a property in order to attract big box stores have grown rapidly in areas that are experiencing economic decline. The chain home-improvement store Home Depot actively seeks to develop store locations on urban brownfield sites, receiving tax breaks to lay vast parking lots over contaminated/unproductive land from Honolulu, HI and East Palo Alto, CA to Cleveland, OH and Pittsburgh, PA. Walmart similarly pursues brownfield redevelopment: the Denver Urban Renewal Authority granted Walmart US\$10 million in tax subsidies to redevelop the site of the largest Asian grocery store in the city,

along with a strip mall of popular Asian restaurants.<sup>31</sup> The city's eviction and redevelopment plan was only thwarted after a lengthy community petition process.

The power to take private property based on blight – amplified by the ambiguous/elastic definitions of public use found in brownfield programs – “could become the newest tool that local and state governments could use to accelerate the gentrification and displacement that is already affecting low-income black and brown communities.”<sup>32</sup> The symptoms of a neighborhood's systemic neglect can serve as justification for exercising eminent domain based on the argument that it is a public necessity and/or for the public good. Any number of conditions resulting from the nexus of race, waste and space – from sewer floodplain hazards and high quantities of lead in water systems, to asthma rates linked to concentrations of industry and their pollution – might provide the rationale for eminent domain to enhance land productivity to support racial capitalism. Those most vulnerable to climate change, due to racialized patterns of land appropriation and development, are subject to blame and removal, in a vicious cycle of climate colonialism mobilized in the name of environmental sustainability. Brownfield projects that reframe land revitalization in terms of public health and environmental stewardship represent the potential to advance goals of enhancing care for BIPOC communities and rearranging historical geographies of segregation and disinvestment. Yet the continued prioritizing of property values and an environmentally inequitable and extractive logic spurs development projects that target unpropertied vulnerable populations and justifies land grabs under the banner of environmental health. Planting parks, farmer's markets or other environmental amenities as trickle-down benefits to local health-stricken communities can entrench – rather than ameliorate – geographies of waste and race by *greenwashing* displacement.

### **Base conversions: Military ruination and development spectacles of biodiversity**

Waves of US military base closures domestically and overseas reveal an additional range of brownfield land conversions, from mass housing developments to elite global museums, that intensify economic disparities under the auspices of environmental stewardship and national amenities. The redevelopment of former military bases further exemplifies the contradictory mission of brownfield land revitalization projects that claim to protect human health and offer environmental benefits while advancing climate colonialism. The Pentagon is the largest US energy user and polluter (from toxic wastes to greenhouse gas emissions), and one of the single biggest climate-change contributors in the world.<sup>33</sup> In the quest for sustainable perpetuity of war and US control, the Department of Defense (DOD) has been restructuring and realigning its property holdings, leading to the closure and decommissioning of DOD bases (and also Department of Energy/DOE sites) and numerous concessions, including cleanup actions, environmental stewardship and compliance. Liquidating land and shifting resources effectively reduces responsibility and offers important concessions, such as the return of land to the host country and/or the paradoxical ‘greening’ of the US military through bioinventorying species on bases. However, “efforts to create a more efficacious military apparatus and establish consistency between discourses of security/defense and good economic and environmental management do not indicate the erosion of war” or US empire.<sup>34</sup> Rather, US military base conversions often serve as opportunities to consolidate military and market relationships and secure ‘investment climate’ – that is, redevelopment projects that offload ongoing environmental damage and organize massive subsidies to private industry within asymmetrical power relations of debt, property and/or extraterritoriality.

From 1988 to 1995, the US military decommissioned hundreds of military bases during several worldwide Base Realignment and Closures (BRACs).<sup>35</sup> In numerous instances, the Department of Defense (DOD) determined the land to be in excess and sold it to local development authorities. Within the US, these bases became attractive options for city or government divisions at a time when buildable land with infrastructure and entitlements in or near urban areas was in short supply. Some architectural and planning firms have now developed subspecialties in military base reuse and design, while certain housing builders – through subdivisions or joint ventures – increasingly seek large-scale land deals based on a frontier imagination of high returns and measures that mitigate investor risk in exchange for so-called community benefits packages, such as the inclusion of low-income housing. In this case, redevelopment projects target large-scale domestic military bases that were once remote but are now located in suburban/urban fringes next to expanding metropolitan regional populations. Land sequestered for national sacrifice zones becomes the grounds for growth engine fantasies, with any scenery or wildlife reinterpreted as environmental amenities in the service of property valuation. Initial promises and contractual obligations to provide public amenities and low-income housing are the first to be sacrificed to maintain a profitable bottom line, amplifying the need to address brownfields as a deeply historical, spatial and cross-generational racial justice issue.

The Front Range of Colorado provides a model of land conversions that have influenced the decommissioning and reinterpretation of domestic military occupation across the US. As the Pentagon avows its beneficent environmental stewardship, the push to redevelop former military bases along the Rocky Mountain Front Range intensifies the racialized regional pattern of Denver's suburbs and the intimate proximity between environmental hazards and racialized bodies. The area shows the aligning of nature preservation with long-standing support for military enclosures that now sport large housing redevelopment projects and obscure environmental justice issues. The Rocky Mountain Arsenal, located north of Denver near the economically and racially diverse Commerce City, hosts affordable housing subdivisions. Large housing projects about the northern edge of the former chemical weapons production facility, while the US Fish and Wildlife Service administers the majority of the arsenal land as part of the national wildlife refuge system. The internal former industrial area could not be remediated for safe reuse except as a nature refuge, which limits human contact with the environment. The arsenal wildlife refuge now offers charismatic species like the bald eagle and the reintroduced bison as local amenities that upgrade property values, even as drinking water must be trucked in and delivered due to groundwater and aquifer contamination. Under the same wildlife refuge administrative umbrella, the former Rocky Flats plutonium production facility northwest of Denver now serves as a wildlife refuge with housing developments encroaching upon the property line of the notoriously controversial plant. Candelas and other housing subdivisions have pioneered waiver forms that homebuyers must sign indicating they are aware of the site's 'nuclear energy' history.<sup>36</sup> Residents and activists allege the developers have provided little-to-no resources on the area's nuclear weapons production, ongoing and uncertain radionuclide contamination of air, water and ground or awareness of nonhuman hot spots, such as local mule deer, who have tested positive for plutonium and americium.<sup>37</sup>

Internationally, US base conversions present equally formidable redevelopment opportunities and colonial dangers to host countries that regain control of the land. Cleanup of residual contamination from overseas military activity typically follows a global color line, and the US offsets remediation cost and scope by emphasizing the so-called 'benefits' brought by US military presence and by leveraging ongoing relations of dependency and debt. The Pentagon has frequently used the extraterritorial location of overseas bases as reason to avoid cleanup – as a license to pollute within unequal power relations – and it has denied responsibility by

deferring to military base agreements that made no explicit provision for compliance with any environmental standards or for cleanup.<sup>38</sup> Even when the DOD has conceded it is responsible for environmental contamination, it has directed resources earmarked for overseas base cleanup predominantly to Europe.<sup>39</sup> The DOD has devoted much less attention and resources to base remediation in developing nations that rely on US assistance and whose relations of dependency and inequality with the US make detection and remediation of military hazards less possible both in terms of geopolitical situation and technological capacity. Moreover, DOD policy for overseas environmental compliance and cleanup has prioritized cost-saving measures that weigh environmental claims against the 'residual value' and 'advantages' that US military occupation supposedly brought.<sup>40</sup> Even as social movements and revolution have expelled the US military from these occupied sites, the trade and investment deal inducements that bases organized to maintain US political and economic domination have set an uneven development pattern reliant on attracting international businesses and tourists regardless of whether any land remediation has taken place.<sup>41</sup>

In one particularly illustrative case, military brownfield redevelopment bio-politically arranges a spectacle of environmental amenities to raise international recognition and obscure the colonial legacies of US military ruination. Panama's redevelopment of the formerly American-occupied zone concentrated around the Panama Canal converts the country's biodiversity into development aesthetics, supposedly buffered by historical US military conservation efforts, within unequal relations of debt and reliance on foreign investment. Established by the 1903 Canal Treaty as a US colony in the heart of Panama, the Panama Canal Zone was a strip of land and water 50 miles long and 10 miles wide claimed by the US to protect transisthmian transport and interoceanic travel in perpetuity for the world's sake (as the US deemed Panamanians incapable of this).<sup>42</sup> The canal connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, so ships can cut across Panama rather than travel all the way around the southern tip of South America. The US military sought to build, maintain and defend the interoceanic waterway and transform the Canal Zone into a laboratory that would "demonstrate how 'real' civilization could be established in the midst of the terrible tropical 'jungle.'"<sup>43</sup> Stratifying space and claiming racial superiority as the basis of US entitlement to environmentally and socially destructive practices, the US military engaged in canal defense training and chemical weapons testing from around 1923 until 1968.<sup>44</sup> Upon its eviction from Panama in 1999, the US military had only cleaned up around 407 out of 37,000 acres and left more than 100,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance – despite a Canal treaty provision for removing such dangers.<sup>45</sup> The DOD contended that cleanup would ruin the rain forest and deteriorate the ecology for endangered species.<sup>46</sup> This claim followed from the DOD's integration of conservation programs into its operations, including a biological survey of flora and fauna that found myriad plant and animal species protected by Panamanian law while ignoring remaining toxics and dangers on US military land – an environmental audit the DOD used as a sign of its environmental stewardship.<sup>47</sup> National politicians and elites shied from public discussion of the environmental problems and uncertain liabilities that might scare away investors seeking concessions to redevelop the former military areas. Instead, Panama would draft its territorial biodiversity into elite development visions.

The transfer of the Canal Zone to Panama meant the area would now be subject to the forces of the national and international market, following Panama's growing economic dependence on foreign capital and trade, which had led to one of the highest foreign debts per capita in the region.<sup>48</sup> Redevelopment plans for the land on both sides of the canal targeted the Amador Causeway – an area outside of Panama City where the US Army had been stationed to protect the Pacific southern end of the Panama Canal at Panama Bay – to anchor an international tourism industry, with Panama sinking millions into new infrastructure to service a tourist

complex.<sup>49</sup> With the opening of the US\$89 million-dollar Guggenheim Bilbao in Spain in 1997 as part of a revitalization effort, Panama joined an international crowd of states seeking to replicate the “Bilbao effect” with high-visibility expensive cultural buildings that would jumpstart the economy and announce arrival on the world stage. *Starchitect* Frank Gehry was commissioned to build the Biodiversity Museum (Biomuseo) – dedicated to the geological and ecological story of Panama – breaking ground on his first project in Latin America with a budget of US\$60 million (Figure 28.3).<sup>50</sup> After 15 years of development, 10 years of construction and countless project delays, the museum opened to the public in 2014 at US\$40 million over budget. The Biomuseo represents an investment by Panama that “is the equivalent of the US building 63 Getty Centers, all at once”; the US\$3k per square-foot edifice blends architecture, landscape and exhibitions into a synthetic speculative utopia that blurs museum with national biodiversity singularity, overlooking environmental fallout from the former American base for a horizon of favorable business climate.<sup>51</sup>

The Biomuseo’s technicolor multi-panel roof ensures visibility from the distant banks of the canal, drawing visitors to an open central atrium with 360-degree views of hulking cargo ships headed to the Mira Flores Locks, the causeway as it narrows to meet the Pacific Ocean, and a panorama of the glassy Bay of Panama limning Panama City.<sup>52</sup> With eight galleries and over 43,000 square feet of exhibition space, the Smithsonian-affiliated museum directs visitors through a narrative of Panama’s genetic, ecological and biological bounty, including a “Panamarama” cinematic cube that audiovisually immerses visitors in Panama’s biodiversity, and an elaborate tableau of the cross-migration and biotic interchange that took place once the isthmus of Panama rose to create a land bridge between North and South America around three million years ago.<sup>53</sup> The spectacular deracination and mobilization of materials to build the Biomuseo and its native menagerie assert techno-aesthetic confidence in novel architecture and biodiversity edutainment as development engines (Figure 28.4). The project treats the grounds of US military remains as a platform to stage a spectacle of biodiversity protection as a globalizing pedagogical project,



Figure 28.3 Biomuseo canopy, Panama City, Panama. Architect: Frank O. Gehry. Photograph by F. Delventhal (2017). Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic. No changes made to image; no endorsement implied by use of this work



Figure 28.4 Construction of the Biomuseo from the viewpoint of la Plaza de Francia. Architect: Frank O. Gehry. Photograph by Ayaita (2013). Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported. No changes made to image; no endorsement implied by use of this work.

space between highlighted words

obscuring the collateral damages of US military environmental colonialism and the ongoing toxic debt of canal operations to support international maritime commerce and trade.

The uncertain border and nature of this US military brownfield conversion makes the material geography of the former sacrifice zone both an asset and a liability: in December 2000, the Panamanian Society of Architects warned that the site chosen to build a second bridge across the canal was at risk from unexploded ordnance left by the DOD. The canal zone's extraterritorial enterprise of neoliberal transport and trade seeks to externalize obstacles to profit but is continually threatened by the US military's ruinous leavings. Merging special economic zones with tourist compounds and knowledge hubs, the area promises trickle-down benefits from the enclave to Panamanians and the domestic economy. However, even as the Biomuseo projects an image of Panamanian development through global biodiversity, the canal zone today maintains a relationship of debt and dependency with the US and services the interests of the international shipping industry and tourism over protecting Panama's tropical environment and marginalized populations. The 'favorable business climate' incentives of this transnational racially stratified zone produces spillover effects of pollution, displacement and disaster that collapse the scale of and distinction between *brownfields as development versus sacrifice zones*. Proposals to flood land and supply water for the continual expansion of the canal locks now face the negative effects of the global trade infrastructure's own making due to climate change: the canal is running low on water.<sup>54</sup> Rainfall shortages have forced canal operations to recirculate water through the basins, a solution that is not only technologically challenging in terms of northbound and southbound ships entering locks together, but also threatens to increase the salinity of Gatun Lake, which is a major freshwater source for Panamanians.<sup>55</sup> In this endgame of climate colonialism,

the logistics of conserving water for canal operations to sustain global trade clashes with that of maintaining water quality at a standard acceptable for human consumption.

### Conclusion: Decolonial brownfields heuristic

This chapter has explored the politics of land reuse in US brownfields and military base conversions and their forms of technopolitical and biopolitical–environmental violence. Case studies examined blight designation to gentrify inner city areas in the name of environmental health or more productive use; and military base conversions that promise housing and/or premium infrastructure but that obscure contamination and put vulnerable communities at risk. Brownfield programs create a framework for land reuse “investment, resignification, and value formation” that may support community-driven justice efforts or aspirational national development projects but, more frequently, (re)produce inequitable living conditions, unequal social formations, land dispossession and occupation.<sup>56</sup>

Land reuse is not neutral. Brownfield programs facilitate site conversions and cleanup remedies that minimize investor liability and the collateral damage of US military activity; they leverage environmental, financial and geopolitical liabilities to galvanize surplus value production, through property transfers that maintain racial difference and often ensure that waste remains.<sup>57</sup> The brownfields framework, however, can also serve as a heuristic for exploring “historical and contemporary articulations of race and toxic waste” in land redevelopment.<sup>58</sup> Brownfields are inseparable from issues of social inequality, racial discrimination and uneven development manifested in adverse land use decisions. By implementing brownfields as a heuristic device, we can critically reflect on the racialized social production of property, its transfer and the ways that notions of productivity, blight, improvement, public health, environmental sustainability and national development may intensify the racial disparities of land use, and unwisely, unjustly transfer risk to future generations.

Scholars have warned that brownfield programs risk further entrenching “environmental apartheid” by implementing separate and unequal environmental standards across regions.<sup>59</sup> Grassroots activists and national environmental organizations have both argued that “differential cleanup standards at brownfield sites could lead to a dangerous double standard and to a concentration of redeveloped sites ... where contamination has not been removed but rather contained on site” to buffer life elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> There is a need for transnational research on the racial inequality and waste politics attendant to land conversions, from renewed forms of racial segregation through eco-gentrification or hospital hubs that supposedly remedy blight, to tourism development aesthetics that project biodiversity to global audiences rather than demand cleanup and reparations. This wider-scale view reveals the urgency of addressing *climate colonialism* in land conversions within intersecting frames of racial capitalism and US imperialism. How do decisions about cleanup and development at any given site shift “costs and benefits of economic revitalization and environmental remediation across space to other jurisdictions and across time to future generations”?<sup>61</sup>

A critical brownfield heuristic focused on waste and race relations transnationally would support *decolonial physical geographical studies* of land reuse. This would entail empirical documentation of the materiality of the ground/soil and the entanglement of environmental sacrifice and spectacle across scales of interaction manifesting in climate change. Architects can play a critical role in such decolonial land reuse considerations by refusing to perpetuate modernist assumptions about waste or territory or the climate that maintain the illusion of a border between contamination and social life upon which capitalism and the revival of profitability depends. Counteracting the social death of land, architectural studies would

turn to the soil: particular futures are embedded in the soil composition and end use of land remediation projects and necessitate careful attention to the materiality and physical characteristics of brownfields.<sup>62</sup> These facts on the ground are part of relationships between places and geographies of race, and thus wastes *in situ* (on site) can be investigated as deposits of racial histories and geographies of inequality that extend atmospherically. Brownfield projects typically hide toxic foundations and material hazards from view via a fabricated geology and the creation of a transferable surface, annulling linkages between a particular site's material history and everyday lives, health, ecology and geopolitics.<sup>63</sup> In response, a *decolonial physical geography of brownfields* would combine histories and theories of race/racism and "critical attention to power relations with deep knowledge of biophysical science or technology in the service of social and environmental transformation."<sup>64</sup>

Drawing from sciences, social sciences and humanities, such a transdisciplinary collaborative method would analyze the treatment of the soil as free disposal and waste container in terms of *sedimented* power relations that allow for value creation through racialized property financialization and transfer. This would build awareness of the legacies of racist land policies – settler-colonial seizure, eviction, blight removal, redlining, predatory mortgages, highway constructions, pollution, urban renewal, business opportunity zones and so forth – and their racially disparate harmful effects on bodies, lands and futures. In doing so, a *decolonial brownfields heuristic* would galvanize explicitly antiracist policy and land reuse that would support projects to design reclamation and reparations into end uses, cleanup and stewardship, and encourage alternative versions of sustainability and more equitable landscapes and modes of living that transform waste–race relations. This requires upending the settler-colonial maps, geopolitical divisions and silences about race that often haunt architecture and its antipathy to waste, to examine what W.E.B. Du Bois referred to as a "global color line" of climate colonialism across the development divide.<sup>65</sup>

## Notes

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- 7 Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*.
- 8 BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. With the entire property system built on stolen native land, this violent land dispossession animates a *brownfield frontier* (rural and urban) of renewed rounds of removal and erasure of BIPOC inhabitants, amplifying the need to address brownfields as a deeply historical, spatial, and cross-generational racial justice issue. See: Alan Berger, *Drosscape: Wasting Land in Urban America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 74.
- 9 Catherine Lutz, "Introduction: Bases, Empire, and Global Response," in *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*, ed. Catherine Lutz (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1–44.
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- 11 Matthew Dull and Kris Wernstedt, "Land Recycling, Community Revitalization, and Distributive Politics: An Analysis of EPA Brownfields Program Support," *The Policy Studies Journal* 38, no. 1 (2010): 120.
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- 14 Wernstedt and Hersh, "'Through a Lens Darkly,'" 157; Dull and Wernstedt, "Land Recycling," 136.
- 15 Dull and Wernstedt, "Land Recycling," 120.
- 16 Berger, *Drosscape*, 70.
- 17 Berger, *Drosscape*, 74.
- 18 Dull and Wernstedt, "Land Recycling," 119.
- 19 Dull and Wernstedt, "Land Recycling," 134.
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- 40 Lindsay-Poland, *Emperors in the Jungle*, 144.
- 41 Lutz, "Introduction," 33.
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- 47 Lindsay-Poland, *Emperors in the Jungle*, 149.
- 48 This is due to the Latin American debt crisis, the US blockade and invasion and a series of structural adjustment measures.
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- 57 Liboiron, Tironi, and Calvillo, "Toxic Politics"; Dillon, "Race, Waste, and Space."
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# THE BOMB, THE CIRCLE AND THE DRAWING UNDONE

*Endriana Audisho and Francesca Hughes*

Nothing tests the supremacy of a map more effectively than the failed search for an object once registered, and then lost, in its domain. In order to understand the disruptive agency of *things-that-get-lost*, it is necessary first to understand how the very idea of the search, its temporal and geometric logics and the always political necessity of their success is located deep in the defensive architecture of any map, or indeed any drawing whose job it is to *keep-things-in-place*, not least the construction drawing. The search that fails can then be understood to be what it is: the defeat of this always corrective endeavor, space outwitting the domination by representation that is all measure.

One of the more extraordinary productions of Pax Americana was the development of real-time drawing in the ‘defending of every place’ by its alter ego, the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> The new state of permanent threat meant that, with the end of any ‘downtime,’ ‘every place’ had to be defended ‘all of the time.’ Like weather forecasting, this task is primarily representational – how to draw every-place-all-of-the-time so that one can watch (and ultimately predict for) every-place-all-of-the-time. In order to construct this four-dimensional, graphic panopticon, Whirlwind I was turned, in 1949, from the task of advancing computation faster than the weather (Lewis Fry Richardson and John von Neumann’s dream) to advancing computation faster than an incoming nuclear air attack.<sup>2</sup> Weather and war had always been inseparable although weather had only ever been a brief detour in computation’s convergence with war. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler mapped this construed inevitability via the story of computation’s **hardware: ACE** had been used for calculations regarding shells, bombs, rockets and guided missiles; ENIAC had similarly calculated the trajectories of shells for differing wind and air resistance values; EDVAC had solved three dimensional aerodynamic and shock wave problems; BINAC had worked for the US Air Force; ATLAS, on cryptanalysis; and MANIAC, though it never made it, was to have been used to optimize shock waves from the H-bomb.<sup>3</sup> ‘Weather,’ it seems, was all along simply a euphemism for real-time analysis. As Kittler succinctly formulated, not only is all war prosecuted via a binary (two party) zero sum game (you win/you lose), but also all war is conducted in an eternal present – thus, the only time that counts in war happens to also be only the time that counts in the computer.<sup>4</sup>

Backed with the unlimited resources of fear in the face of potential nuclear attack, Whirlwind I in the Lincoln Laboratory, where it had already been used in flight simulation for pilot training, was put to work on the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE). While never producing a militarily effective system, it did produce the first networked and predictive drawing as it



Figure 29.1 Left: Operators viewing a real-time drawing in a SAGE Subsector Command Post ‘blue room.’ US federal government – public domain. Right: The ‘big board’ in Kenneth Adam’s set design for Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 *Dr Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Frame enlargement from *Dr Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, Stanley Kubrick, 1964, 102 mins.

harnessed the computer to “constantly calculate and re-calculate the position, course and speed of all aircraft seen by our radars and continuously presents this information on scopes.”<sup>5</sup> It also produced a vast metaphoric dome of paranoia and the hermetic architecture of its control. SAGE’s network was made up of a constellation of direction centers dotted across the US whose computers were fed by information on every scheduled flight across American and Canadian borders and live data from radar units, Texas Towers, picket ships, early warning aircraft, ground observer corps and, of course, weather stations, in order to continuously survey the skies for suspicious behavior that might indicate hostile air attack. The narrating voice of one of the many IBM and USAF propaganda films made at the time makes clear that the gaze of this constantly recalculating drawing on the ‘scopes’ is ultimately corrective: “Now the computer can draw a picture of what is *supposed* to be in the sky at any moment. It continually compares this expected picture with the real picture as seen by radar”<sup>6</sup> (Figure 29.1). Not only was this picture-making exhaustive in its parallel processing of the expected and the real – “Every instrument in this room is constantly monitoring, testing, pulse-taking, controlling” – there was a further parallel continuum to its construction. The master computer was doubled by a slave computer:

It is really two computers but only one is operating the system, the other, with the same vast memory, performs as a slave, checking calculations and results. Ready to take over in a matter of seconds should the master computer fail.<sup>7</sup>

Like a pincer grip, the master/slave double vision misses nothing. Its parallel visual and temporal order is inscribed in the strange symmetry of the plans of the command centers (two identical wings, one for the master, one the slave) as if the construction of the drawing determined the very architecture that houses its production.<sup>8</sup>

The computed and real-time drawing, being in possession of memory, can also see into the future:

In case of enemy or attack, not only can a clear picture of the changing air situation be displayed on the scope but if the airman wishes to see how things got that way, the

scope can recall any previous phase of the situation from the computer's memory. By memorizing the past, SAGE can project into the future.<sup>9</sup>

This newly constituted drawing is the loop of induction that underwrites all prediction. But drawings have stored memory before.<sup>10</sup> The radical augmentation in this drawing is its memory retrieval speed, indeed its embodiment of speed itself as: "What is the most precious commodity that electronics defense wins us? Time. Long before the bomber reaches our defense perimeter, the computer's memory will identify it as friendly, but if a flight of planes are identified as hostile, then in a matter of minutes," the camera cuts to fighter pilots running to their jets to intercept the attack, adding after a pregnant pause, "time is everything (sic)."<sup>11</sup>

Near to real-time processing speed suddenly renders the present as the space in which past predictions are confirmed (the supposed-to-be against the real) and future predictions are made. The net effect of this looping construction is that it is, paradoxically, precisely via its eclipsing of the present that the eternal present of real-time processing becomes established. There is no time in computers, no clocks, only counters that count event changes.<sup>12</sup> This drawing on the console that, as *On Guard* claims, procures "split second presentation as well as split second calculation" seals the relations between the temporal order of no-time with the architecture of war, and that of the nascent digital drawing.<sup>13</sup>

In 'blue rooms,' so named for their blue lighting used to better reveal the image on the console screens, described as "the offspring of the marriage of a television tube and a radar screen," SAGE operators used 'light-guns,' pointing them at any suspicious blips in the live drawing on the screen of all air traffic (Figure 29.2).<sup>14</sup> The trigger of a 'light gun,' when pointed at an offending blip and combined with the pressing of the 'FIRE' button, ultimately instructs the removal of incoming Soviet atomic missiles from the Cold War's real and virtual skies, thus correcting the 'picture' back to what it should be:

ODD new arrangement, pls place quote directly below, and finish the paragraph. Then add Fig 29.2 This is to be followed by a paragraph that starts with "Apart from the production of an..."



Figure 29.2 Left: Operator using a SAGE light gun to make 'corrections' to US airspace. Courtesy of the Computer History Museum. Right: Operator using a Sketchpad: A Man Machine Graphic Communications System light-pen to make corrections to an architectural drawing. Courtesy of the Computer History Museum.

The officer fires a light gun at the target blip. This tells the computer to track the object. At the launching site a long range Bomarc missile is ready for firing. Now they ask the computer to calculate an intercept point. X marks the spot where the Bomarc missile would meet the moving target if fired immediately. The officer in charge makes the final decision. FIRE! At the moment of launching, the Bomarc missile receives instructions from the IBM computer. As the missile screens to our target, radar keeps on tracking. With electronic control, the computer automatically adjusts the missile to meet any change in the target flight. There is no escape.<sup>15</sup>

Programmer Les Earnest, who worked on SAGE, later, and not without irony, concluded: “[i]t was basically a ‘peacetime’ defense system.”<sup>16</sup> The lack of any clear performance specifications for a functioning air-defense system had endlessly plagued the smooth joining up of hardware and software developments, not to mention the interface between the many corporations assembled for the task.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately the lack of any real requirement for SAGE to be able to meet a manned-bomber threat was confirmed by the Soviet Union never bothering to mirror its centralized architecture.<sup>18</sup> A year or two after it was completed, SAGE was rendered obsolete by the Soviets’ invention of intercontinental ballistic and submarine launched missiles.

Apart from the production of an extraordinary Cold War architecture of fear, and a rehearsal for the virtual theaters of remotely conducted war to come, at an instrumental level, SAGE understood the real task at hand as early as 1949: the production of a computed drawing that is never finished, that is eternally mapping the skies in real time. As chair of the Air Defense Engineering Committee later reflected, “The computations were straightforward enough ... *It was doing all the world in real time that was impossible.*”<sup>19</sup> The northern edge of ‘all-the-world’ was defined by an integrated palisade of 63 listening posts (radar and communication detection equipment sheltered under Buckminster Fuller fiberglass geodesic domes or ‘radomes’) which made up the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line along the 69th parallel. This was backed up to the south by the Mid-Canada Line, and south of that again, by the Pinetree Line on the Canadian border. Together they fed the system a picture of radar sites and sector boundaries that stretched to the north as far as the Arctic Ocean, to the south into the Gulf of Mexico, to the East and West into the international waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, respectively. As a virtual monument to the Cold War’s “anxiety of annihilation in the midst of plenty,” SAGE mirrors the physical monuments of Cheyenne Mountain’s giant bunker for the North American Aerospace Defense Command Center.<sup>20</sup> NORAD’s cavernous interior and SAGE’s giant drawing converge in Kenneth Adam’s design for Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 *Dr Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Figure 29.1).<sup>21</sup> Central to the film and its plot is the drawing on the ‘big board,’ “we mustn’t let them get the big board!” This also semi-fictional, underground space, inspired by some of the largest interior volumes in the world, holds the largest drawing in the world of the largest expanse of sky and sea in the world.<sup>22</sup> Not only was this conjuring a drawing of a world that is able to automatically and spatially correct its subjects, including the potential to literally delete erroneous items from the realm it represents, this drawing guarantees, for the first time, a world in which nothing ever gets lost. In order to produce such a drawing, SAGE effectively invented everything needed for the next chapter in computation: magnetic core memory, the video displays of the scopes, multiprocessing, networks (automated data exchange between computers), the first effective algebraic computer language, simulation techniques, synchronous parallel logic (digits transmitted simultaneously, rather than serially, through the computer), analogue-to-digital and digital-to-analogue conversation techniques (given the hybridity of this network), digital data transmission over telephone lines and the use of modems, duplexing (our duet of two computers backing each other up), the

vastly accelerated near to real time processing speed of the eternal present, and the bizarrely nostalgic, if not comical, 'light gun.' SAGE also, as Reinhold Martin points out, materialized much of the communications infrastructure upon whose existence Norbert Wiener's vision of cybernetics eventuality was predicated. Indeed, the relations between Wiener's vision of "defense by communication" and that of SAGE as a networked early warning defense system were complexly reflexive, as Martin points out:

First, it [Wiener's vision] uses many of the same techniques – decentralization, redundancy, information management, feedback – to defend against and regulate the entropic effects of imminent atomic catastrophe that constitute the primary justification for the collaboration of science, industry, and the state embodied in the very idea of the military-industrial complex. But second, in a kind of cybernetic feedback loop, it also uses scientific concepts, developed in the laboratories and testing grounds of the complex, to defend against science itself. The project's dream of communicative transparency maintained by a network of roads, highways, train lines, and telephone wires constitutes a "defense-by-communications" not only against the bomb but against the specialized, incommunicative discursive environment that created it – SAGE, for instance.<sup>23</sup>

The dome and its footprint, the circle, as fundamental geometries of war – think of the rings of destruction around impact points and the reach or range of missiles or arrows, with their nested parabolas – install a recurring spatial logic and figure across the spectrum of the Cold War's military and civilian projects and imaginaries. Thus, SAGE's virtual dome over the US speaks not only to the physical domes of the radomes that mark its perimeter but also to: the encircling ring of 'lifebelt suburbs' (for urban centers to decant to in the event of nuclear attack) in Norbert Wiener's 1950 *Civil Defense Plan for American Atomic Age Cities*; Fuller's project for a *Dome over Manhattan* in 1962, only a year after SAGE was finally complete; and, of course, to that circular lighting ring hovering over that circular table in *Dr Strangelove*.<sup>24</sup> Circles, domes – and the radius of reach they inscribe – were everywhere and everything within this paradigm.

The very next year, 1963, Ivan Sutherland published, in the form of his PhD, his precocious design drafting software, *Sketchpad: A Man Machine Graphical Communication System*, progenitor of CAD and every drawing software since.<sup>25</sup> The program, developed in the same Lincoln Labs as the almost immediately obsolete SAGE, was direct heir to everything it had invented: same scope, same 'FIRE' button (renamed 'ERASE'), same 'light gun' (renamed 'light-pen'), same harnessing of memory to the drawing. Aware that the drawing of the circle was the trickiest thing to design an interface (between a human and a computer) for, Sutherland, under the advice of his supervisor Claude Shannon, had left it until last. His solution when he came to it was of its time: Sutherland installed the reach of the radius (and not the sweep of the circumference) as the only input of the hand-held light-pen in the drawing of a circle. This program is designed to ignore the corporeal gesture of the now even more complex nostalgic 'light-pen.' As Sutherland explains:

to draw a circle we place the light pen where the center is to be and press the button 'circle centre,' leaving behind a centre point. Now, choosing a point on the circle (which fixes the radius) we press the button 'draw' again, this time getting a circle arc whose angular length only is controlled by light pen position. (Figure 29.3)<sup>26</sup>

The circle in Sketchpad is stripped of the sweep of the arm, the erratic trace of the body in the making of its circumference. The once embodied practice of *disegno* (with its synthesizing of body and mind, of the gesture of the hand with thought in the making of a drawing) is finally



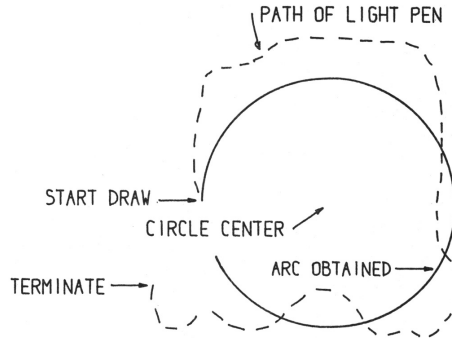


Figure 29.3 Illustration of the drawing of a circle in Sketchpad from Ivan Sutherland's PhD dissertation, *Sketchpad: A Man-Machine Graphical Communications System*, MIT January, 1963. Courtesy of Apollo – University of Cambridge Repository.

and utterly decorporealized.<sup>27</sup> As if the function of reach were written into his programming reflexes, this Cold War circle is all radius.

The logic of the bomb is deep in the digital drawing, from the very start. So too is the not unrelated logic of correction, so neatly cleaved to the bomb in the drawing on SAGE's screens. Sutherland's program went on to invent everything necessary for electronic drafting: the zoom function, the cursor (as cross-hairs, in case the military origins were in any doubt); snapping, as Sutherland's 'pseudo-gravity' and other algorithmic features that would discern intention in order to correct errors before they could even be made (and thus, the future before it arrived), and, crucially – using the light-pen, and pressing the 'ERASE' button – how to delete them.<sup>28</sup> The predictive correction that is the meeting of the supposed-to-be and the real in SAGE becomes, in Sketchpad, the foundations of snapping in all architectural drawing software that follows. As presenter John Fitch in the 1964 demo film explains, *Sketchpad* 'helps' us not to make mistakes through the assumptions of approximation:

I did a thing that I called 'pseudo-gravity,' Sutherland later recounts, which said that around lines or around the intersection between lines that the light pen would pick up light from those lines and then the computer would do a computation saying: Gee, the position of the light pen now is pretty close to this line, I think what the guy wants is to be exactly on this line, and so what would happen is that if you moved the pen near to an existing part or near to an existing line it would jump and be exactly at the right coordinates.<sup>29</sup>

When the light-pen decides the hand is simply being sloppy and is close enough to a line to snap to it, doubt is foreclosed – predictive programming as preemptive correction. This is Sutherland's *coup-de-grace* (decisive finishing act): everything is certain and nothing is misplaced in this omniscient drawing. Just as SAGE redesigned war as a virtual, remote, predictive and "automated process for rational managers,"<sup>30</sup> Sketchpad, in redesigning the architectural drawing as "a model of the design process," effectively redesigned the design process itself; newly virtual, newly remote (the gestural body is gone), newly predictive – it corrects your mistakes before you even make them.<sup>31</sup>

The legacy of the Cold War cathexis of the bomb and the drawing, with their logics of the circle and correction, installed in the productions of SAGE and Sketchpad, surfaced again, some 50 years later, in an extraordinary moment of failure: in a drawing of the world from which nothing ever

gets lost, an enormous object got lost. On 8 March 2014, a 67-meter-long Boeing 777-200ER aircraft belonging to Malaysian Airlines (flight MH370) disappeared from the air traffic control screens.<sup>32</sup> The crisis that ensued was, among other things, one of representation: how exactly does a commercial flight disappear from the total surveillance space of the real-time drawing that is the contemporary air traffic control screen? How do things get lost when they are in full view (not to mention contact), every-place-all-of-the-time and in real time? All of a sudden, the supposed-to-be and the real radically split, and the site of this cleavage was the screen/sky drawing – and its union of the virtual and real sky – whose supremacy was so central to SAGE’s legacy. In a peculiar inversion in which the present haunts the past, this loss represented the simultaneous collapse of everything the Cold War had secured half a century earlier and that had been technologically augmented ever since: real-time processing, total virtual control of a remote field, omniscience and memory (digital, and therefore with perfect recall). Conversely, the past came to haunt the present as the new task for the air traffic control shifted from monitoring scheduled traffic into one of searching for unscheduled, alien trajectories, thus returning it to precisely the founding task of SAGE. In so doing, SAGE’s legacy of the search by predictive engineering flipped and became a rear-view mirror as the air traffic systems adopted search by forensic logics.

All forensic practice necessarily begins its inquiry into an event through a double analysis of its recent past and ensuing aftermath: by going back into the deeper past, before the event in question, and then predicting forward to the moment of the event and beyond, it simultaneously looks backward and forward. Within this reverse engineered construction, the site of the event, in this case, the space of the sky and screen, is transformed into a medium in which multiple forms of evidence are subtended in relation to one another, waiting to be collected and assembled into an account.<sup>33</sup> The search by forensic logics into the disappearance of MH370’s aircraft ultimately begins by asking: what trace does something that gets lost leave in the past, present and/or the future?

Although MH370 failed to check in with Ho Chi Minh, Vietnamese controllers reported seeing it cross into their airspace and then abruptly drop off their screens. Both registers representing MH370 on the drawing disappeared: the primary radar, five seconds after it crossed into Vietnamese airspace, and the transponder signal, 37 seconds later.<sup>34</sup> The figure that represented the aircraft on their screens had effectively ‘self-deleted.’ The corrective logics of light gun and light pen, with their ‘x marks the spot’ or ‘cross-hair cursors,’ had no say in the matter. Having exited the drawing, the aircraft rendered itself de-facto outside of the no longer total jurisdiction of representation – with no trace to be found past this point. Whereas SAGE compared the supposed-to-be or desired picture against the unknown-but-real picture of the sky in order to make future predictions, and thus corrections, the absence of a known-real from this drawing of the expected (unlike the missile, they knew the plane was there, but where exactly?) constituted a hole within its makeup. As the aircraft fell out of this all-knowing drawing, all future interest lay in its spatio-temporal repair, but all that could be used in the reconstruction of the event was a series of expected times – the aircraft departed at W, crossed at X, disappeared at Y and was expected to land at Z. Velocity and its radius of fuel exhaustion ranges, both functions of time, became the predictive forensic logics employed to draw the new supposed-to-be and the new real, the location of the fall of MH370, in the repair of the drawing.

Eyal Weizman’s forensic framework assumes that a set of spatial relations between “an event and the object in which traces of that event are registered” is present.<sup>35</sup> But when the object – key protagonist and most critical piece of evidence – to the drawing is absent, these assumptions fail – all historical and methodological agency is also lost. MH370 had effectively installed amnesia in the drawing that possessed perfect recall. Amnesia in turn disrupted its singularity and propagated a multiplication of new potential “presents” or “reals” – expanding and, in turn, further unraveling the constitution of the drawing. The space between the screen/sky and the

screen/sea became a site of serial simulation (in both planimetric and elevational projections) in the process of reconstructing the presumed fall to the ground, and its “truthing.”<sup>36</sup> The initial search area focused on the South China Sea, the space below the intended flight path between Malaysia and Vietnam. However, data from Malaysian military radar revealed that MH370 had deviated and veered southwest over the Malay Peninsula. Although the radar data identified this deviation as the last known point of contact, a point is just that – static and crucially, directionless. The last known point, at the last known moment when the drawing and the real aligned, became the fertile origin of an infinite set of radii of reach – maximum and minimum fuel exhaustion calibrated to potential wind resistance and altitude effects. Each required the deployment of predictive logics to establish which might plug the hole in the picture, whose fundamental singularity was further undone by their very multiplicity. The onerous task of *truth-construction* became a matter of probability, rather than certainty.<sup>37</sup>

Analysis of seven subsequent automated interactions, known as ‘handshakes,’ two between a geostationary Indian Ocean satellite (operated by the International Maritime Satellite Organization, INMARSAT) and the aircraft, and then five between an earth station in Perth and the aircraft, revealed that MH370 continued to fly for an additional six hours after the last verified point. Not unlike Sutherland’s circle drawing program, handshakes only record linear distance from the satellite to an aircraft, with the satellite as the center of the cone, thus establishing a “roughly circular set of possibilities,” seven nested circles of potential locations in time (Figure 29.4). In the emerging new drawing that is the search, the singular, verifiable but directionless point thus becomes the vaguer geometry of an infinite set of equidistant (from the satellite) locations, a circle.<sup>38</sup> Each of the nested circles can then be cropped to a set of nested arcs pairs, symmetrical northern and southern wings, defined by the maximum and minimum velocity limits from the last definitive point. As certainty becomes probability, its logics and aesthetics – the symmetry of the curve of the law of error in its distribution around a central axis of likelihood – is installed in the imaginary of the search.

The final handshake intersected with the seventh circle, establishing two arcs of search, northern and southern that, far from providing an ‘X marks the spot’ type of solution, stretched, as geometry finally met geography, from the border of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to northern Thailand and from Indonesia to the southern Indian Ocean.<sup>39</sup> As INMARSAT’s communication system found itself repurposed into a navigation device in determining the mirroring arcs of search, a whole architecture of representation of space and prediction defined in geometric terms only via the circle and its logics took hold.<sup>40</sup> A decision was made to focus on the southern wing, but for every southern possibility the doubt of a neglected northern counterpart existed.<sup>41</sup> Whereas symmetry in SAGE, inscribed in the master/slave plan of the command center and through this the deep construction of the drawing, had ensured nothing would be missed, the symmetrical north–south loci generated further uncertainty in the search (that would ultimately miss everything) as it doubled the hole in the drawing: what if the search was looking in the wrong half all-of-the-time?

MH370 fell out of the sky/surface/screen drawing into the sea/surface/screen drawing, the ‘blank sheet’ of the southern Indian Ocean, described by the Australian government as “close to nowhere as it is possible to be, but closer to Australia than anywhere else.”<sup>42</sup> The remote and unpatrolled vastness of this colonial blind spot – “out of normal shipping lanes, out of any commercial flight patterns, with few fishing boats, and there are no islands” – also has the most severe weather, is the only place where water can flow around without ever hitting land and is home to some of the deepest and most mountainous ocean floors in the world.<sup>43</sup> With an initial search area of 600,000 km<sup>2</sup> (at 3000 km or six hours flying time southwest of Perth), the line of the southern search arc was endowed with a thickened architecture of doubt and resistance

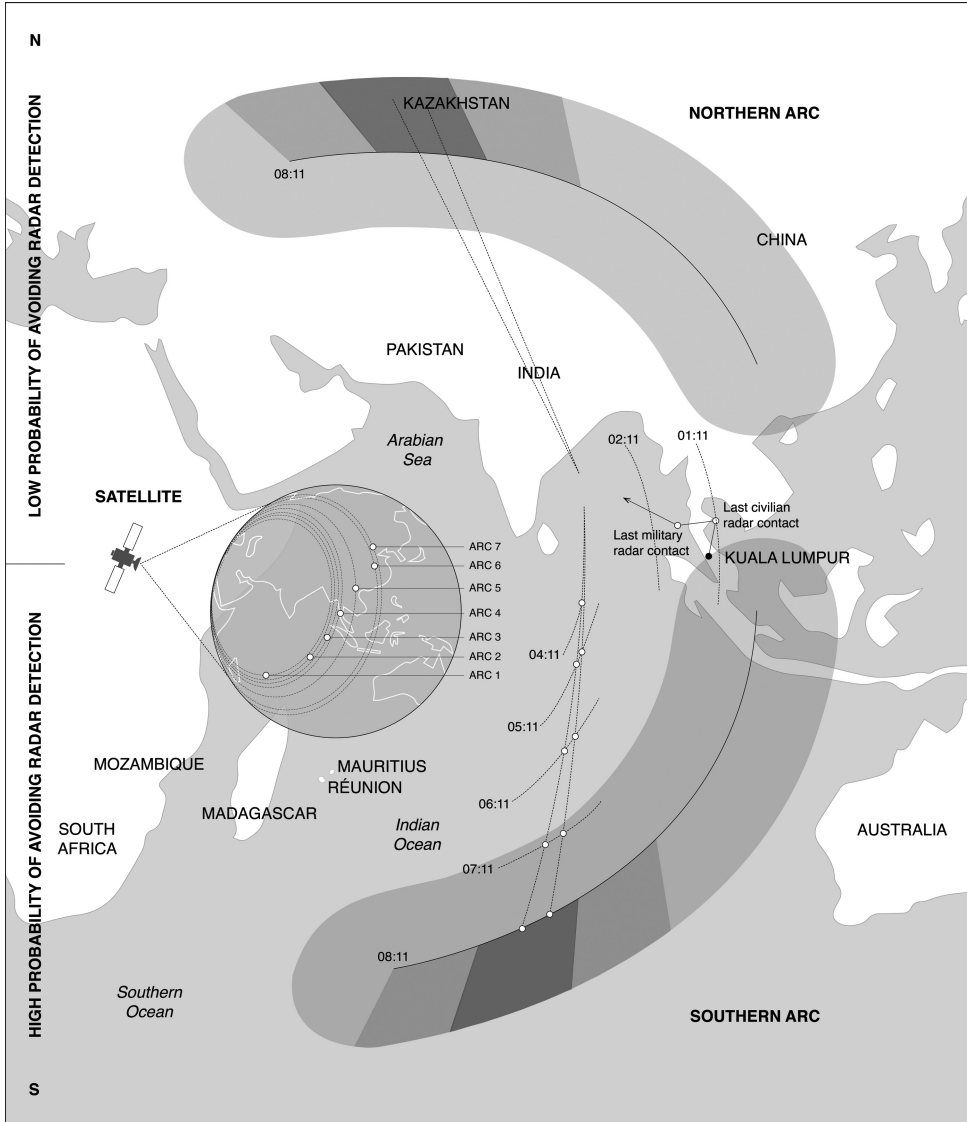


Figure 29.4 Depiction of seven nested ‘handshake’ circles showing the seventh and final interaction between INMARSAT’s geostationary satellite and MH370 – resulting in the north and south arc of search. Drawing by authors.

to representation as abstraction met the physical: a ceiling, the sea’s surface, subject to extreme winds and complex currents; a depth of up to five kilometers under water; a horizontal margin for error of plus or minus a hundred nautical miles to either side; and an unmapped, rugged floor. The site of search constituted a material and energy landscape that defies the measure, or capture, that is any drawing. The erected logic of handshakes and arcs had led the search to precisely the landscape that could not be drawn, that evaded representation, in a tautology that had, in the tradition of SAGE, simultaneously rendered the search, the drawing. At the time, only 10–15% of the world’s oceans had been mapped. This area had not. Plus, this territory

had two grounds, the sea bed for the non-buoyant debris, the sea surface for the buoyant. This search that was drawing was not only on a blank sheet of paper but the paper itself was sliding unpredictably across the table.

The search/drawing that ensued was systematically organized by three phases relating to three 'landscapes': the surface of the sea, the vertical interval that is the depth of the ocean, and the surface of sea bed. Each transformed into an objectified, indexable and browsable territory. The initial surface search, coordinated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), was visual, corporeal and laboriously (almost comically) manual in nature with "very highly trained and skilled observers looking out of the aircraft windows, and looking to see objects."<sup>44</sup> The temperament of the Southern Ocean meant the search area moved daily in response to the weather and the movements of the water. Unlike the surface of the Cold War skies, the surface of SAGE's drawing, that is fixed to its absolute coordinates, the sea/surface of the ocean moves. The surface scoured for floating debris the previous day might drift to the coordinates of today's search and this unpredictability is not helped by the fact that, referencing Weizman's 'trace,' movement on water leaves no trace. Like the waters of Lethe, the surface of the sea constantly forgets everything. In order to install some sense of control to this sliding enterprise, marker buoys were dropped into the search area as reference points to assist drift modeling, dynamic coordinates that would constantly 'correct' (or not) the drawing as time elapsed.<sup>45</sup>

The sea/surface search started on the 18 March 2014 with an area measuring 600,000 km<sup>2</sup> at 3000 km southwest of Perth, was "refined" to 305,000 km<sup>2</sup> at 2600 km southwest of Perth, and then once again reduced to 23,000 km<sup>2</sup> at 500 kms, then split into two areas covering a cumulative 68,500 km<sup>2</sup>, then split again into three areas covering 80,000 km<sup>2</sup> and shifted north, then 2060 kms west of Perth. Revisiting data and estimates of remaining fuel led to yet another shift in the search area, from 1100 kms northeast of the previous area to a new search area 319,000 km<sup>2</sup> at 1850 kms west of Perth.<sup>46</sup> The 21 aircraft and 19 ships from eight nations that took part confirmed that the scale of this enterprise (the investment, the labor, the collaboration of international governments and industries) was clearly military in scale. Despite this, the scale of the subject made a mockery of the method: "although this search area is much smaller than we started with, it nonetheless is a big area when you are looking out the window and trying to see something by eye."<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, as search areas were abandoned (sometimes mid-sweep, distracted by jetsam or new fuel radius calculations) and the search bifurcated, the drawing grew and became vast again, as increased precision, rather than homing in on a target, paradoxically only multiplied them. The Cold War promise (and the co-nascent cybernetic promise too) of more data generating more control was starting to unravel. The drawing acquired a ghostly, propagating, archipelago of over 40 precisely delineated, often overlapping zones, each dated and replete with the inscribed turning circles of search vessels' gaze, each documenting the emptiness of those coordinates of the sea surface, only that day (Figure 29.5). This virtual architecture of search, animated with multiple traces and track lines, across 4.7 million km<sup>2</sup> of ocean found not one object associated with MH370. The surface search was abandoned on 29 April 2014 and efforts turned to the ocean floor.

Led by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) with advice from Geoscience Australia, a bathymetric survey was conducted to produce a detailed map of the depth of the ocean, the second phase and landscape, in order to provide a 'sketch' of the seafloor. This level of resolution would suffice to ensure that the third and last phase of the search, which would deploy underwater search equipment, could navigate efficiently and safely across the complex topography of the sea bed. In a reminder that to search is always also to draw, the side scan and multi-beam sonar equipment were towed behind vessels in the same zig-zagging boustrophedon paths that the surveyors looking out from aircraft windows and boat decks had used, and the same path that any rendering software uses in the production of a drawing or a 3D printer uses

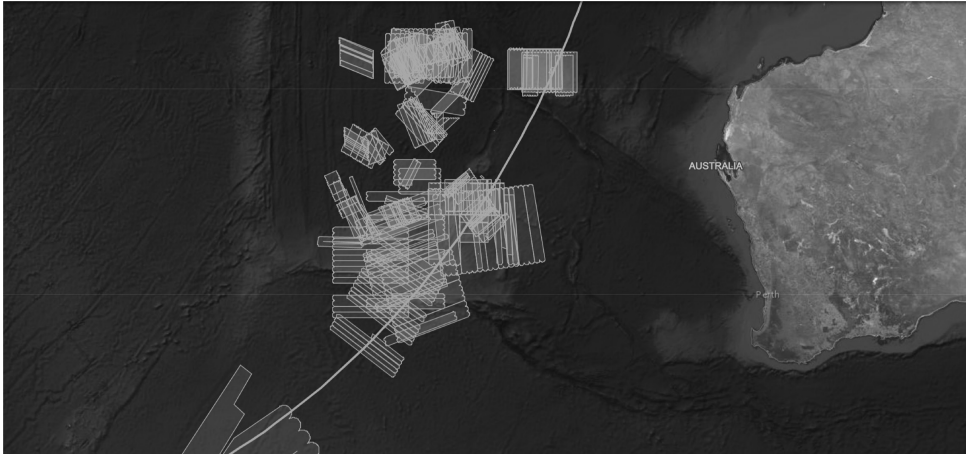


Figure 29.5 The 4.7 million km<sup>2</sup> sea surface search coordinated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in 2014. © Commonwealth of Australia (Geoscience Australia) 2021. This product is released under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

in that of a model. Both acquired data around the clock as they moved across the search fields, always taking care of the turning points to overlap the return line with that of the previous direction of travel, in order to “increase confidence in the data.”<sup>48</sup> Surveyors reviewed the data in real time to flag and “correct” any anomalies which were then explored in greater detail by the Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs). Traveling approximately 100 meters above the seafloor and equipped with multi-beam echo sounders as well as side scan sonar and synthetic aperture sonar, the AUVs gathered data up to one kilometer on either side of their path, ensuring that any anomalies or gaps from the previous search were surveyed and captured. After three years of meticulous scanning and scouring of over 850,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the search of the seafloor ended.

As with the sea/surface drawing, the increased precision of multiple attendant scanning technologies whose data sets fed the feedback loops, rather than reducing the locus of search, only proliferated new territories of disappointment. Daily maps of the ocean floor search appear arbitrary, as new intelligence interrupted and fragmented the previous day’s logic, and areas are suddenly abandoned, mid-sweep, like a render frozen, and the search picked up elsewhere. Plagued with doubt, they constitute an exquisite portrait of very precisely and systematically looking in the wrong place. They also portray the legacy of the Cold War confidence in representation and its control of space and time strangely, and finally, undone. If to search is to draw, to fail to find, to lose, is to somehow *undraw*. To undo drawing itself. The post-Cold War world, shrunk by the first Blue Marble, and then by the later composite iterations from the satellite’s newly omniscient gaze, and then again by our daily browsing through Google Earth, became, if only momentarily, boundless again, retrieving its pre-SAGE size, as all strategies of finding failed.<sup>49</sup> As the search area expanded both horizontally and vertically over time, bringing the ocean’s vastness into “sharp relief,” the supremacy of the drawing-that-is-searching was ultimately disarmed.<sup>50</sup>

In 2015, the object that had self-deleted, that had exited the drawing, appeared on the outside, as an extensive list of fragments far from the search area: a flaperon in Saint Andrew, Reunion Island, on 29 July 2015; a flap-track fairing segment in Xai Xia, Mozambique, on 27 December 2015; a horizontal stabilizer in Vilankulo, Mozambique, on 28 February 2016; an engine cowling segment in Mossel Bay, South Africa, identified through matching the stenciling of the Rolls-Royce logo,

on 21 March 2016; and a cabin interior closet door, in Rodrigues Island, Mauritius, 30 March 2016. In a turn from trust in geometry to that in big data, and from predictive calculation to the counting that is analogue simulation, a fleet of replica flaperons were built and dropped into the field test area of Storm Bay, Tasmania, each paired with an oceanographic buoy. Observing that the flaperons drifted faster than the buoys and using the accumulated data from Indian Ocean drift buoys from over the past 20 years, a digital drift model was constructed to simulate the speed at which a Boeing flaperon would transverse the Indian Ocean.

Sign and signifier meet, not on the surface of the drawing this time, but on the surface of the sea as an actual Boeing 777 flaperon is acquired and lowered into the water next to its built replica (Figure 29.6). They float around together for a bit – it is ambiguous where representation, where the drawing, is now in this new equation. Have they (sign and signifier) escaped its logics altogether? The real one moves faster than its replica and is observed to veer in its drifting always about 20 degrees to the left, pointing it in the direction of Reunion Island from the southern seventh arc.<sup>51</sup> From the ruins of representation's failure, something is retrieved, is vindicated. Or is it? Is this model simply another case of inference-to-best-explanation rather than to-most-likely cause that plagues so much scientific practice?<sup>52</sup> (No model was ever made of jetsam crossing the ocean from the neglected northern seventh arc, nor indeed the rest of the circumference). The catastrophe, the 239 missing bodies had long since left the calculations and models, whose data pile-up only reified their futility. As Jess Bier reminds us, "No level of accuracy, resolution, or detail will ever be sufficient to form one overall, authoritative picture ... More and better data will never make either maps or theory behave, nor fully tame their troublesome behavior."<sup>53</sup> The dome that was SAGE, with its logics of the Cold War circle, was only ever simply the latest iteration of the hermetic ecology, the closed system that is all



*Figure 29.6* Actual and replica flaperons dropped into the field test area of Storm Bay, Tasmania, to assist in drift modeling simulations. Courtesy of Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

representation. What happens to one drawing happens to all drawings. Thus the failure of one drawing, of the contract between the supremacy of representation and the data that builds it, is the failure of all drawings. The retrieved fragments and their multiple simulacra, bobbing in the Southern Ocean, like the ghostly search tracks in the Indian, constitute not simply an aircraft but also the enduring legacy of a whole Cold War digital architecture of representation of space, its measure and prediction, in ruin. However, this remote part of the world now has “the most detailed underwater map ever created.”<sup>54</sup>

## Notes

- 1 See “‘We Defend Every Place’: Building the Cold War World” in George E. Valley in Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 1–41.
- 2 In 1922 Lewis Fry Richardson published, in what remains an extraordinarily prescient projection, his *Weather Prediction by Numerical Process*. He describes an enormous wraparound screen on which is painted a map of the world like an inside-out globe with the display surface to the interior. Behind the screen, an array of (human) computers are busy running algorithms, calculating future weather which is telephoned to radio transmitting stations. In a prefiguration of air traffic control logics, a “conductor” positioned at the center of the globe shines a rosy beam of light on any country getting too far ahead in their predictions and a blue on any falling behind. Twenty-odd years later, but in an altogether different technological paradigm, John Von Neumann, as he moved from atomic bombs to weather forecasting, famously promised “The part that is stable we are going to predict. And the part that is unstable we are going to control.” See George Dyson, *Turing’s Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe* (London: Penguin Press, 2013), 154.
- 3 See Friedrich A. Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*, trans. Erik Butler (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2004).
- 4 Conversely, all war has always been conducted in the temporal order of computation. See Kittler, *The Truth of the Technological World: Essays on the Genealogy of Presence*.
- 5 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, “In Your Defense: The SAGE System.” 1960. Computer History Museum archives, 23:00, [www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102651595](http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102651595).
- 6 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, “IBM Sage Computer Ad.” 1960. YouTube Video, 2:49. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCCL4INQcFo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCCL4INQcFo). Authors’ emphasis.
- 7 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, Made in cooperation with US DOD, USAF, Boeing Aircraft Co. “On Guard! The Story of SAGE.” 1956. Internet Archive, 12:18, [https://archive.org/details/0772\\_On\\_Guard\\_The\\_Story\\_of\\_SAGE\\_18\\_48\\_05\\_00](https://archive.org/details/0772_On_Guard_The_Story_of_SAGE_18_48_05_00).
- 8 The double vision required its own corrective mechanisms which took the form of an image of a pin-up woman, scripted by 97 punch cards, the first vector image and ostensibly the first human likeness to ever appear on a computer screen – porn and missiles are an old story. The program that displayed the pin-up image was created as a visual proof to test true data flow between the master and slave computers and to ensure no noise was changing the picture as the two computers relayed information to each other. The active machine would transfer the flight information to the second computer. If the transfer happened correctly, the pin-up would display correctly on the monitor. If, on the contrary, there were a problem during the transfer, the technicians would immediately know from the incomplete figure of this digital woman, whose own curvaceous coastline was drawn with the same system used to draw US Cold War borders as vector segments for display on the screen.
- 9 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, “On Guard: The Story of SAGE.” Note how the narration carefully installs in the audience’s imagination the idea of memory and prediction in the computer and indeed the loop of induction – if you can remember, you can predict.
- 10 The *histoire longue durée* of computation necessarily splices with that of the art of memory and the long tradition of drawn mnemonic architectures, and their storage and retrieval circulatory logics, by Giordano Bruno, Giulio Camillo, Robert Fludd and others. All, to varying degrees, were also predictive or generative tools, using the past to predict the future. See Francesca Hughes, *Architectures of Prediction* (Santiago de Chile: ARQ Ediciones, 2019); and Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966).
- 11 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, “On Guard: The Story of SAGE.”



- 12 George Dyson argues that the only remaining distinction between analogue and digital existence really is their differing use of time. See Dyson, *Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe*.
- 13 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, "On Guard: The Story of SAGE."
- 14 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, "On Guard: The Story of SAGE."
- 15 IBM Corporation, Military Products Division, "IBM Sage Computer Ad." Note in the narration "screens" appears curiously as a verb – as if all existence is in the terms of and defined by the screen.
- 16 Sun Microsystems Inc, "SAGE: Computer Based Air Defense 1958–1982." 1998, Computer History Museum archives, 01:41:37, [www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102695337](http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102695337).
- 17 At its peak SAGE employed an astounding twenty percent of all the programmers in the world; it was IBM's biggest contract and brought together Burroughs, Western Electric (the manufacturing branch of Bell), RCA and Rand, whom, combined with MIT and the Lincoln Laboratory, were able to operate in an environment of unlimited funding thanks to the procurement of a new paradigm – the state of nuclear "permanent alert" that ultimately paid for the engineering of the digitized eternal present.
- 18 The USSR's equivalent was decentralized; as Edwards points out, this is "what you do when you are serious about continental air defense." *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*, 96.
- 19 The earth's curvature meant that hundreds, if not thousands, of radars would be required to detect low-flying aircraft ... There was no conceivable way in which human radar operators could be employed to make [the necessary] calculations for hundreds of aircraft as detected from such a large number of radars, nor could the data be coordinated into a single map if the operators used voice communications. The computations were straightforward enough ... *It was doing all the world in real time that was impossible*. Authors' emphasis. Professor George E Valley in Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*, 91
- 20 David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, eds., *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), 94. Also taking place against the backdrop of the virtual dome of defense over US land and waters, and in a coalescing of aesthetics, was the USAF's engagement with Konrad Waschmann on his giant USAF Hangar project in 1959, whose seminal photographs of its model depict it apparently weightless, drawn in lines of light against a darkened background and floating – in every way like the new digital drawings on Sketchpad and SAGE's screens.
- 21 Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. 1964: Columbia Pictures and Hawk Films (102:00 mins).
- 22 Namely NASA's Vehicular Assembly Building designed by Max O. Urbahn. See Crowley and Pavitt, eds. *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970*, 94.
- 23 SAGE also, as Reinhold Martin points out, materialized much of the communications infrastructure upon whose existence Norbert Wiener's vision of cybernetics eventuality was predicated. Indeed, the relations between Wiener's vision of "defense by communication" and that of SAGE as a networked early warning defense system were complexly reflexive:

"First, it [Wiener's vision] uses many of the same techniques – decentralization, redundancy, information management, feedback – to defend against and regulate the entropic effects of imminent atomic catastrophe that constitute the primary justification for the collaboration of science, industry, and the state embodied in the very idea of the military-industrial complex. But second, in a kind of cybernetic feedback loop, it also uses scientific concepts, developed in the laboratories and testing grounds of the complex, to defend against science itself. The project's dream of communicative transparency maintained by a network of roads, highways, train lines, and telephone wires constitutes a "defense-by-communications" not only against the bomb but against the specialized, incommunicative discursive environment that created it – SAGE, for instance." *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 37.
- 24 See "How US Cities Can Prepare for Atomic War" in which Norbert Wiener, political theorist Karl Deutsch and historian of science Giorgio di Santilliana's lifebelt as circle provides "An escape route that could be reached by moving in any direction" as the fleeing citizen is recast as radius. *Life Magazine*, 18 December, 1950, 78.
- 25 See Ivan Sutherland, "Sketchpad: A Man-Machine Graphical Communication System," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1963).

- 26 Ivan Sutherland, "Sketchpad: A Man-Machine Graphical Communication System," in *The New Media Reader*, eds. Wardrip-Fruin and Montford (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 111. Authors' emphasis.
- 27 Which conveniently means that the architect is able to be "quite sloppy," as Sutherland explains, and still "get a precision drawing out at the same time." "Science Reporter; 42; Computer Sketchpad," July 26, 1964, WGBH, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress), Boston, MA, and Washington, DC, accessed October 27, 2021, <http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-15-07gqpbm>. For a fuller analysis of the relations between Sketchpad, *disegno* and Alberti in the drawing of circles, see Francesca Hughes, "Facilities for Correction," *e-flux Architecture*, 2016, [www.e-flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/68648/facilities-for-correction/](http://www.e-flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/68648/facilities-for-correction/).
- 28 In order to delete a mistake, you simply point the light-pen at the line in question, the cross hairs lock-on, then you press the ERASE button and "it's gone." Or, more cunningly, you undraw the line: "If you go backward you erase it!" *Science Reporter; 42; Computer Sketchpad*. See also Sutherland, "Sketchpad: A Man-Machine Graphical Communication System."
- 29 Interestingly, most GUIs now employ the metaphor of magnetic rather than gravitational attraction, some even using the symbol of a magnet, this apart, so much of the user-interface logics and explanatory models that Sutherland invented and first coined remain in drawing software today. See lecture by Ivan Sutherland, Sun Microsystems Inc, "Sketchpad: A Man Machine Graphical Communication System." 1994, *Computer History Museum archives*, 01:30:24. [www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102639871](http://www.computerhistory.org/collections/catalog/102639871).
- 30 Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*, 106.
- 31 See Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, eds., *The New Media Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 113.
- 32 While a direct heir to SAGE was, and indeed still is, the airlines booking system SABRE (Semi Automated Business Research Environment), contemporary air traffic control also owes much to SAGE.
- 33 See Eyal Weizman, "Introduction: Forensics," in *Forensics: The Architecture of Public Truth*, eds. Franke Anselm and Eyal Weizman (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 14–32.
- 34 Primary radar, which relies on pings to measure range, and secondary radar, which depends on the transmission of an aircraft's transponder signal, are both used to identify and locate aircraft.
- 35 Eyal Weizman, "Forensic Architecture: Only the Crime Can Solve the Crime" in *The Least of All Possible Evils: A Short History of Humanitarian Violence* (London: Verso, 2017), 105.
- 36 As Jess Bier has argued on the interrogative role of ground-truthing, Despite the proliferation of drones and satellites, geographic facts and statistics continue to be based on observations on the ground – a process geared toward interpreting and validating what is viewed from above in aerial photos. Ground data collection is still central to digital cartography. *Mapping Israel, Mapping Palestine: How Occupied Landscapes Shape Scientific Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 5
- 37 As Eyal Weizman and Thomas Keenan discuss through the forensic identification of Joseph Mengele's remains as the marker of an era of forensics: Forensic anthropology, like every other life science, is a matter of probability, not certainty. The investigation was a process of elimination in which each interpretation increases or decreases the balance of probability. For scientists and lawyers, truth is measured as a position on a scale of probability. The different questions asked of, and experiments conducted on, the skeletons should be understood as ways of operating with the fuzzy probabilities of forensics. "Mengele's Skull," *Cabinet*, issue 43 (Fall 2011), 63–64
- 38 Represented through a series of circles projected onto the surface of the earth, 'handshakes' denote communication between satellite and aircraft, with the satellite as the notional center-point of what is really not a circle but a cone. William Langewiesche, "What Really Happened to Malaysia's Missing Airplane." *The Atlantic*, June 17, 2019, [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/mh370-malaysia-airlines/590653/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/mh370-malaysia-airlines/590653/).
- 39 As admitted by vice president of satellite operations at INMARSAT, Mark Dickinson, via satellite, "Inmarsat Exec Talks about Operator's Role in Search for MH370," accessed November 27, 2020, <http://interactive.satellitetoday.com/inmarsat-exec-talks-about-operators-role-in-search-for-mh370/>.
- 40 Two data values, recorded by the ground station, were fundamental in reconstructing the range circles and possible paths: Burst Timing Offset (BTO) and Burst Frequency Offset (BFO). Put simply, BTO is a measure of the aircraft's distance from the satellite based on transmission time whilst BFO is a measure of the relative speed between the aircraft and the satellite. These values were only available due

- to a recent upgrade to INMARSAT's Perth ground station software in 2013 in direct response to their involvement in the search for Air France 447 flight in 2009.
- 41 When asked if the northern route was any less likely, general manager of Australian Maritime Safety Authority, John Young, responded that the analysis of the data set produces a mirror image on either side of the equator: The southern and northern routes, from an analysis of possible movements of aircraft, look the same on either side of the equator. The difference is that over the southern Indian Ocean, there is very little radar cover and its wide-open space. Over the northern route, that's over land so you would expect different reactions from countries involved whether they are on the northern or southern route. Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), "AMSA MH370 Media Briefing." March 18, 2014. YouTube Video, 19:25. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_O9gUgWV6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_O9gUgWV6U).
  - 42 Tony Abbot in Lisa Cox, "Tony Abbot 'confident' debris from missing Malaysia Airlines plane will be recovered," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 26, 2014, [www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/tony-abbot-confident-debris-from-missing-malaysia-airlines-plane-will-be-recovered-20140326-35i4x.html](http://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/tony-abbot-confident-debris-from-missing-malaysia-airlines-plane-will-be-recovered-20140326-35i4x.html).
  - 43 Frank Jacobs. "MH370 and the Secrets of Deep, Dark Southern Indian Ocean," *Foreign Policy*, March 27, 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/27/mh370-and-the-secrets-of-the-deep-dark-southern-indian-ocean/>.
  - 44 Kristen Gelineau and Rob Griffith, "Nothing Spotted in Search for Jet, Australia Says," *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, March 21, 2014, [www.gazettenet.com/Archives/2014/03/jet-hg-032214](http://www.gazettenet.com/Archives/2014/03/jet-hg-032214).
  - 45 "Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), "AMSA MH370 Media Briefing." March 18, 2014. YouTube Video, 19:25. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_O9gUgWV6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_O9gUgWV6U).
  - 46 A subsequent search, lasting just over one week (3–11 April, 2014), saw aircraft and vessels deploy sonic equipment to identify signals from the underwater locator beacons fitted to the aircraft's black boxes, once again, refocusing the search on two more northerly areas spanning 217,000 km<sup>2</sup> at 2100 kms west of Learmonth, Western Australia. The drawing grew again with a total of 20 shifting and overlapping patches across two larger and disconnected search areas. A number of potential pings were detected, and with the black box batteries due to expire imminently, a seafloor sonar search was deployed, scanning an additional 860 km<sup>2</sup> of areas surrounding the ping sites, south of the previous search. This phase of the search was the most haphazardly scattered, over 70 patches across seven search 'archipelagos.'
  - 47 Unknown, "Australia switches to visual search for MH370," *Vietnam Investment Review*, March 21, 2014. [www.vir.com.vn/australia-switches-to-visual-search-for-mh370-26553.html](http://www.vir.com.vn/australia-switches-to-visual-search-for-mh370-26553.html).
  - 48 Geoscience Australia, "Mapping the Seafloor," May 8, 2017, YouTube Video, 2:32. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CK\\_Q6BsjZU&feature=emb\\_logo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CK_Q6BsjZU&feature=emb_logo).
  - 49 For an excellent analysis of this serial shrinkage, see Laura Kurgan, *Close up at a Distance: Mapping, Technology, and Politics* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2013).
  - 50 William Langewiesche, "What Really Happened to Malaysia's Missing Airplane." *The Atlantic*, June 17, 2019, [www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/mh370-malaysia-airlines/590653/](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/07/mh370-malaysia-airlines/590653/).
  - 51 CSIRO. "What Debris and the Indian Ocean Told Drift Modelers about MH370 Search Area," accessed November 27, 2020, <https://ecos.csiro.au/mh370/>.
  - 52 See Nancy Cartwright, *How the Laws of Physics Lie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), for a critique of the role of inference in much scientific practice.
  - 53 Jess Bier, *Mapping Israel, Mapping Palestine: How Occupied Landscapes Shape Scientific Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 5.
  - 54 Spatial Source. "Scanning the Depths – The Search for MH370," accessed November 27, 2020, [www.spatialsource.com.au/gis-data/scanning-the-depths-the-data-behind-the-search-for-flight-mh370](http://www.spatialsource.com.au/gis-data/scanning-the-depths-the-data-behind-the-search-for-flight-mh370).

# INFRASTRUCTURES OF URBAN SIMULATION

## Digital twins, virtual humans and synthetic populations

*Farzin Lotfi-Jam*

### Introduction

When, in September 2020, Germany announced 32 million euros in funds for the cities of Hamburg, Leipzig and Munich to develop the Connected Urban Twins project, it was merely following recent precedent.<sup>1</sup> A “digital twin,” a virtual replica that maps data from objects in the physical city to digital proxies in a simulated city, is the latest product being marketed to cities by global logistics companies and smart city technology firms. Digital twins are immersive, omniscient fantasy images, populated with real-time feeds of human activity, weather and traffic events. At stake in this urban technology is the reliance on a computational model to make the city legible to decision-makers, who then use this model to create urban futures.

This chapter examines how digital twins and synthetic populations represent cities. It asks what the consequences of this technology are for collective urban futures. It looks at two recent case studies: Virtual Singapore, a “dynamic three-dimensional city model and collaborative data platform”<sup>2</sup> of the city-state, and Replica, an urban data platform. Urban simulation products like Replica’s are marketed to city administrators – like the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in New York City or the Illinois Department of Transportation in Chicago – to help “fix the broken business of the built environment.”<sup>3</sup> This shift to urban simulators is located at the convergence of two recent global trends. The first is found in the neoliberalization of government services and its accompanied disinvestment in welfare services like public housing and transportation.<sup>4</sup> The second is increased government spending on securitizing urban environments and ‘optimizing’ public resources through the application of digital technologies.<sup>5</sup>

Synthetic population simulations and digital twins are only the latest and most visible encounters between spatial and temporal techniques of monitoring and computer prediction. Economist Mary S. Morgan has noted a gradual historical shift in the way we come to know things, a shift from reasoning with language to reasoning with models.<sup>6</sup> Looking at the models economists were using, Morgan warns that “we cannot understand how economists learn things from models without understanding how models are used, nor understand how they are used without understanding how they are built.”<sup>7</sup> By unpacking contemporary commercial urban simulations and tracing their development to a postwar military technology called SIMNET, this chapter will try to understand

how and why these models were built and what their implications are. Specifically, this paper will argue that methods of historical reenactment and data collection inform algorithmically driven simulations in which futurity is reduced to permutations of past events.

Much past scholarship has examined the militarization of cities and how Cold War doctrines of centralized command and technological control moved from war zones to urban environments.<sup>8</sup> The structuring role of the electronic computer in management and governance of these processes has also been examined by historians of architecture, science and technology.<sup>9</sup> Most of this scholarship has focused on the militarization of urban environments through fortified architectures, tactical insertions of civilian-military infrastructures and the expansion of law enforcement capabilities. This chapter will add to this scholarship by analyzing the application of new computer simulation techniques that track and model human movement and urban events for the purposes of urban planning and city administration.

### **SIMNET: Reliving history, preparing to make history**

On 27 August 1991, military defense contractors and personnel from the US Department of Defense convened in Alexandria, Virginia for a conference called *73 Easting: Lessons Learned from Desert Storm via Advanced Distributed Simulation Technology*. The conference was organized by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) and cosponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the Office of Military History of the Army and the Engineer Topographic Laboratory at Fort Belvoir. Central to the many panels and presentations that comprised the three-day program was the reenactment being developed of the Battle of 73 Easting, an armored vehicle battle fought in Iraq on 26 February 1991 between three US cavalry troops and the 18th brigade of the Tawakalna Iraqi Republican Guard. The purpose of the reenactment was to develop a database of the minute-to-minute activities of each participant (for example, tank and soldier). Pivotal to conference discussions was that this battle was being recreated using new distributed simulation technology: advanced distributed simulation. This technology allowed users to replay and analyze the event in detail from any vantage point and to pose alternative cause-and-effect hypotheses and test what-if scenarios.<sup>10</sup>

Advanced distributed simulation, or distributed interactive simulation, was invented as part of a DARPA-initiated program to create simulator networking (SIMNET). The idea behind SIMNET was first conceived in 1978 by Colonel Jack Thorpe, who at the time was a young captain and scientist with the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, in an unpublished white paper titled "Future Views: Aircrew Training 1980–2000." Thorpe proposed a network of simulators for combat mission planning, rehearsal and execution, an idea that went on to have significant influence on military training and doctrine, as well as on shaping the possibilities of virtual and actual world making.<sup>11</sup>

In the paper, Thorpe envisioned a smooth and undifferentiated battleground governed by the logics of the network, where physical and virtual events, training and actual combat are rendered indistinguishable. The key components of his concept are illustrated in four figures drawn by a Pentagon graphic artist (Figure 30.1). In the upper-left square of Figure 30.1, an overhead sensor relays real-time information about an enemy aggression event and connects this event to a networked geography of battle ships, airstrips and a Tactical Development Center. In the upper-right square, planners huddle over a three-dimensional "holographic electronic sand table projection system" assessing the situation and formulating a response. In the bottom-left, four pilots in separate but connected flight simulators rehearse the battle plan while planners on the electronic sand table observe. In the last square three people, "planners and battle damage assessors," can be seen at the electronic sand table monitoring the actual mission in real time.<sup>12</sup>

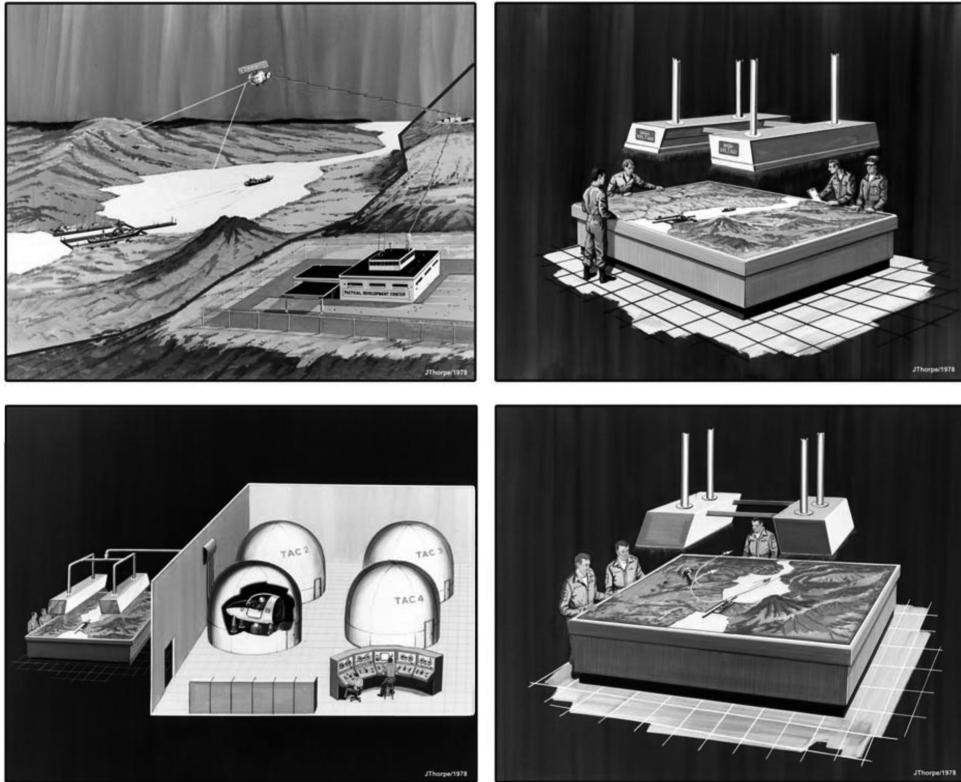


Figure 30.1 SIMNET concept illustrations from “Future Views: Aircrew Training 1980–2000,” unpublished white paper, Jack Thorpe, Life Sciences Directorate, Air Force Office of Scientific Research. 15 September 1978. © Courtesy Institute for Defense Analyses.

The ideas in Thorpe’s white paper were built on a genealogy of military concepts and techniques for dominating space through superior vision.<sup>13</sup> Thorpe sought the unattainable goal of total omniscience through technological means – a network of observation and transmission instruments tuned to the physical battle space and a network of thinking machines producing infinite images of possible battle space events. Paul Virilio has termed these techniques the “logistics of military perception” where a supply of images – in this instance 15 frames per second – became the equivalent of ammunition supply. As Virilio put it:

[i]n a technicians’ version of an all-seeing Divinity, ever ruling out accident and surprise, the drive is on for a general system of illumination that will allow everything to be seen and known, at every moment and in every place.<sup>14</sup>

This general system of illumination produces a general system of knowledge rendered through the eyes of military vision, a kind of ‘biased Divinity’ that hides its occlusions under the veil of omnipotence. SIMNET works under the presumption that if all facts about an event are known, not only can future events be foreseen, but that a neutral, unbiased decision can be made, one based on, supposedly, just the facts. But as will be seen shortly, SIMNET merely repeated the biases of its creators, who believed that winning battles was an integral part to winning wars.

Also embedded in this logistics of military perception are the conceptual seeds for what later became the smart city digital twin and, by extension, Virtual Singapore and Replica. Software like these rely on real and near-real time<sup>15</sup> visual information to attempt a condition of total predictability in their own all-seeing Divinity. As tools, they are impacting how buildings are seen and how space is controlled – or how people *think* space can be controlled.

At the time of its publication, there was no known technical solution for Thorpe's proposal. In 1981, Thorpe was assigned to DARPA. By this time, the findings of the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) experiments to connect computers at different universities had become more known.<sup>16</sup> A key DARPA contractor, Bolt, Beranek and Newman (BBN), had helped develop the ARPANET networking protocols. This proved consequential for SIMNET's inception. At the same time, transistors, the building blocks for chips and computer processing power, were becoming increasingly powerful due to their growth in the commercial sector. Seeking to exploit these developments and leverage military and civilian technologies, Thorpe and others conceived of SIMNET to "develop a new generation of high-tech, realistic, networkable, microprocessor-based simulators that would cost 100 times less than existing simulators."<sup>17</sup> Military combat training was to become massive, open and online.

Over the next decade the SIMNET program extended and expanded its impact across the Department of Defense. At its peak, it employed over 300 scientists, engineers, operators, site managers, trainers, fabricators and software and hardware experts.<sup>18</sup> The project then implemented vehicle simulator classes for ground, air and naval entities (Figure 30.2). In 1987, SIMNET began work on what it called *semi-automated forces* (SAF), artificial combatants that



Figure 30.2 An officer operates a viewfinder in a SIMNET M1 tank simulator at the US Army Armor Center in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Photography by PFC Myles Gullette (1986). © Courtesy National Archives (6458515).

could be controlled by a commander at a workstation to project substantial enemy forces on the battlefield and/or provide friendly flanking and support units. Much effort was invested in developing artificial forms of cognition so that human fighters in simulators would not be able to tell the difference between actual and artificial (virtual) combatants. This simulation technique of ontological plasticity, between really rendered humans and algorithmically rendered humans, or real threat and imagined threat, has continued to develop and can be seen in the virtual humans of *Replica* and the simulated crowds of *Virtual Singapore*.

Toward the end of the 1980s, DARPA teamed up with the US army to demonstrate a training exercise with 260 networked simulators at 11 sites in the United States and Europe and in multiple branches of the armed services.<sup>19</sup> In 1991, the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies placed SIMNET alongside the internet and personal computers as one of the six DARPA-initiated programs to have had the most profound effect on the Department of Defense.<sup>20</sup> Its recognition grew: in 1992, a live distributed simulation demonstration took place before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Capitol Hill. In 1997, *Wired* proclaimed: “William Gibson didn’t invent cyberspace, Air Force Captain Jack Thorpe did.”<sup>21</sup> SIMNET had gone mainstream.

The technical innovation of the SIMNET program was the non-hierarchical networking of multiple simulators. “Each simulator provid[ed] its own controls, displays and computational resources,” explained Duncan C. Miller, program leader at BBN.<sup>22</sup> There was no centralized control system; instead, each node worked autonomously and represented one simulated entity. Each then shared its information to other nodes, like in a peer-to-peer system.<sup>23</sup> This fundamental architecture allowed for “real-time distributed simulations that [would] scale approximately linearly with the number of entities being represented.”<sup>24</sup> The organizing of information was so successful that a DARPA-initiated SIMNET offspring set the record for the largest real-time distributed simulation of 1997, with 50,000 entities participating live on 500 computers across seven sites.<sup>25</sup>

But beyond its role in furthering the military’s use of cybernetics and establishing industry standards and norms, SIMNET’s most impactful legacy is arguably the image it lodged in the collective consciousness: a world controlled by the infinite rehearsals, loops and permutations of a computer simulation. Thorpe and his colleagues strove for a system where everything could be digitized and connected. As he articulates in his retelling of SIMNET’s history, the totalizing goal of distributed simulation is that

all entities ... (real vehicles, virtual and constructive simulations, manned simulators, command and control, anything that could be networked whether designed for that purpose or not) could be physically located anywhere in the world, connected together via network ... [and] beamed onto one of several synthetic battlefields.<sup>26</sup>

The legacy of SIMNET then is the domination of the global consciousness by an insatiable desire to network all entities into the infrastructures of infinite war.

Traditional limits to communication, such as physical space, were now rendered less important with advances in speed and connectivity. Observing this technological development, Virilio noted in his 1986 book *War and Cinema*, that a “factitious topology” had emerged in which “all the surfaces of the globe are directly present to one another.”<sup>27</sup> In his analysis of industrialized warfare, Virilio argued that war was increasingly being waged remotely as the result of developments in military communication infrastructures. In a sense, the spaces between battlefields have shrunk, as information from a battlefield can be transmitted to remote command and control centers and response coordinated using remote warfare weapons like ballistic systems. With SIMNET and simulation modeling, the inverse is true: the battlefield has extended to all spaces, including the



spaces of the future. Embedded in the engineering of SIMNET's fundamental system architecture is an expansionist political logic that has no recourse other than the colonization of space and time beyond the battlefield. SIMNET had been designed as an open topology, able to theoretically incorporate an infinite array of physical objects into its virtual worlds with no stated cost to performance. As we will see in *Replica* and *Virtual Singapore*, the result of this for civilians has been a push, in the last few decades, to *internet all things* and bring urban space under further forms of simulation control. While this push has perhaps been efficient and optimal from a network engineering perspective, the analysis of *Replica* and *Virtual Singapore* will reveal its cost to the social, physical and political spheres of urban life.

On day one of the 73 Easting conference, Thorpe explained the project's beginnings. A month after the battle, while speaking to his chief about simulation, he realized he could combine the two. The idea was instantly popular. He described the data-collection requirements:

we needed to walk the terrain, we needed to go where the battle was and look at the firing positions and look at where the TOL missile lines went from those firing positions and see where the opponent vehicles were headed and try to understand what went on in that battle ... we had to have, if at all possible, the leaders and troops that fought that battle right there on the same battlefield so that they could explain and we could capture what they did.<sup>28</sup>

Colonel Gary Bloedorn of the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) observed that data collection is dealing "not so much in simulation as [in] a reenactment of an actual event."<sup>29</sup> Historical reenactments, another military practice, emphasize the importance of returning to the site of battle with combatants who fought in the event, a technique that was first used during Civil War reconstructions with surviving combatants 30 years after the fact. For Bloedorn it was critical to perform reenactments while the US still owned the battlefield. His team sat down with each unit commander in the desert and drew maps of the battle on the side of a tent, illuminated by jeep headlights. This provided them with their first unverified picture of the event. In addition to recording witness testimony from key combatants, they also toured the battlefield, recorded forensic evidence, obtained GPS activity records, collected army engineers' databases on each destroyed enemy vehicle location and orientation and likely means of destruction and obtained audio tape recordings of command instructions.<sup>30</sup> The broad range of information collected fostered the illusion of an 'all-seeing Divinity' with no blind spots in the simulation.

Major James McDonough and his team at Perceptronics then aggregated and represented the data through two forms of media: maps with overlays for each vehicle's path and timelines of events. These instructed SIMNET's semi-automated forces (SAF), a suite of algorithms controlling the movement and behaviors of the simulated vehicles, to recreate the battle. Between the battle-ravaged fields of Iraq and the technical labs of Cambridge where BBN was based, measurements were being used to make computational simulations, an amorphous new media category and a new type of technical image. This category of media will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections, but what is important to note here is how SIMNET was instrumental in the production of a new form of *networked technical image reading* that undergirded the quantifiable, digital future.

SIMNET's SAFs were designed to receive command instructions from a human operator and respond in an automated and plausibly human way. They were able to pass a basic Turing Test where observers could not tell which simulated vehicles were being controlled by humans and which not. Their underlying algorithms had also been given sophisticated small-unit tactical concepts; they respected military hierarchies and the chain of command. A human commander

with expertise in Soviet doctrine and tactics, for example, could give detailed instruction to a SAF enemy platoon leader's vehicle; all other simulated vehicles would respond accordingly in appropriate formation to changes in terrain or external factors such as crossfire (Figure 30.3).<sup>31</sup> SAF was an early instance of the translation of historical data into an immersive digital form. Within reconstructed battles, human demands and machine logics shaped simulations. According to Bloedorn, "the initial simulation was not a total reconstruction or enactment of the battle, it was, in fact, designed to elicit on the spot information from the participants."<sup>32</sup> These simulations of human decision-making invented in SAF are the antecedents to the virtual humans of Replica. They model the use of reenactment as the basis for synthetic population simulation. They also show the messy craft of computer knowledge production that is often – in SIMNET's case literally – rendered invisible by the technical precision of the final object: audiences perceive computers as pristine, thinking machines, rarely seeing the biases of the algorithms that drive their simulations.

As seen in Figure 30.4, a computer model of artificial intelligence produced for a specific problem and data source (friendly and enemy combatants with contingent behavior receiving input from a human commander) is adapted and reused for another problem and dataset (friendly and enemy combatants with prescribed behavior translated from a historic record).

At the conference, Colonel Michael D. Krause, a military historian and member of the team that traveled to the Iraqi desert that March, placed SIMNET's reenactment in the tradition



*Figure 30.3* Testing of different hypothetical environmental conditions in virtual reenactment of 73 Easting battle. Composite grid of four still frames compiled by author and extracted from digital reproduction of VHS video cassette from "The Reconstruction of the Battle of 73 Easting: A Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Report," 9 minutes and 33 seconds, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (1993). © Courtesy DARPA.

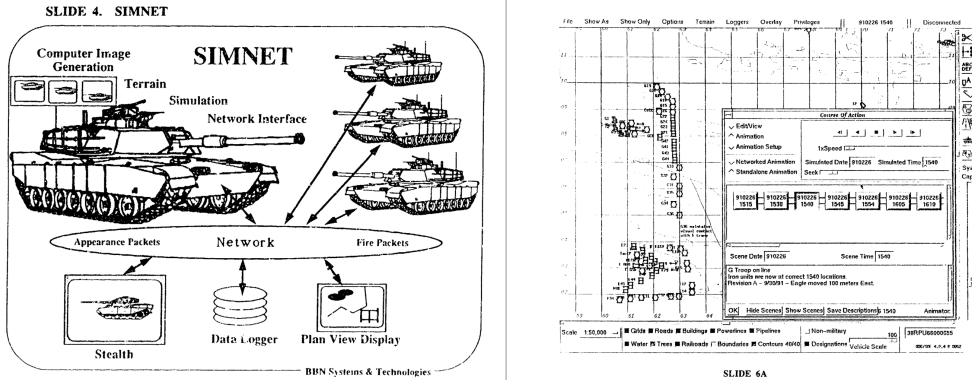


Figure 30.4 Reproduction of two slides from Dr. Andrew Ceranowicz’s presentation on “Constructing the Simulation” showing: (left) SIMNET’s technical system architecture; (right) screenshot of SIMNET’s computer software interface showing geographic positions of military and nonmilitary units on a map, with the newly created animation timeline feature which allows users to play, pause or rewind the computer simulation. From conference proceedings, Orlansky and Thorpe, “73 Easting,” II-73 and II-76, 1992. © Courtesy Defense Technical Information Center (ADA253991).

of German historian Leopold von Ranke, who spoke of “history as it actually was.”<sup>33</sup> Krause argued that their project presented the event “as it actually was”; he believed that the use of digital communication – telephone conversations, radio transmissions, personal tape recordings, interviews before and after battle – could model the event minute-by-minute, creating a perfect replica whose use of materials would overturn traditional ideas of documentation. Reenactment offered a method to expand the archives of military history, and in so doing, to establish the algorithm as an archival form itself – a record of how it was.<sup>34</sup> Simulations, when understood in their relationship to reenactment and automated record keeping, became tied to the actuality of the past. Future scenarios are so predicated on historical fidelity and data feeds that the futurity they envision are constrained by their own methods. Not *what actually happened* but what records those powerful institutions, such as militaries or corporations, have used to tell that story. This will have dramatic impact when applied to social simulators like Replica, which cannot help but simulate a corporatist future because their data is taken from corporatist sources. Possible futures built on other foundations of data remain in the simulations’ blind spots.

Krause emphasized that due to these new technologies a “living history book” was imminent, while DARPA director Vic Reis proclaimed that a new way of understanding history had been born.<sup>35</sup> Many of SIMNET’s artificial forms of intelligence and SAFs had been developed and instructed to simulate the decision-making matrix of the T-72 Soviet battle tank (widely used in the Gulf War), the Soviet doctrine and the world order, where evenly balanced opposing foes would meet to engage on a battlefield. When the USSR collapsed unexpectedly four months after the conference, SIMNET’s limitations became clear.

SIMNET was based on at least two outdated assumptions. One is the notion that the rise or fall of a nation hinges on a single battle, and not a complex interweaving of social and economic factors, as in the USSR’s case, that SIMNET did not model. The other is that the point of war is to win it and not have it go on indefinitely for capitalist profit, as the recent and controversial end to the War in Afghanistan shows. When, in August 2021, the US military pulled out of Afghanistan after 20 years – only to have whatever ‘gains’ it had made erased almost immediately by the Taliban – it was as if someone finally switched off a simulation that had been left to loop for two decades.

Addressing the first of these issues, Bob Jacobs, one of Perceptronics' behavior and design engineers, noted in 2010 that after the fall of the Soviet Union and with the continued US military engagement in the Middle East, the threat had changed. SIMNET's focus on vehicles and systems worked well with computational technology, as it was easier to simulate vehicles and harder to simulate dismounted individual infantry or peoples from different cultures speaking different languages. However, changing tactics to insurgent urban warfare required knowledge of how different groups might move and behave. Jacobs admitted such simulation was difficult, yet he was optimistic: "Progress is being made in this area, but it is very tough: we have to capture and model how people act and embed that into models that can be executed by machines."<sup>36</sup>

Modeling how people behave has now become a lucrative industry.<sup>37</sup> SIMNET's synthetic populations of Soviet forces may be obsolete, but the need for data collection and human simulation remains relevant, as Replica and Virtual Singapore show.<sup>38</sup> Yet if SIMNET was based on a vision of militaristic knowledge blind to social and economic factors outside that vision, its successors like Replica, in trying to determine how demographics shop and consume media in urban landscapes, have the opposite blind spots: seeing movement through cities as being only based on consumption and not influenced by broader militaristic events or movement without purpose.

### **Replica: Near-real time urban planning**

By 2020, urban simulation had spread from Iraq to Kansas. Forty minutes outside Kansas City's airport, in a one-story brick and glass building punctuated by corrugated metal canopies, and opposite a County Memorial Chapel, is the headquarters of Replica, a start-up that grew out of Sidewalk Labs, an urban technology company owned by Google parent Alphabet. Replica is the developer of "Replica," a "next-generation urban planning tool" that uses machine-learning methods to translate "near-real time" location and behavior data tracked from real humans to abstract "persona" models.<sup>39</sup> A Replica persona is composed of three main underlying behavior choice models: activity scheduling, destination location and travel mode. A combination of these models is used to reproduce Replica's complete daily activity sequences, such as: start the day at home, drive to work, walk to lunch at lunch break, complete work, drive to store, shop, drive home and now stay at home.<sup>40</sup> These persona models are then matched to virtual human populations that are statistically correct representations of an entire city's population based on census data. Replica calls these entities "synthetic populations"<sup>41</sup> and produces simulations of them as they move around different US cities. Virtual humans go about their daily lives moving between home, work, lunch, shopping and "other" using different modes of transportation.

Replica has released notoriously little information about its data sources and backend.<sup>42</sup> The specifics of these simulations have to be pieced together from promotional videos, blogs, government procurement forms and a confidential methodology document with protected trade secrets that was accidentally made public.<sup>43</sup> The platform is browser-based, requiring no new hardware or software installations.<sup>44</sup> Its frontend architecture consists of an OpenStreetMap interface in which custom Replica map layers, such as "Network links" and "Area selection," can be switched on and off. Users can view the total number of trips made by Replica's virtual population for a given period in a given location. They can also filter by different modes of travel and by trip purpose – work, school, shopping, recreation and others. Users can view aggregate trip origins, destinations, purposes and transit modes. This dataset can also be correlated with other datasets, such as census demographic information, to see when, how, where and why different classes of urban residents are moving.

In justifying their interest in using Replica, the City of Portland stated that there is often less available data for city planners on the transportation habits of residents from historically

underserved communities of color – something that they hoped Replica’s data would solve.<sup>45</sup> Using Replica, the Chicago Regional Transit Authority was able to show that the virtual Black residents on the Red Line in Chicago (in the Replica digital city) spend more time commuting to work than the virtual white residents from the same areas.<sup>46</sup> Building on this work and in response to a US Department of Transportation request for information on transportation equity data, Replica claimed their data products can “advance racial equity and support for underserved communities.”<sup>47</sup> Here, under the guise of racial equality, Replica extends its commercial version of the all-seeing conditions of the electronic battlefield to communities who have historically already been the targets of much investment in monitoring and tracking regimes by law enforcement.<sup>48</sup> As Virilio observes: “There is no war ... without representation.”<sup>49</sup> Now, a marginalized group that has traditionally sought representation (in media, urban planning, politics) has such representation weaponized against it by being tracked by the very commercial and planning authorities that had previously ignored them. Black residents are positioned as potential combatants in urban ‘warfare.’

Replica relies on vast physical infrastructures that persistently track and collect passive and active encounters between humans and urban information systems.<sup>50</sup> To produce their synthetic populations, Replica combines cell phone GPS data and what it calls IT infrastructure data (“auxiliary sources of human activity in the region such as POI [Points of Interest] visits and credit transactions data”<sup>51</sup>) with census and land use data to produce Mobility Models. Virtual personas are trained from information collected from real humans to make daily travel decisions.<sup>51</sup> These personas are then anonymized and matched with synthetic households to produce a virtual reproduction of a city’s demographics. A final process uses field observations data from customer datasets to calibrate and validate their simulations and models. These synthetic populations of autonomous personas are then put into action to simulate urban movement over time.

As was shown previously in SIMNET, field data collection is a form of military vision that quantifies the world in the language of the calculable and extracts information from spaces and bodies. It is also a vision of the world from the perspective of the military and neoliberalism.



Figure 30.5 Screenshot of Replica software with map-based interface showing 5.87 million trips by 1.77 million residences of Kansas City between April and June (year undisclosed). © Courtesy of Matt Drange (Protocol.com), 2020.

This vision renders landscapes and humans as adversarial, replete with risks to be managed and advantages to be exploited. All movement becomes transactional and purposeful. The human goes from point A to B always with a purpose: to make and spend money, to entertain oneself. Just as the logics of war assume that all entities act with the purpose of winning the war, simulations like Replica's assume there is no non-purposeful movement, like wandering around aimlessly with friends or being directed by nonhuman entities (as when dog walking). Nor, despite its militaristic vision, and following neoliberalism's attempt to downplay state intervention in the economy, does Replica look at how militaristic events more broadly influence movement: how imperial wars in the Middle East might drive up gas prices that affect car use or how protests against police brutality block traffic that alters the way people get around.

Beyond this adversarial world view embedded in its methods, Replica is exploiting the public to help develop its product. The company has made a business out of leveraging its privileged access to tracking systems, like cell phone and credit card data, that monitor how bodies move in space. It is undisclosed if Replica uses data from its parent company Google, but suspicions of such is why the City of Portland canceled its Replica contract.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile the City of Chicago admitted Replica has access to much data that the city does not.<sup>53</sup> What is clear is that Replica has monetized and privatized human movement in the US. Its models watch how some humans move and infer from this how all humans will move. It is selling itself as a data cleansing operation, repackaging ethically dubious source data collected by commercial entities as newly sanitized products fit for purchase by public entities. Such information can be beneficial – for instance, transportation engineers can see which routes are busiest and use this to improve public transportation. But if Replica's mapping is based on a neoliberal view of movement – in which movement is always purposeful and data is aggregated by credit cards and people with smartphones – then city planners using its maps to make decisions will, unwittingly or not, be serving those views.

What does it mean, then, when city planning is informed by the decision-making behaviors of privately owned virtual humans? We know about Replica, but there are likely many similar programs hidden from the public. While much of the literature around architecture, urbanism and the military has focused on urban warfare,<sup>54</sup> or cities under siege,<sup>55</sup> here we can see how militarized concepts like surveillance, security and anticipatory risk management through what-if scenario planning have permeated the design of cities.

Because GPS data is gleaned from cell phones, city dwellers without them are not represented. Already we can see the biases of this technology at work. Public decision-making is predicated on normative, financially driven behavior that only *sees* those able to access a cell phone. It makes sense that an urban simulation software essentially owned by Google would model the kind of city profitable to that company. As Replica's own website puts it: "Cities are first and foremost labor markets – facilitators of people finding work and getting to work."<sup>56</sup> But perhaps even more pernicious than a capitalist logic monetizing movement through public spaces is that entire populations are being modeled just like enemy combatants.

Replica's persona model is, like the datasets it harvests, a 21st Century archival form. Each persona instance indexes events of individual behaviors shaped by collective records matched to Replica's archival practices. Within the probabilistic modeling of activity sequences that 'motivate' Replica's virtual humans to move are three-months' worth of human movement as recorded by telecommunication and IT infrastructures and multiplied by census records. Here historical records are fed into a machine-learning method to produce a probabilistic sum model of historical movement. Ever greater documentation of the past is used to speculate on the future in order to control the constant now. But this creates a kind of feedback loop of futurity in which privileging certain kinds of data ensures that data's perpetuity.

Replica bills itself as being in the business of identifying urban trends in the “near-real time” in order to fix the “broken business” of the built environment. It argues that city planning is too slow, too siloed and too set in its own way.<sup>57</sup> This argument combines two familiar rhetorical tropes: the picture of an inflated big government bureaucracy inured by its own entropy and in need of private enterprise innovation and the emancipating effects of new technologies to accelerate and solve social and political problems while avoiding politics. We also see an update to Virilio’s thesis, herein a battle for images of the city in near-real time drive urban technology developments and practices. Virilio reminded us that war can never break free from its mystification mandate. Weapons are not just tools of “destruction but also of perception,” their purpose is not to just capture but to captivate and capitulate.<sup>58</sup> So Replica’s arguments about their urban technology, its scintillating speed and synthesizing capabilities, don’t just capture urban movement, but captivate our attention for possible urban futures. In the rehearsal of these familiar arguments, we can also see how simulation is in many ways the reenactment of the recent and more distant past as shown by SIMNET. Like the military, the bureaucracy of the private sector can also operate outside the public’s eye.

Replica’s images of the city are a specific type of image different to the cinematic ones that framed Virilio’s analysis. They are technical and computational in origin. In similar spirit to Virilio, albeit a year earlier in 1985, philosopher Vilém Flusser also ruminated on the captivating logics of technical images. He argued that technical images have a “hallucinatory power” and unlike traditional image-making practices that observe and depict objects, technical images are “computations of concepts.”<sup>59</sup> Replica computes a concept of the city based on militarized image-making practices. It attempts to understand how humans will move through and fit into a specific worldview within visible parameters. As such, it builds on SIMNET, which created a template for human modeling and reconstruction. SIMNET pioneered the use of simulation in dynamic environments with aggregate users. Flusser also reminds us that technical images cannot come into existence without an apparatus that allows for the conceptualization and manipulation of the inconceivable.<sup>60</sup> The technical apparatus that surrounds Replica imports practices from SIMNET. Replica is one example of how militarized methods of field data extraction and the anticipatory situational modeling of the battlefield not only order today’s digital urban design tools, but also facilitate the militarization of daily life through surveillance and securitization. In order to do so, Replica must first represent the communities it seeks to model, thus turning representation – and its weaponization as noted by Virilio – against communities that have traditionally sought it.

### **Virtual Singapore: 43,140 sensing school students**

During November and December of 2015, as part of the National Science Experiment, 43,140 Singaporean school students voluntarily submitted their bodies to a pervasive state-sanctioned surveillance program.<sup>61</sup> Over the course of a week, they carried a custom-built sensing instrument that recorded their movements, environmental conditions and emotional states – all in the name of scientific experimentation. The sensing instrument, SENSg (pronounced “Sense-SG” and named to commemorate Singapore’s 50th anniversary of nationhood), was equipped with seven sensors to record temperature, pressure, humidity, light, noise, infra-red and location data. This information was incrementally uploaded to a web server and made accessible to the students who were then able to monitor metrics such as their individual step counts and their carbon footprint.<sup>62</sup> Aggregate data from all participants was also used to produce digital reenactments of all urban events within Virtual Singapore, an immersive digital twin developed by Dassault Systèmes in collaboration with the Singapore government.<sup>63</sup>

Virtual Singapore is a “dynamic three-dimensional city model and collaborative data platform” of Singapore.<sup>64</sup> It includes 3D mapping data of the city-state, with semantic 3D modeling that encodes geometry with detailed information about textures, material representations and facility components of buildings – even down to details like granite composition. The 3D platform can also perform different types of calculations, including crowd simulations of artificial human movement and energy production analyses of buildings. Its stated goal is to be an urban data entrapment mechanism integrating real-time and offline information from government agencies, 3D models, the internet and internet of things devices to “describe the city with the necessary dynamic data ontology” in an “easygoing experience.”<sup>65</sup>

The digital twin is a loose term applied to any number of products. According to one retelling, the first digital twin was a lunar landing simulator used in the Apollo 13 mission.<sup>66</sup> Urban planner Michael Batty has defined the digital twin in its strictest terms as “a mirror image of a physical process that is articulated alongside the process in question, usually matching exactly the operation of the physical process which takes place in real time.”<sup>67</sup> He notes that the term is more loosely attached to a variety of digital simulation models that run alongside real-time processes that pertain to various systems, which raises questions about the exact relation between digital twins and cities.<sup>68</sup> In Batty’s analysis, the digital twin suffers from two insurmountable definitional problems. First, the inability of models to mirror everything about a system makes them intrinsically different from that system. Second, given that they are representations of a physical environment, they cannot be used to investigate alternative environments, or simulated futures of this environment, because they would then by definition no longer be models of the current environment.<sup>69</sup>

In their response to Batty, geomatics engineers Martin Tomko and Stephan Winter claim that much can still be salvaged from the concept of the digital twin, although it needs a rebranding. They argue a digital twin is increasingly not just a passive, mirrored reflection only capable of reaction and prediction, but can also be used to channel action. They claim a cyber-physical-social-system paradigm is emerging, which couples digital and physical properties together and offers a ‘brains in organisms’ metaphor to replace the obsolete digital twin image. In their telling, a digital system can represent alternative images of itself in the same way that the brain can imagine altered versions of real objects. Such simulations can then be part of an active control strategy and used as a tool to investigate alternative states of the environment.<sup>70</sup>

What both arguments miss is the context in which these simplified models of cities and citizens are used. Virilio’s use of the word *Divinity* implies not just an all-seeing force, but one that is all-powerful, wrathful and punishing – if we think of it through Abrahamic theology. Users of digital twins include top personnel from the Senate’s Arms Committee and Department of Defense, engineers and planners from New York City and Illinois and members of the Prime Minister of Singapore’s office. Digital twins may be foundational technological archetypes populated with real-time feeds. But in the hands of the powerbrokers who shape urban environments and subjects, they become instruments to produce particular urban futures with particular objectives. Just as SIMNET required a reenactment of an Iraqi battlefield to play out permutations of war, Virtual Singapore reenacted its physical analog to anticipate and direct how urban life could – and perhaps how powerbrokers think it *should* – play out.

The fact that these simulations are live also engenders senses of interactivity and participation and, consequently, the ludic intrigue of reenactment. In so doing, they encourage and indeed capitalize upon human movement, which becomes tracked and monetized. The problems of getting good urban analytical data, or privacy questions around smartphone apps, are solved by habituating young school students into being consenting participants of information extraction regimes. By distracting students with step counts and individuated carbon footprints, SENSg was able to develop and deploy its app and experiment on school children in the process, which



raises ethical implications based on state indoctrination (walking to help the country) and free child labor that Dassault Systèmes profits from.

Students are the producers, consumers and aggregate stars of recording their body movements. Following Shoshana Zuboff's investigations into "smart" products in our home, we can think of these students' movements as akin to Roomba, which "builds a map while tracking its own location" to later "[sell] floor plans of customers' homes."<sup>71</sup> Students become directed capital flows whose habits and spending decisions are modeled with increasing precision in urban space under the guise, like Roomba, of cleanliness (a lower carbon footprint to decrease pollution). By looking to a technical solution to ecological problems, users of SENSg (in this case children!) consent to pervasive forms of government tracking and computational surveillance.

Spanning the planet's surface, vast infrastructures have been built to record the movements and behaviors of human beings in physical spaces, from complex fiber optic networks to the smartphone in your pocket. The linking of these disparate objects has produced a megastructure of computational machines operating at the territorial scale and controlling movement at the city scale. Movement is channeled in two ways: through specific physical pathways – like roads and escalators – and through informational domains, like subway systems tallying ridership or the automated vision of law enforcement surveillance.<sup>72</sup>

The computational practices of urban reenactment have shifted architecture beyond its traditional categories of structure and envelope. The node becomes the new unit of reenactment, defined by overlapping and entangled computational networks. The virtual citizen makes its home in the world's datacenters, where it apes real humans forever. These archives of the digital present are constantly being expanded to capture ever more information about urban happenings. The corollary to urban reenactment is urban prediction. The algorithmic records of historical human activity are mined by experts, like city planners, within the industries of innovation and subjected to statistical calculation. Reduced of complexity, historical records are mapped to functions, probabilistic models and impenetrable black boxes and used to computationally simulate possible urban futures. These prognostications are both real and imaginary simulations. They are real in that their frontend is visible on a computer screen (their backend is the formal infrastructure described above). They are also real in that urban space, and beings have been reorganized around their inputs and outputs – the model affects the modeler. These virtual movements are inscribed on the bodies of actual humans, through the modulation of physical space and regulation of circulation. But they are also imaginary. Stripped of an actual urban vision, audiences of these simulations are left seduced and transfixed by the soothing rhythms of virtual humans moving across a screen, not unlike how schoolchildren find entertainment in American Civil War reenactments, where they are brought on field trips to 'learn' about war.

## **Conclusion**

The field of military studies has a long history of producing theoretical models of human decision-making. As simulators like SIMNET became more and more immersive, they better hid the limitations of such modeling, now lost behind ideas of omnipotence and omniscience. SIMNET, and its urban simulation successors like Replica and Virtual Singapore, deceive their audiences into believing that all movement can be predicted and understood, and thus controlled. They do this through an outdated militaristic and neoliberal idea that all movement is outcome-driven and through a belief that computers are unbiased systems.

Such thinking gives credence to the idea that all human decision-making is quantifiable. City planners basing urban design decisions off urban simulation and digital twin data will

reproduce the world views and limitations of that data. This means, perhaps unwittingly, treating citizens like the enemy combatants and constant consumers that SIMNET, Replica and Virtual Singapore model. It also means that the urban futures offered by these immersive systems will always be constrained by their biases.

The platforms for planning urban futures are pre-coded with the fear and need for control that hallmarks wartime environments. This is already evident in Replica's unwillingness to show its cards. It was further visible in the quick deployment of police to suppress protests for racial justice in the summer of 2020. And, as we know from Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, the business model of private corporations is that of an intelligence-gathering arm of governments and militaries.<sup>73</sup> Such intelligence-gathering is the first step toward representation and thus weaponization against urban communities.<sup>74</sup> Urban simulation and technologies discourse insulates municipal and commercial actors from democratic accountability, allowing a claim to scientific rationality when the decision-making is informed by computer models and anonymized algorithms. Through claims of data-richness and methods of reenactment, these platforms may only further entrench the disparities of access and visibility in our cities.

## Notes

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- 2 "Virtual Singapore," National Research Foundation Singapore, accessed May 17, 2021, [www.nrf.gov.sg/programmes/virtual-singapore](http://www.nrf.gov.sg/programmes/virtual-singapore).
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- 5 See Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege* (London: Verso, 2010); Shannon Mattern, *A City Is Not a Computer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); and Felicity D. Scott, *Outlaw Territories* (New York: Zone Books, 2016).
- 6 Mary S. Morgan, *The World in the Model: How Economists Work and Think* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5–6.
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- 8 See Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007); Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2007); and Graham, *Cities*.
- 9 See Jon Agar, *The Government Machine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997); John Harwood, *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945–1976* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); and Chris Hables Gray, *Peace, War and Computers* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 10 Orlansky and Thorpe, "73 Easting." For a detailed summary and analysis of this project, see Stephen Biddle, "Victory Misunderstood," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 139–179.
- 11 Duncan C. Miller, "SIMNET and Beyond: A History of the Development of Distributed Simulation," IITSEC Fellows Paper, 2015. See also: Timothy Lenoir, "All But War Is Simulation: The Military Entertainment Complex" *Configurations* 8, no. 3 (2000), in which he first discusses SIMNET.
- 12 Jack Thorpe, "Trends in Modeling, Simulation and Gaming: Personal Observation about the Past Thirty Years and Speculations About the Next Ten," *Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation, and Education Conference Proceedings* (2010), 4.
- 13 Antoine Bousquet, *The Eye of War: Military Perception from the Telescope to the Drone* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).
- 14 Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 2001), 5.
- 15 I use the term "near-real time" and "real time" as it is being used in literature from the case studies I am examining. I do not have the space in this chapter to provide a critical overview of the term or to analyze the technical limits and speeds of information transmission.
- 16 ARPANET was the predecessor of the internet.

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# POSTHUMAN URBANISM

## Datafication, algorithmic governance and Covid-19

*Ignas Kalpokas*

### Posthuman embeddedness

It is a truism that the Covid-19 pandemic has severely disrupted, if not altogether transformed, today's way of life. In order to gauge the full impact, however, one needs to adopt a posthumanist standpoint. In fact, it is increasingly obvious that the Cartesian stance of modernity, premised on causation, absolute knowledge and disembodied rationality and separation of the knowing (human) subject, understood as autonomous and self-determining, from the rest of the world becomes increasingly unsustainable.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it makes much more sense to recast the human self as *relational*, embedded within broader entanglements consisting of physical, digital and biological components,<sup>2</sup> in this case – the virus itself, but also devices, sensors, data, apps, algorithms. Hence, the subject is rendered “embedded, embodied and yet flowing in a web of relations with human and non-human others.”<sup>3</sup> Such placement *within* the world rather than *above* it is at the heart of posthumanism.

At the heart of posthumanist thinking lies the acknowledgment that “agentic and performative capacities” are shared between humans and their organic and inorganic counterparts.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the human/nature dualism, a staple of modern Western thought, is decisively undermined.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, “[e]veryday life [...] is an ongoing composition in which humans and non-humans participate.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, had one needed a clear illustration of this interrelationship and embeddedness of humans with their environment broadly conceived, the Covid-19 pandemic has served as a perfect example and not just because of the severe disruption to human life caused by that permanent *Other* – Nature – but also because of the importance of the lived environments (particularly the built urban areas) to the pandemic management efforts.

Moreover, posthumanism aims to overcome the understanding of human wellbeing that “envisages a ‘good’ human life as one that is freed from the vicissitudes – the risks and vulnerabilities – of living on the planet, of being part of ‘nature,’ of being animal” – meaning circumvention of the risks and inconveniences characteristic of living in a world that is more-than-human.<sup>7</sup> The process of overcoming, in the meantime, pertains to another fallacy of anthropocentrism – that the autonomization of the human can only be made possible on the back of “the use, exploitation and redesign of nonhuman nature”; that is justified as a matter of supposed “unique and exceptional qualities” that humans are claimed to have, thus legitimizing an exceptional standard of care.<sup>8</sup> In the Covid-19 context, this means, as shown below, among other things, excessive datafication practices and growing efforts in environmental management.

With the above in mind, critique of the *anthropos* benchmark as “a thoroughly gendered, raced construction” whose “marginalized, colonialized ‘others’ were rendered susceptible to acts and forms of domination legitimated by assumptions concerning (white) masculine superiority and mastery”<sup>9</sup> clearly resonates with the posthumanist field of concerns. To further underscore the claim, a three-fold anthropocentric claim can be identified: that “humans are special and privileged entities compared to other living beings (ontology), they are the only sources of knowledge (epistemology) and the sole holders of moral value (ethics).”<sup>10</sup> However, it is increasingly clear that *pre-covidian* ideas of freedom and independence-qua-domination are no longer applicable – instead, the human has been revealed to be just one part of an interdependent system, vulnerable rather than masterly. Posthumanism, therefore, positions itself against “foundational anthropocentric assumptions underpinning Western philosophy and science” whereby the “rational and intentional human subject” is seen as “the locus of epistemological and moral agency, responsibility and accountability.”<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, as will be shown below, the pandemic has given rise precisely to the overdetermined reassertion of such attributes. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has also added a further – technological – dimension of embeddedness. A posthumanist stance aims to understand the ways in which technology becomes not merely a tool but, instead, one of the elements with which humans increasingly share their agency and that, even more fundamentally, become co-constitutive of a shared existence.<sup>12</sup> Hence, urban space cannot be understood without taking into consideration the increasingly ‘smart’ capacities of the surroundings, from the built environment to transportation, to provision of municipal services and much more. This understanding has become particularly acute as the pandemic has resulted in urban affordances becoming the epicenter of surveillance and containment.

The above points to the necessity for sharing individual and political agency with both data-based digital systems and the technology companies behind them – all of these being tendencies exacerbated, as shown below, by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thereby, according to posthumanists, one must account for the impossibility of separating matter from meaning, or the technological from the social because the boundaries between them are impossible to trace – instead, they are constituted through relational practices.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the core defining feature of subjectivity is “ontological relationality, which is the power to affect and be affected.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, posthumanism sensitizes us to the “foundational anthropocentric assumptions underpinning Western philosophy and science whereby the rational and intentional human subject is seen as the locus of epistemological and moral agency, responsibility and accountability.”<sup>15</sup> Abandoning such assumptions allows seeing datafied, quantified and algorithmically ordered human existence in a new light – as part and parcel of a changing ontology of the human, whereby technological developments and the commercial interests driving them make it impossible for the autonomous and independently rational self to unfold, instead entangling humans within broader systems of connectivity. If there had to be a development that laid the non-autonomous technologically interconnected nature of the human bare, the pandemic was certainly one.

Indeed, researchers increasingly characterize today’s life in terms of the increasing impossibility of distinguishing between the real and the virtual as well as between the natural, the human and the machinic, ultimately leading toward interactions taking precedence over entities.<sup>16</sup> In this new world, the argument goes, artifacts have become more than mere machines that are only capable of following human instructions but, instead, are now increasingly autonomous and adaptive entities feeding on ever-increasing troves of data.<sup>17</sup> As demonstrated by the pandemic, technology has proved to be an ordering force in human social life (determining (un)available contacts, tracking and managing movements, closing and opening entire societies) and co-constitutive in the practices and experiences of the everyday, from working and learning practices to partaking in escapist fantasies, in both forms enabling

what was seen as a digital ‘cleaning up’ of the messiness and contagion of the physical (mostly urban) environment. That only further illustrates that human beings are always “more-than-human” in the sense of being “always already distributed phenomena, interembodied with other humans and with nonhumans, multiple and open to the world” within a seemingly endless set of “human–data assemblages.”<sup>18</sup> That should not be seen as an outcome of some technologically determinist forces but, instead, as a complex combination of technological, social, cultural and political interactions.

It is a staple of posthumanist thinking that agency must be seen as characteristic to more than just humans. Therefore, in order to take full account of causation and, therefore, governance, nonhuman elements become paramount, particularly in cases of technological interaction, putting significant emphasis on the capacities and parameters of devices, the influence of algorithms and data – as well as the technological infrastructures underlying them. And the economic, behavioral and political practices relating to devices, data, algorithms and technology<sup>19</sup> become co-constitutive of everyday practices, not least in the way of opening and closing of possibilities and environmental personalization. On the one hand, such a reconsideration enables the overcoming of a popular narrative that postulates competition between humans and machines.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, though, as neither of the technological elements is freestanding but, instead, has a commercial logic behind it, one becomes an object of datafication and technologization without reaping most of the benefits, or such benefits merely cover for new and emerging forms of digital exploitation as happened in the context of Covid-19. For this reason, pandemic response through increasing surveillance, algorithmic governance and introduction of new ‘smart’ capacities (such as location and contact tracing), especially in densely inhabited urban environments, should be seen as a particular form of reaction to the increasing obviousness of the posthumanist state of the world.

Following from the above, techno–solutionism should be seen as a nominally anthropocentric counterreaction to the impending obviousness of human embeddedness and dependence on their surroundings – something that posthumanists have been stressing all along. That was possible due to some of the shared premises of posthumanism and techno–solutionism as both devote a lot of attention to the growing technologization of today’s world. However, whereas posthumanism focuses on horizontal agglomerations of humans, biological and physical nature, technology, the techno–solutionist counterreaction to such a world is focused on the arrogant fiction of using technology to transcend such agglomerations and reestablish humanist hierarchy. Paradoxically, as shown below, the latter only serves as a technique of exploitation through excessive datafication and techno–centric governance, *reducing* the status of the human to a subject of technology *instead of elevating it*.

### **Privatization of digital management capacities**

The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the extent to which, in today’s interconnected world, the state has witnessed its effectiveness being reduced as a result of global movement not only of goods and people but also of diseases and other threats. That, in turn, necessitates robust surveillance and population control capacities. However, the state often has limited mastery of such capacities and has to resort on private surveillance, which, in turn, leads to *infrastructural subjectivation*, which refers to the establishment of “a set of relationships that mobilize and aggregate users and non-users with non–human data points.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the necessity for surveillance and data analytics capacities had led authorities into dependence upon technology companies to fill in the gaps within the capacities of state and municipal authorities,<sup>22</sup> thereby stripping away much of the former’s power and leeway to deal with the emerging situation.<sup>23</sup> In this way, data-

and surveillance-centric companies can aim for a ‘regulatory capture’ of national and municipal government in terms of embedding themselves not just as useful allies and solution providers but also as unquestionable authorities and advisers in all matters digital,<sup>24</sup> including but by no means limited to pandemic control.

Crucially, the emphasis on finding ‘novel’ solutions, often encountered in public discussions and policy briefs pertaining to the pandemic and dealing with its effects, effectively functions as “a euphemism for technological innovation.”<sup>25</sup> Technology here becomes a tool for mitigating risks and uncertainties, with the hope that its disciplinary and analytical/predictive capacities will forewarn and help overcome any crisis.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, not only “[r]eal-time and accurate information is critical to the improved efficacy and efficiency of emergency response tasks,”<sup>27</sup> but also credit for any success in the current pandemic management (such as the flattening of the n<sup>th</sup> wave of the pandemic) is given precisely to digital technologies and, more narrowly, their surveillance and data-analytic capacities. In short, both citizens and the authorities have come to expect an ‘algorithmic fix’<sup>28</sup> to essentially everything, which has also been called *technological solutionism*.<sup>29</sup> Typical of such techno-solutionism, the medical domain has become one of the many in which human decision-making, at least for the tech aficionados, is increasingly seen as superfluous and even dangerous. In this way of thinking, “life threatening decisions are still heavily reliant upon human-based interpretations that are time consuming and lack a comprehensiveness of data evaluations”<sup>30</sup> due to the insufficient embrace of technology, particularly AI. In a way, this is part and parcel of the human effort to control that ultimate *Other* – Nature,<sup>31</sup> including the nature in ourselves. In the context of Covid-19, this has been manifested within the nexus of society-wide datafication and surveillance processes, hyped analytical tools, technology-enabled micromanagement of daily activities and the resultant delegation of decision-making capacities from the political to the technological sphere, such as AI-based modeling and healthcare planning, automated analytics or primacy of data analysts over elected representatives as faces of pandemic management.

In the case of Covid-19, intrusive surveillance in the form of movement and contact tracing, reconstruction of interactions and automated algorithmic risk assessment became almost de rigeur.<sup>32</sup> Particularly in urban areas, due to their population density, a combination of “city information resources, data science skills and executive power to operate” has been touted as almost a magic bullet for solving issues pertaining to public health and pandemic management.<sup>33</sup> After all, it was the mobility and spatial behavior of individuals that authorities have sought to regulate the most,<sup>34</sup> and these are among the most straightforwardly governable aspects of human life, inasmuch as surveillance and sensory capacities are concerned. In such circumstances, something as familiar and mundane as mobile phone data have become one of the core resources for pandemic management purposes.<sup>35</sup> With regard to Covid-19, one must agree that the centrality of personal data, including movement, biometrics (for example, temperature scanning), patterns of behavior, personal perceptions of mood and health and so on only leads to unprecedented levels of surveillance.<sup>36</sup> This, in turn, necessitates a rethinking of spatial and digital organization – and even the status of the human person.

### Smart urbanism and digital inequality

As one considers the impact of and response to the pandemic, urban areas have become the main objects of concern, regulation and experimentation particularly in terms of the movement and gatherings of humans as well as the distribution and patterns of everyday practices.<sup>37</sup> As population densities of all kinds have been seen as hotbeds of Covid-19 risk,<sup>38</sup> both physical and digital ‘cleaning up’ has been on the agenda ever since the global impact of the pandemic started



being felt. That, in turn, could lead to undesirable outcomes, such as expansion of built areas and vast infrastructure construction projects due to growing suburbanization as well as greater inequality between those who can and cannot afford such new suburban living.<sup>39</sup> This spread is also part of a transformation of the lived environment from landscapes to *connectionsapes*: as connectivity becomes a default requirement (particularly with full or partial work from home having become normalized and often desirable), large parts of the population will have less and less need to commute to work and will thus be able to spread more thinly, having a greater impact on both the physical (through extension of built-up areas) and the data (through extended use of communication technologies) environments.<sup>40</sup> Simultaneously, these changes have led to further exacerbation of preexisting inequalities from the familiar lines of socioeconomic status and race to infrastructure access<sup>41</sup> as some become capable of inserting themselves into such connectionsapes more centrally than others.

Perhaps even more pertinently, urban areas have been turned into datafication laboratories. In fact, it would hardly be an overstretch to assert that in the discussions of lessons learned from the pandemic, the physical/spatial domain is seen as a challenge, and the digital/data domain is taken as the solution.<sup>42</sup> Here, one can witness “the reworking of location determination technologies, data and machine learning algorithms” in order to formulate *predictable futures* for the purpose of controlling and preventing mobilities.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, a broader set of ‘smart city’ infrastructures is employed in order to observe and manage populations, whereby access and other opportunities end up being dependent on individual data patterns.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the matter of inclusion and exclusion has become a paramount one in pandemic response and not just in terms of infected vs not infected, but also in terms of digital access and, in particular, material inequalities,<sup>45</sup> with the latter greatly affecting both the capacity to maintain social distancing in both private and public settings as well as access to services that have moved to a digital-first (and, often, digital-only) mode. The age-old domination drive is clearly evident here, just with technological overtones added into the mix.

Indeed, the key selling point of the digital ‘cleaning up’ of urban life is premised upon the promise of smart cities, courtesy to the communication networks and computational and datafication infrastructures built into them acting as magic bullets, becoming ever more resilient and guaranteeing the security of their citizens.<sup>46</sup> The focus is typically on efficiency, speed, adaptability and new economic opportunities that ‘smartness’ is going to offer.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, this drive toward ‘smartness’ is not without its critics. In fact, typical discussions of smart urbanism have a tendency toward a reduction of citizenship within technologically mediated top-down relations as the new forms of governance turn humans into simultaneously tools and objects of sensing, surveillance and datafication.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, as a city is transformed into a smart platform, the matters of values and bias (inherent in both data and code) come to the fore, particularly when the setting of algorithmic weightings of potentially sensitive individual or group-level attributes is entrusted to unaccountable and anonymous programmers employed by some tech company rather than politically accountable officials.<sup>49</sup> Crucially, the outcome of the pandemic consists, to a large extent, of the normalization and valorization of such technocratic control practices.

Instead of greater empowerment, resilience and personalized service provision promised by the advocates of ‘smart cities,’ the actual outcome could well be a significant increase of corporate influence through technological mediation of infrastructures.<sup>50</sup> As a characteristic illustration of the preceding, the more data-centric discussions of pandemic management includes citizens and civic groups merely as partners in the quest for more effective datafication, while any participation in decision-making (and, indeed, any political processes of deliberation or oversight) are foregone in favor of automated algorithmic decision-making, with efficiency being the main selling point.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, when a city becomes dependent on portals, corporate

authentication systems and proprietary apps that cannot be interrogated or scrutinized, not only ordinary citizens but also public officials become dependent on private partners because, once ‘smart’ functions are embedded into the core of systems and processes, the rolling back (or even changing the private partner in question) of which becomes close to impossible.<sup>52</sup> Hence, the increasing datafication and ‘smart-ification’ of (primarily urban) life in the wake of the pandemic is likely to have lasting negative effects on privacy and political empowerment – the exploitative underbelly of techno-solutionism.

Likewise, the “quasi-suspension of time”<sup>53</sup> that has characterized the pandemic experience has only further underscored the centrality of technology in everyday life. While the more optimistic accounts have focused on how connectivity, progress and new, greener, energy sources will become the solutions to all problems,<sup>54</sup> the status quo at present is marked, more appropriately, by access and technological inequalities and environmental degradation and pollution caused by a scramble for resources necessary for device manufacturing and by greenhouse gas emissions associated with the massive power demands of data storage and transfer, such as data centers needing significant power resources for both cooling and maintenance.<sup>55</sup> Hence, while it is relatively uncontroversial that “the Covid-19 pandemic has worked as an accelerator of pre-existing dynamics by pushing an IT development process and the interconnection of the global society,” affecting not just present but also future choices, the societal and environmental sustainability of such changes, particularly as societies worldwide were forced to dive into such transformations right at the deep end, is likely to be transformational in a negative way.<sup>56</sup>

### Surveillance, datafication and prediction

The proliferation of sensing capacity across everyday environments means that the awareness of datafication is decreased as “the monitoring infrastructure allows for passive, distributed, always-on data collection.”<sup>57</sup> This is a common feature of “surveillance capitalism” that relies on extensive data collection to predict the future.<sup>58</sup> For others, meanwhile, this represents nothing short of a reprise of colonial practices: for them, “data colonialism appropriates not only physical resources but also our very resources for *knowing* the world.”<sup>59</sup> In this way, both users and decision-makers have increasingly become accustomed to and expectant of near-complete transparency of populations and their bodies, both as groups and as individuals. This transparency, however, does not exist for its own sake – it is, instead, attributable to the broader process of profit-minded conversion of lives and relations to data.<sup>60</sup> Hence, the most prevalent techniques of pandemic response tend to conspicuously coincide with the interests of the technology industry. However, one should not rush to blame collusion or conspiracy, as has become commonplace during the pandemic, but, instead, the overwhelming culture of tech- and data-centric thinking that results in the preponderance of technological solutionism.

In a more industry-apologetic fashion, “AI processes [...] coupled with wearable technologies, can and must be encouraged, as it will render larger datasets and hence more accurate prediction and detection.”<sup>61</sup> Hence, the solution to any setbacks and lack of robustness should allegedly be simply doubling down on the same, that is, further increase in datafication: transparency should lead to predictability in a move that ultimately frames technological (and technologized) governance as “a form of caring.”<sup>62</sup> Thereby, anticipatory governance, reliant on population-wide data collection, management and analytics has been enabled – a shift toward *creation* of ‘predictable futures.’ In the context of Covid-19, this involved, among other things, channeling and preventing mobilities, identifying and isolating risky contacts and taking action against law violations, and other norms, prior to them taking place.<sup>63</sup> Essentially, this is predictive policing extended into the overall principle of societal organization and public health. In the same vein,

the expectation is that AI-based pandemic prediction and modeling would help preparedness and help formulate policy outputs more efficiently.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, for others, increased surveillance and the resulting flows of big data, coupled with artificial intelligence, represent a winning combination against any future crises.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the challenge to this rule of thumb, posed by Covid-19, is precisely that of prognostication having been thrown into disarray, some bodies failing without prior indications, while others suddenly become tainted by risk factors that can be only very roughly approximated. It is precisely here that the nature of techno-solutionism in the pandemic response, as an overdetermined reaction to (and, therefore, attempted denial of) the interconnectedness and embeddedness that posthumanists had been emphasizing all along, is starting to become acutely clear.

Given the techno-optimism outlined above, it comes as no surprise that citizens across different countries have demonstrated increased willingness to sacrifice some of their civil liberties, particularly with regard to surveillance and data collection, for the purpose of tackling the pandemic.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the pandemic has “loosened institutional constraints and policy imaginations and provided a mandate for change and deepening governance experimentation” or, in other words, “shifted what is thinkable, feasible and socially and politically acceptable.”<sup>67</sup> In this way, new pathways for ‘innovation’ – for example, further advances in datafication and algorithmic governance – are being opened.<sup>68</sup> Such focus on experimentation, pilot projects, analytics, typically delegated to the private sector and left to its own profit-maximizing logics, extends not just across pandemic response projects but also into post-pandemic recovery practices.<sup>69</sup> Should one agree that contemporary data colonialism is centered around human life being appropriated so as to generate even more data flows and, correspondingly, ever-greater profits, and that such a broad rollout of business-led datafication practices acquires definite exploitative overtones – made palatable as attempts to regain the anthropocentric fiction – with all its hierarchical and violent attributes that have been manifest throughout history.<sup>70</sup>

In a broad sense, it becomes obvious that such impersonal subjectivation reaches its full potential through “orchestrating a set of relations among groups, humans, non-humans, services or products, places, spaces, technologies and times,”<sup>71</sup> ensuring that today’s world can only be explored as a matter of ‘sociotechnical assemblages.’<sup>72</sup> Hence, while the discourse of societal optimization is prevalent – for example, that “we can get new understanding about how our society works and improve public health, municipal services and consumer products” – it must also be kept in mind that these developments have to be paid for, albeit in a nontraditional currency: data.<sup>73</sup> There is, nevertheless, at least the expectation of exchange within this datafying move that makes us inseparable from technology: that the solutions offered would be superior and that our societies will be proofed against the unexpected. Although what we have witnessed in 2020 and 2021 should have torn any such faith into tatters, opening up the unpredictable core of the everyday, the response has been a doubling down on technological solutions, extending surveillance and analytics efforts in line with today’s push toward ever-greater datafication.

Likewise, a crucial defining feature of the contemporary environment has been the “shift from a regime of truth to a regime of anticipation,” based on algorithmic prediction and its expected ability to foresee the trends and patterns to come,<sup>74</sup> including, in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, deployment of machine learning tools for prediction of outbreaks and deployment of supplies and medical personnel<sup>75</sup> with varying degrees of success. In this linear structure of algorithmic governance, informed by sets of *if... then* rules, straightforward paths from past records to predicted future outcomes are presumed, thereby crudely shoveling humans into groups united by ascribed traits and projected trajectories of behavior and/or risk factors. This narrowing down of thought processes and failure to see beyond projected trajectories based on some sets of data but not others and loss of the contextual ‘big picture’ falls squarely in line with computational

algorithmic logics – but ultimately fails to take into account the messiness of the real world, creating the conditions for deceptively straightforward strategies. These may point imaginary pathways toward mastery of the world but are, sooner or later, to be undermined due to their failure to account for the underlying interrelatedness and embeddedness that characterizes the world – perhaps giving rise to yet another wave of techno-solutionist self-deception.

Even though, with the advent of Covid-19, states have adopted techniques for population management that are best seen as tools for more effective conditioning of populations as resources, it transpires that the virus could not have been contained even through drastic actions, leading to “a sense of collective responsibility is growing toward those who cannot protect themselves: those who can’t work at home, those who are in unfavorable sanitary conditions, the elderly, etc.”<sup>76</sup> In order to reinforce such management, a turn to technology and its surveillance capacity was billed as necessary. What matters in either of those cases is the capacity to demonstrate, in whatever way, one’s compliance with the prescribed norm, the benchmark for desirable biological condition. It is even better if that normality is corroborated across sources: therefore, “I need to ensure that my body and my data are *perfectly* aligned,”<sup>77</sup> and in order to do so, surveillance – either by state authorities directly, as in tracking the movements of individuals, mandating checking in and registration on arrival or on entering mass events or by way of outsourcing surveillance to the technology companies – is an absolute must. In this way, once again, the shortcomings of datafication were simply covered with more datafication, this time also shifting a large part of the responsibility to citizens themselves.

Indeed, today’s world of datafication and algorithmic prediction is a world that expects to know everything, preferably in clear-cut categories – in fact, “it’s not the extremes that are difficult to maintain, but ambivalence.”<sup>78</sup> The legitimizing discourse for datafication and algorithmic analysis aims to sell this transparency and ascription of status as a matter of efficiency and value-maximization. Some predict that in the near future, the world will be awash with swiftly moving low-cost data that, when parsed through by cutting-edge machine learning algorithms, will be able to identify the best possible potential transactions.<sup>79</sup> And while economic transactions dominate the accounts of progress, it is by no means a stretch to imagine the same for risk calculations in relationships – turning to tech to tell which social (but also familial and intimate) ties to make and maintain and who is to be shunned for not meeting a preset risk threshold. In this way, submission to datafication becomes a desirable trait, while someone unwilling to participate becomes a Luddite and a renegade standing in the way of progress (or pandemic response). Meanwhile, “human life, and particularly human social life, is increasingly being constructed *so that* it generates data from which profit can be extracted” while the individuals themselves are increasingly desensitized simply as a result of the ubiquity of surveillance.<sup>80</sup>

### **Depersonalization and responsabilization: Digital antinomies**

Such datafication would be impossible without a shift toward *sensor society* – “a world in which the interactive devices and applications that populate the digital information environment come to double as sensors” and thereby lead to ambient surveillance serving to “complicate and reconfigure received categories of privacy, surveillance and sense-making.”<sup>81</sup> The ambient sensing capacity of the sensor society results in an unprecedented growth of the amount of data that are generated by sensors that subsequently necessitate the development of new machine learning techniques to boost analytic capacities accordingly.<sup>82</sup> Hence, in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, smartphones became the key tracing tool, courtesy to both their ubiquity, in-built sensing capacities and the likelihood that they would stay on the person at all times<sup>83</sup>; other tools, from CCTV to car registration plate scanning were widely used as well. Here, again,

there seems to be a paradox that, despite the preexisting infrastructure, the large number of victims and the spread of Covid-19 could not be prevented, undermining the anticipatory claim, while simultaneously the already-familiar expectation is that if only we increased the existing infrastructure and the quantity of data collected either through additional sensors and apps or through increased use of the available ones, any remaining obstacles to predictability and anticipation could be overcome and the spread of the virus stalled.<sup>84</sup>

The normalization of the sensing and anticipation infrastructure also means that self-quantification and self-optimization become natural, thereby “turning individuals into willing data providers.”<sup>85</sup> In other words, we have been trained to enjoy our own datafication. The catch is, though, that once ambient data collection and self-datafication are combined, “the ability to micromanage lifestyles becomes virtually limitless”<sup>86</sup> – or at least it should be if the turn to data- and techno-solutionism is to pay off. In this way, populations that may otherwise be wary of intrusive government measures have become docile and even complicit once disciplinary policies are shrouded in digital technology while also submitting to algorithmic benchmarks of deviant and ideal subjects.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the technologization of everyday life seems to be all-pervasive: from private initiatives to local or national authorities and in domains ranging from public transport to infection control, the message seems to be fairly similar: “be responsible – use the app.”<sup>88</sup> That, in turn, only contributes to the growing acceptance of intensified surveillance as well as of the switch of many societal functions, from learning to meeting up, to their remote forms. And while the intensification of this shift is, of course, Covid-19-related, the move of interactions and societal functions from their more spontaneous face-to-face forms to more easily governable online forms will, likely, be welcomed and maintained by both governments and technology companies.

Indeed, the overall default position seems to be that key problems can be solved – or avoided altogether – if only the population was using more digital tools and thus further entangling themselves in the web of data and algorithms. Even beyond the pandemic, this approach must be seen as part of the general shift toward responsabilization as “a situation where responsibility is moved from higher up in the system – usually a state or government agency – to individuals.”<sup>89</sup> Perhaps nowhere the trend toward responsabilization is clearer than in the domain of health and lifestyle where, concurrent with the overall self-quantification trend, “citizens are encouraged to monitor and improve their lifestyle, using mobile health apps” while also being exposed to social engineering techniques.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, it has been observed that digital tools are underpinned with a tendency to confer significant responsibilities (of, for example, self-datafication) on the citizens, thus relieving the state of its duty of care – instead, the ‘reliable citizen,’ in effect, substitutes institutional actors that have become impotent in the wake of the neoliberal drive for efficiency and privatization.<sup>91</sup> Particularly in the midst of the pandemic, even the most fundamental of bodily functions, such as breathing, become suspicious, making the body an object of heightened awareness and monitoring.<sup>92</sup> In terms of the Covid-19 pandemic, this responsabilization seems to be embedded in the dual necessity to, first, surrender as much data as possible in order to redeem technology’s anticipatory and solutionist promise and, second, to ensure that population management efforts are adhered to, from observing social distancing and lockdown rules to simply avoiding individuals (who could be close friends or family members) who are deemed (by track and trace apps or large-scale prognostication models) to be posing risk.

## **Conclusion**

There is a definite paradox in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic: on the one hand, the pandemic itself can be seen as a massive failure of the drive toward prediction, ordering and

control via technology and data while, on the other hand, the reaction has been merely a doubling down of the same techno-solutionism. Such techno-solutionism, however, has a clear commercial impetus behind it, further entrenching the ever-growing power of technology companies in regulation and governance. In particular, urban environments became laboratories for introduction of ‘smart’ features and other tools for a digital cleaning up of the alleged messiness of the physical. In addition to contributing to ever-growing datafication and subjection of populations to agency-diminishing predictive governance, such technologization of response has also shrunk the capacity of ordinary citizens, public officials and professionals to scrutinize and provide the necessary checks and balances for techno-solutionist tools and measures. Hence, the paradox at the heart of the matter is that the response to the validation by the pandemic of posthumanist claims of embeddedness and interrelationship has been an exploitative reinforcement of datafication and algorithmization, which in practice only further undermines the human to a status far below the egalitarian stance of posthumanism.

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## PART VII

# Conclusion



## INTERMISSION

## Critical mappings of spatial politics and aesthetics

*Stephen Walker*

This *Handbook of Architecture, Urban Space and Politics* has been set up by the editors, Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi, as a resource, a point of reference and a stimulus to reflection and action. The practices and products of architecture and urban space are brought into sustained contact with current debates concerning the spatialization of politics and the politicization of space in ways that broaden understandings of the range and complexity of all these ingredients. At this point, midway through the two-volume set, my role in writing this intermission is to take a step back and reflect on the frame that Volume I offers for the organization and development of this work and to dwell on some of the through-lines that emerge. I will focus on the connections between politics and control (and between violence and governmentality); on what this frame might reveal about the epistemological complexity of the topic; and on the various ways that this might be ‘viewed’ and ‘written.’ Given that one of the intended audiences for this Handbook is students of architecture and associated (urban) design disciplines, I will also briefly discuss the role and consequences of authorship, education and the production and circulation of knowledge.

One of the opportunities of this intermission is to step back from some of the details of the chapters collected here in Volume I and to rearrange some of those with different neighbors. In that sense, it is less a user’s guide or conclusion than a *reframing*, but one that is offered on the understanding that it is based on a different sequence of reading than will be undertaken by most users. The majority of readers will not have started at the beginning and continued through to the end of this or any handbook. Instead, it is more likely that particular chapters or sections have been targeted, without any obligation to the overall trajectory. While the intention of any handbook is to provide a point of reference, a manual that can be consulted to assist with a particular task, the present work can be used – misused, perhaps – to dwell more on thinking about the political, architectural imaginary, prompting or encouraging us to imagine, question, rethink. In contrast to political urban handbooks, such as the *Leyes de las Indias* [*Laws of the Indies*],<sup>1</sup> with a proscriptive and colonizing intention, the frames, contents, details and the theories contained here can be run in many directions. Indeed, they run against each other, prompting us, as readers, to make our own connections, to bring these examples into our own orbit. As such, the handbook is demonstrably not encyclopedic in scope or in application but, instead, sets up a kind of active, operative reading that can be linked to the political experiences of architecture and urban space. Many of the contributors write themselves into their texts, situating their

knowledge explicitly in particular geographical, cultural and disciplinary locations in ways that encourage a reciprocal attitude on behalf of their readers. This also provides a certain resistance, or at least requires a bit of work in the transfer or recombination of insights from the handbook entries. For my own part, it has also prompted conversations with the editors about whether mine is an appropriate voice here – as a white, professional, cisgender, Anglophone middle-aged man – in the longer work of this handbook that sets out so consistently to draw attention to the limitations that must be understood to accompany similar voices. These conversations also touched on the multiple points of contact between the examples or approaches raised in the handbook and a flurry of contemporary events that resonated or reiterated the currency of these debates.

### Terms of reference

The stated intention of Volume I was to consider a broad sweep of limiting and oppressive spatial narratives, in preparation for different, more propositional work in Volume II. These narratives operated, and operate still, across many scales, from the individual body to trans-global networks of colonial and more recent trade and financial power. They act on the body, directly and indirectly, implicating architecture as well as governance, finance and social mores and behaviors and also operate on nonhuman actors in manifold ways, from the categorizing of the ongoing extractible ‘resource’ often called *nature*, to the tools, techniques and technologies deployed to move people and goods around the globe, to histories or stories – verbal or visual – providing or preventing person- or statehoods. Volume I has set out an extensive, representative but necessarily incomplete cataloging of how, where and when such spatial narratives – as well as counter claims or covert or overt responses – have become manifest.

Their explicit approach to organizing this consideration is announced in the five main sections established in the editors’ structuring, which addresses in particular urban entanglements with violence and war; individual and collective identity, race, belonging; the complexity of border situations and the contradictory dynamics of these notions, both beneficial and unsettling; the roles of media in challenging and reinforcing claims to place and identity; and the histories of information and its circulation. This carries an underlying concern, echoed in many of the individual chapters, regarding the role of knowledge in producing and contesting such situations and the associated dynamics of violence and control; and how new forms, modes or locations of knowledge can both contest previous assumptions and reach new or previously ignored audiences. Some contributions already make such comparisons (such as those by Shiloh Krupar, H el ene Frichot and Sepideh Karami, and Redento B. Recio, Ishita Chatterjee, Luftun Nahar Lata and Neeraj Dangol); others can be brought into contact to elaborate wider issues, such as the progression across scales from Daniel Grincer’s account that draws from the individual experiences and eyewitness testimonies of detainees of Manus Prison, through to Mirjana Lozanovska’s account of the larger scale and longer histories of Australian immigration policies and practices.

The implicit politics of this handbook would align with progressive, new left, anti-gentrification, socially driven architectural and urban agendas broadly conceived. It counters multiple versions of a neoliberal approach to cities and governance that are manifest around the globe. Money is never far away from the discussions set out here. It is named explicitly in the analysis of the monetization of border policing and the financial, rather than political, rationale for the ongoing US occupying presence in Afghanistan (Farzin Lotfi-Jam), as well as the ‘failures’ that Thomas Nail analyzes related to the US–Mexican border, which similarly support and justify an ongoing commerce enjoyed by privatized border policing companies.

Where the texts in Volume I take a historical look over the shoulder to cities and their long association with violence and control, many provide us with a reminder of a belief (still held/peddled in some quarters, or taught in some schools of architecture and planning) that there is a causal link between ‘improved’ space and an ‘improved’ society, or that architecture has the capacity to address the full gamut of social issues. These can be linked to projects of normalization that stretch back, at least conceptually, deep into the histories of architecture and urbanism. More recent work has challenged this, reminding us that we need to remain cautious to avoid such deterministic cul-de-sacs. Michel Foucault’s work, referred to many times in the present volume, offers to demonstrate the range and complexity of contributory factors at play in these relationships of power (or *dispositif*) over space and the body.<sup>2</sup> Thinking with Foucault, for example, has provided architectural and urban theory with concepts and tools that allow us to identify and trace the exercise of power over and through the material and spatial forms of our environment, pushing the discourses of architecture to expand their vocabulary in ways that become more responsive to these powerful yet less visible forces.

Foucault’s focus on the micro-politics of individuals and their specific situations has been challenged elsewhere, but as various contributions here demonstrate, it can continue to prompt our considerations of power and control and expand definitions of violence.<sup>3</sup> The concern with the individual remains a strong through-line of discussion in the chapters collected here, whether these remain resolutely individual or as a factor in broader collective identities and actions. There is a clear concern that the individual citizen is increasingly becoming sidelined in discourse and practices that favor subjects or consumers. As Teresa Hoskyns discussed in her book *The Empty Place*, these changes in how people are conceptualized and (de)politicized can be linked to recent changes in public space under neoliberalism. The summary of the latter is familiar: the exclusion of citizen participation; minimal state; and the transfer of the ownership of public space to the private sector. The important move in Hoskyns’s argument is around the break this introduced into connections between public space and representative politics:

These combined factors can be seen to have broken the links between democracy and public space, and produced a de-spatialisation of democracy and a de-politicisation of public space. At the same time, the emphasis has moved from citizen to subject or consumer.<sup>4</sup>

Outlining these other, more stealthy modes of violence associated with neoliberalism, Hoskyns’s response builds upon the work of theorists such as Chantal Mouffe, arguing that we should no longer think of democracy happening in specific, privileged places where citizens can encounter and resolve difference.<sup>5</sup> Instead, ongoing disagreement should take place in multiple locations, where difference can be taken as an enduring constituent in the political process.

Such worries that there is no location from which alternate, oppositional practices or politics can organize are echoed in many of the chapters in this volume, from Lieven De Cauter’s discussion of zoöpolitics, to Redento B. Recio, Ishita Chatterjee, Luftun Nahar Lata and Neeraj Dangol’s examination of how planning documents entrench the politics of unseeing in unequal cities and city development in Asia, as well as the widening problem of inequality worldwide. In different contexts, Maroš Krivý provides a similar frame for viewing the casting of socialist heritage as an anomaly, a blip in conventional neoliberal discourse that prevents broader discussions of socialism; while in related critiques of housing provision, the chapters by both Lawrence Vale and Tahl Kaminer examine how different pressures and policies on (re)location move potential oppositional residents and residential practices aside. Neoliberalism is pretty much everywhere and ready to appropriate any emerging dissent or alternate practice. Other, multiple and heterogeneous modes

of access to space and representation take their place in opposition to reminders of preventions and restrictions to such access. These extend beyond the violences associated with the prevention of physical involvement, to encounter the successive waves and versions of a colonial project manifest in naming and memorialization. While both debate and direct action concerning public statues, for example, are now familiar to former colonial, postcolonial and postsocialist countries, little clear direction is emerging about how statues should be dealt with. (As I've been writing this intermission, one of the most high-profile recent cases in the UK has been back in the national media, with the acquittal of the 'Colston 4' in Bristol. They had been charged with criminal damage to the statue of Edward Colston, an English slave trader operating in the late 17th and early 18th Centuries.) Notwithstanding the clear focus of this action and the splintered debate about ongoing racism it has raised, similar concerns are recorded in the practices of naming and renaming. Actions to audit and otherwise record these less visible traces of spatial domination work to raise awareness, analyzed in this volume by Catherine D'Ignazio, Wonyoung So and Nicole Ntim-Addae. But there are different modalities of a similar violence, such as the projection of new and 'placeless' images of place popular among so-called 'world cities,' or aspiring world cities, such as Medellín discussed by Christina Deluchi. The concern here is not with the increasing ubiquity of the architectural forms that are projected, or the roster of international practices being commissioned, but with the challenges that the presumed 'neutrality' of space means for the design professions and for users of space/place; or with the double movement of exclusion from space and politics that Hoskyns notes.

These specific debates should (re)sensitize us to the variety of devices, as well as the common strategies and tactics, deployed to continue reproducing violence and socio-spatial control. In addition to the architectures of direct physical aggression, to memorialization and naming, these extend to various practices of 'unseeing' in planning processes, licensing and access to data. Despite the variety of these strategies, there is arguably a shared characteristic of claiming apparent neutrality or obfuscating their actual operation behind false simplifications.

One challenge shared by many of the excellent examples of resistance provided in this volume – for instance, the chapters by Pedro Fiori Arantes and Claudio Rezende Riberio, Aikaterini Antonopoulou and Farzaneh Haghighi – is that these examples cannot be reduced to an easy image or explanation. However, that is precisely what is often forced onto these examples by various powerful forces (government, business interests, media interests), making them easier to dismiss in sham democratic or consultative processes and negotiations.

One response to the feeling of being overwhelmed by these forces is explored by Tahl Kaminer, whose chapter here presents a detailed analysis of collective dwelling in the UK as a *coping mechanism* that residents resort to in the face of the powerful forces of real estate, property developers and landlords. Kaminer has explored elsewhere the broader tendencies of simplification and monopolization that are characteristic of narratives of power and violence, particularly the process and consequences of a reduction of complex mobilizations of resistance into apparently single-issue contestation.<sup>6</sup> Developing theoretically from Foucault (on biopower and subjectivization) and Ernesto Laclau (on recuperation), Kaminer notes other, more recent, examples of multiple, disparate populist contestations that are directed against a vaguely defined opponent (like 'the elite') and explores how these complex contestations become almost accidentally coalesced around single-issue demonstrations. While this can provide some sort of coherence within the demonstrators/opponents, the underlying consequence is that this empties out the content of that issue in the process.

These situations resonate with the comments made by Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi in their introduction to this volume, concerning the extent to which any violence is visible to us or becomes normalized. The reduction of complex political dynamics and protests to a simplified

representation runs in parallel to the declining visibility or representation of the nation-state and the rise of extra-state global corporations. The current violences of the latter range from the financial disappearance of these corporations thanks to complex, and invisible, offshore tax avoidance mechanisms, through to very visible proliferation of zero-hour contracts in multiple 'markets' as well as (often remote) environmental extraction and (often invisible) pollution. These dynamics of reduction, and the shadow play of visibility and invisibility that accompany them, connect with Hoskyns's observations of the double movement of exclusion from space and politics. Platforms are provided from which individual freedom of expression might appear easy, but these are underpinned by the decrease or complete removal of individual freedom from exploitation. Douglas Spencer's study of *The Architecture of Neoliberalism* devotes some space to observing how exploited workers in the so-called Global North – including creative types like architects and urban designers – seem willingly to espouse narratives of fun workplaces, collective sharing and so on, which cloak a chronic lack of choice over and rights in the employment models of the free market.<sup>7</sup> This system, while failing those who have to operate within it, supports and is supported by big business.

There are arguably different modes of cloaking that remain related to spatial location and conditions, despite neoliberalism's propensity to project homogenous spatial identity. These can be linked to the various examples of dehumanization, the reduction of humans to a part of some extraction/supply/service chain that Lieven De Cauter analyzes through the term zoöpolitics – or the reduction to bare life. Developing themes from his earlier work on the cellular or the capsule, the archipelago, systems that support bare life emerge cheek by jowl with those offering far greater engagement. Depending on an individual's position in social and spatial systems, these can result in both easy and obstructed movement across the same areas and can again be understood in terms of invisibility/visibility and to unseeing (in policy, in urban policy/geographical imaginaries).

Of course, while the invisibilities discussed are most often associated with decreasing opportunity for political participation and involvement, there are examples where invisibility provides opportunity for other forms of political agency and practice. Such invisible spaces are within as well as beyond the city, not only central to its ongoing function but potentially productive of other ways of doing architecture. These 'overlooked' places have frequently been noted and valued. Judith Rugg, for example, in her book *Exploring Site Specific Art: Issues of Space and Internationalism* offers a deliberate relay or reproduction of this argument stretching over half a century. She notes how in

*The Contradictions of Culture*, Elizabeth Wilson [2001] cites Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1958), which reflects on the 'contingent spaces' of the city: industrial estates, rubbish tips, suburbia, railway sidings, dead ends and wastelands, as oppositional to the 'necessary' parts of the urban centre such as the law courts, royal parks and sophisticated shopping malls.<sup>8</sup>

Rugg here captures a more straightforward spatial relationship between necessary and contingent spaces that was relevant for the cities of the modern period, but that fails to acknowledge the extent of the changes that have been wrought by neoliberalism. In their chapter in this volume, Cecilia Furlan and Manola Colabianchi pay close attention to such spaces, trace the complexity of 'wastelands' back to at least the 18th Century, and discuss its categorical, cartographic and taxonomic slipperiness. Shiloh Krupar's chapter extends this complexity into present day examples, providing more circumspect reminders about leftover space, whether in the city, the periphery or industrialized lands well beyond the city, where the various legacies of pollution do not make them such a great win for those (forced to) exploit these opportunities.



## Operative readings and critical mapping practices

Attention to complexity, invisibility and the overlooked such as those just mentioned can be set up more assertively and widely against the prevailing simplified accounts of the world around us, particularly where this is purportedly linked to ‘natural’ laws or evolutionary forces over which the individual has no control. The response for us as citizens, as subjects/consumers, as well as us as students, as architects, urban designers and educators is to practice and enjoy the complexity of potential cross-readings between things that are increasingly kept apart.

Extending this practice and finding perhaps unexpected connections or parallels between cities or political urban situations from very different geographies and cultures is one productive way of reading Volume I. While this presents an organized overview of spatial oppression, it also offers or activates expanded knowledge and vocabulary concerning architecture, the city and the potentials and limits of political engagement and action therein. This mode of engagement is not simply bookish, it is an operative way of reading that can translate to spatial experience in and between cities, and between different situations, underlying an increased capacity for future action. This handbook anticipates and plays out some of the complexities we face when encountering cities – that is to say, engaging with the handbook is itself operative, or involves something of the operative capacity we need to develop if we are to get ahead of the problem (or even get up alongside it). Fredric Jameson articulates his worry that effective political agency and action is caught up in changing urban legibility: “The incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience.”<sup>9</sup> For many students, architects and urban planners, the term ‘cognitive mapping’ would more likely be associated with the work of Kevin Lynch from the 1960s, where it was used to account for the unconscious techniques and interrelationships with their (urban) surroundings that citizens developed and deployed to make sense of their place, literally and metaphorically.<sup>10</sup> As Jameson uses it, the role of a strong cognitive map enabling someone to play an active role in their surroundings – to locate themselves in more or less familiar places, to act in different and nuanced ways according to changing circumstances – can reflect something of the complexity of political engagement and the importance of being able to navigate the dynamic and changing landscape of local, national and international issues as these potentially bear on specific moments. Moreover, his worry is that the socio-political landscape is changing, and quickly, while our ability to map and understand the social struggles to keep up. Many of the chapters collected here in Volume I provide examples where existing urban fabric, settings and locations have become resettled, repurposed or rebranded to the extent that they are no longer legible to accumulated or assumed cognitive mappings.

The situation concerning urban legibility continues to change. Arguably one of the most significant developments since Jameson was worrying about this in the 1980s relates to the emergence of big data. As Ate Poorthuis notes in his introduction to ‘Mapping Landscapes and Big Data,’ the widespread uptake of this technology has made many social and urban processes legible, some more than previously, some for the first time. With legibility comes the potential exercise of control over those processes and a warning that their use needs to be accompanied by the development of sensibilities or critical faculties in order to avoid a slippage between ‘useful’ data and what is just available because it is easily measurable. Despite the omniscient reach often claimed by big data approaches, data-gathering techniques and artificial intelligence/machine learning packages are shown to be partial and biased. However, these aspects are often illegible, contained within the black box of so-called smart technologies that pervade so many (and increasing) aspects of our lives. Lefebvre’s often-rehearsed warning, although issued from a different technological era, remains relevant. He tried to draw attention to a parallel ‘black

boxing' he observed in the apparent simplifications offered by abstract space that underlay many disciplinary approaches to the complexities of architecture and urbanism. Again with concerns for legibility, he noted, "[a]bstract space... is not in fact defined on the basis of what is perceived. Its abstraction has nothing simple about it: it is not transparent and cannot be reduced either to a logic or to a strategy... it operates negatively."<sup>11</sup>

To the abstractions of cartographic and orthographic drawing conventions Lefebvre was referring to in the 1960s, we can add a new family of abstractions we witness in the omnipresence of big data presentations and infographics. For the latter in particular, the abstracting tendency is arguably concealed behind an apparent desire for transparency, an over-provision of information. The ambition and coherence of this handbook, and the challenges it presents its readers/users as well as to architectures and spatial practices, is to help us situate ourselves – as practitioners as well as citizens – in this contemporary complexity: to draw attention and awareness – to build our capacity, according to current management jargon – regarding diverse spatial and social situations around the globe; and to encourage and extend our ability to 'map' these more fully and responsively. The scope of the challenges we currently face extends across disciplines, scales, territories and geographies. We need to expand previous mapping capacities and understanding accordingly, as well as become more aware of, or open to, non-localized connections, similarities or tactics that could transfer between locations. While none of this provides an easy answer, its more thoroughgoing promise is to counter the simplification of the topic, to sustain the need – and provide the tools – for asking questions and to acknowledge the explicit approach adopted here by Nikolina Bobic and Farzaneh Haghighi: to invite scholars from different disciplines and backgrounds and curate these contributions into a complex, open collection.

A related response to this complexity, and particularly to the contemporary changes that are taking place to our sensorium, is offered by Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman. In their recent book, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*, they return to and extend conceptions of aesthetics in ways that respond to questions that concern the role of the architectural and urban in representative politics (and its absence or repression) and explore, in particular, how complex information can be presented in ways that can be intelligible and legible but that can also resist simplification and abstraction.<sup>12</sup> They address aesthetics, or what they distinguish as *hyper aesthetics*, as a human sensorium that is augmented by and responsive to contemporary data collection and presentation technologies.

In the present context, their work on mapping and legibility takes account of how we can make connections between our changing sensing capacities and how we make sense of the qualitatively and quantitatively different information that is now available. In particular at this juncture, Fuller and Weizman's work offers ways of identifying and challenging the abstractions and black boxing of information about city, civic and political space and their interaction. Beyond the specific cases they discuss, their reflections on the presentation of information and mapping are relevant here. They acknowledge the influence that the German filmmaker Harun Farocki has had on their consideration of this way of seeing and presenting work, noting in particular

the mode of work that [Farocki] pioneered – a weaving together of separate media elements, technologies of vision, imaging, automation and detection, into a series of essay-films that offered deep critical and investigative interrogation of the intersection of politics and technology.<sup>13</sup>

Farocki discussed game space and navigation, and how this is challenging more traditional, linear montage and editing practices of films: similar lessons can be drawn – carefully – to support the development of critical mapping practices we can use to understand the politics of architecture

and urban space, particularly as these move to acknowledge the overlapping and interconnected spatialities of global and local actions, and the near-ubiquitous overlay of virtual and electronic space, used and navigated by local citizens and global power. This complexity of media and technological montage is explored in this volume by Endriana Audisho and Francesca Hughes, who read the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (or SAGE) system alongside Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove*, both projecting and fictionalizing the potential and complexity of networked and predictive drawing, with aspirations to monitor the whole world in real time.

### Looking again and the double movements of looking differently

It is instructive to turn some of Fuller and Weizman's approaches from *Investigative Aesthetics* to a different project, particularly the way they advocate the 'weaving together' of different media and imaging techniques into a complex and resistant account. Architect and landscape architect Anuradha Mathur and the architect and planner Dilip da Cunha posit what they refer to as "the eye of urbanism," and how the "cultivation of this eye" bears not only on the long and complex histories and cultures but also on how such an 'eye' might look and what it can – and cannot, or is not allowed to – see. As with many authors included in this handbook, Mathur and da Cunha position their analysis with respect to the images, discourses and the forms and locations of mediation, as well as to the wider disconnections between officially sanctioned images and empirical experience, to the threats and sanctions that are associated with these locations and the cities themselves that are being looked at. They argue that

[t]he separations made by the eye of urbanism and the clear and distinct things that it presumed possible were not necessarily considered or perhaps even seen by ordinary people. But drawn in maps, worked into administrative schemes and educational programmes, and made part of everyday conversation, they provided the language of governance that set the island [of Mumbai] on track to becoming the Island City.<sup>14</sup>

Mathur and da Cunha are not alone in making this distinction, but their discussion resonates with many of the global complexities – notably colonialism and postcolonialism, ecology and the climate crisis – shared by the other locations and issues discussed by the authors in this volume. They analyze the differences between Bombay and Mumbai – between a city formed by a colonial British 'eye' and that of a resistant, indigenous population, drawing in multiple layers of environmental and cultural conditions and conditioning. They explore how *the eye of urbanism* is formed and trace its consequences. And with an echo of Fredric Jameson's concerns about the consequences of spatial and political incapacity, they observe that "the eye of urbanism is so pervasive (and powerful) that to question it seems absurd."<sup>15</sup> Their analysis draws attention to the multiple cities that are Bombay/Mumbai, in between and beyond, and they subsequently begin to discuss how cities 'travel' to other audiences (even when the latter are in the same place), how they are understood and how this affects how they might be lived in. Their own analytical drawings and maps, produced with students and collaborators, weave together numerous 'eyes' that speak to these multiple same cities, passing on the complex ecological, cultural and political situation in ways that resist simplification. Through and around this work, the dominance of the visual is more clearly associated with the colonial techniques that 'urbanized' Bombay. In contrast, their meditation on Mumbai opens onto a wider set of senses and sensibilities, beyond the visual, that are both more responsive to the ambiguities of Mumbai's territory (literally, the uncertainty and mobility of the relationships between land and water, which caused such problems for European cartographers and legal draftsmen, as well as

metaphorically drawing closer to the aspects of indigenous cultures and practices that remained invisible to or overlooked by the Europeans). Echoing discussions about hyper aesthetics, such work introduces alternate techniques that encourage the cultivation of a broader sensibility, including but exceeding the optical.

These analyses also situate the ‘cultivated’ eyes that have looked at, and produced, Bombay and suggest how these shift from the colonizing/extractive logic of the British Geographical Survey of India to the more projective intentions and serious entertainment of Patrick Geddes’s “Cities and Town Planning Exhibition” (first shown in London in 1911, then traveling widely). In some senses, Geddes’s Exhibition can be considered to be another wave of colonization, advocating strongly for his particular approach to urban planning, while also gathering up each location into a universalizing narrative about city development. Indeed, Geddes’s proposals for the Exhibition were such that in any location where it might be curated, it would situate the present and future of the (host) city into a wider understanding of its *origin*, *history* and *city improvement*. This consciously positioned the host cities into a broader trajectory (normally called ‘progress’ or something similarly upbeat) defined by ‘world cities’ or universal models (normally anchored by Athens and Rome), similar to the tendency to prescribe “general laws which apply to towns of all types and periods.”<sup>16</sup>

Moving away from this specific Mumbai/Bombay nexus and Geddes’s Exhibition, the trajectory of the eye of urbanism can be linked into wider spectacles and entertainments, such as historical panoramas and dioramas, 20th Century Civic Exhibitions and ‘city symphony’ films and more contemporary representations. These films, for example, range from the celebratory to the propagandistic, eulogetic or didactic, produced mainly during the 1920s for European cities including Berlin, Paris, Nice and Amsterdam. There is a post-war film of Manchester, where I work, called *A City Speaks*, directed by Paul Rotha in 1947 and described by the British Film Institute (BFI) as a “[s]weeping vision of Manchester as an urban utopia in the making, by one of Britain’s greatest documentary filmmakers,”<sup>17</sup> which echoes the structure of Geddes’s Exhibition, moving through sections on *origin*, *history* and *city improvement*. Interesting in the present context, is how the film attempts to ‘speak’ to the city’s own citizens and persuade them to buy in to the plans for their city’s future development. Moreover, this city speaks through two voices whose conversation provides the narrative thread over the film: for English speakers, these are easily identifiable as an upper class, authoritative voice who seems to provide all the answers to questions or naïve observations posed by a local, vernacular working-class voice. Without suggesting this represents the same dynamics of colonialism as the situation with Bombay/Mumbai, a class-based power dynamic plays out, with the authoritative voice imposing and explaining a vision for the city’s future.

There is something of a double movement to these various representations: they are caught up within the global circulation of city images that becomes something of an echo chamber connected to the global circulation of real estate and capital (such as the situations in Medellín and Rio discussed by Christina Deluchi and Pedro Fiori Arantes and Claudio Rezende Riberio, respectively); and within a local representational milieu, where they can be understood as an attempt to discipline or train the local population as much as visitors to look ‘properly’ at the city before them (such as the “Panamarama” in the Panama Canal visitor center or “Biomuseo” discussed by Shiloh Krupar, a descendent of the mirador with a heavy didactic feel). But this double movement takes various and complex forms, and plays out differently in different geographical and cultural locations. Indeed, it sometimes seems to substitute one for the other and replaces the shiny architectural image that we might associate with global coverage for an apparently DIY aesthetic that attempts to speak reassuringly to a local audience. As Ella Harris has argued recently, these formats are reassuring precisely because they are somehow

familiar, almost homely or hipster. What she warns against is precisely the way these images and stories about pop-up culture are being appropriated and redeployed by property developers, local government or big business in ways that celebrate and domesticate “conditions of urban volatility.”<sup>18</sup> Although Harris focuses her case studies on London, she observes the projection of these imaginaries in and onto many locations around the globe, arguing:

[t]his logic of permanent temporariness will underscore a future city where precarity becomes further normalized ... the most worrying indicator of what’s to come, however, is the fact that we’ve grown to love pop-up culture. Not only has it led us to accept declining conditions of urban life; it’s persuaded us to embrace them, to actively seek them out and perpetuate them. Pop-up doesn’t just normalize precarity; it makes us willingly complicit in its reproduction.<sup>19</sup>

Sidestepping whether or not ‘we’ are all as complicit as she suggests, I want to follow a connection between the pop-up and other examples that similarly operate by attempting to situate themselves across significant architectural or urban problems by drawing attention to localized ‘success’ stories. In their contribution to this volume, Yunpeng Zhang and Weilun Zhang call into question the claims for efficacy and inclusion of ‘design fix’ projects associated with the recent regeneration of areas of Shanghai. Albeit with a different aesthetic, these projects, much like the pop-up projects that Harris critiques, attempt to cover over their own modes of operation and act as decoys to distract attention away from more significant failures or larger development projects. Zhang and Zhang offer a more cautionary tale, in contrast to the overclaiming that usually accompanies supportive readings of design fix projects and the cosmetic consent and consensus they boast. It is instructive to compare this situation in Shanghai with other locations. Zdravko Trivic has recently analyzed a number of *Community Arts and Culture Initiatives in Singapore*, where an extremely strong Singaporean state has worked to ‘fix’ greater social cohesion by using community arts projects to generate localized familiarity and identity that operates at a neighborhood scale. Against a very different geographical and cultural milieu that contrasts to the top-down situations in both Shanghai and Singapore, Leo Minuchin writes more optimistically about local, bottom-up fixes and the role that such realized projects can have on the socio-political imaginaries of the broader population.<sup>20</sup> Drawing on examples from various countries in Latin America, Minuchin describes how these ‘prefigurative’ projects were realized despite the state rather than because of it, how they are conceived and lived very differently and how they announce a more positive, progressive, self-organized political approach than the superficial ‘design fixes’ just mentioned.

Across these various examples, cultures and geographies, the partiality and contradictions of the ‘eyes’ of urbanism are manifest in various ways. The differences between these modalities of mapping and looking – and their blind spots – is given very tangible expression by Taiwanese artist and filmmaker Su Yu Hsin. Her 2019 essay-film *water sleep II Akaike river under Xizang Road* plays out the experience – or more precisely the difficulties and tensions involved in trying to reconcile the multiplicity of experiences – of the city as it is represented in several historical and contemporary maps of Taipei/Taihoku, tied to the route of the Akaike river.<sup>21</sup> These maps enter the film and associated work very directly, as layers or abstractions within and between which we are taken on a high-speed moped ride above the forgotten river. Even watching this as a short film, it provides a very visceral experience thanks to the point-of-view shooting, with the moped weaving through traffic as it traces the route along Xizang Road. Contrasting with meditative opening and closing sequences, where the river disappears below grade, the essay-film sets up a composite ‘eye’ that positions everyday experience in the city between

large-scale, powerful natural and geopolitical forces of 20th Century colonialism (Japan, US, China). Indeed, the conflation of mapping with the natural or with objective measure are caught up and critiqued by the film's combination of the bird's-eye view and aerial map within more situated representational techniques, producing a work that invites a certain curiosity about this city, its pasts, presents and futures.<sup>22</sup>

These various small examples draw attention to the artificiality and partiality of representational techniques that are deployed in the organization and control of architectural and city space. Among other things, they interrupt the apparently natural continuation of status quo ante into the future: other futures are possible, whether these are actually prefigured or just sketched out, the possibility of thinking otherwise, and these require different modalities of projection that are critically engaged with the limitations of present technologies. As Farzin Lotfi-Jam argues in his chapter in this volume, future scenarios are preconditioned by the simulation technologies they draw upon. His concern with contemporary military simulation packages, processes and teams can be situated in a much longer historical trajectory of the same.

### **Technologies, authorship, education and access to knowledge**

These specific concerns with technology effectively frame this volume, providing its bookends from war and violence to data landscapes and much in between. The role and impact of technology runs as a subtext through the whole piece, raising questions about the limits of what we can think/perceive, sensing and making sense of where its impact is registered in various and complex ways, both repressive and liberatory. As John Hanna's contribution on the 2015 Paris terrorist attack demonstrates, urban space and broader regional territories can be reimagined through the lens of new violences and terrorist oppression.

These concerns can be threaded into the earlier discussion around invisible places or wastelands. It is perhaps increasingly difficult to counter claims to complete knowledge, as more and more places and people in the world are surveilled, albeit in different ways, with different motivations, but using technologies that are increasingly invisible and all-pervasive. Michel de Certeau has pointed out that not all aspects of the city give themselves up to these standard, normative techniques; he examines instead the "imbricated strata" of the city, where "beneath the fabricating and universal writing of technology, opaque and stubborn places remain. The revolutions of history, economic mutations, demographic mixtures lie in layers within it and remain there hidden in customs, rites and spatial practices."<sup>23</sup>

Again, these offer something of a toehold from which to contest the spread, acceleration and mutation of technologies of control. Just to counter any hasty optimism, it is perhaps worth concluding this intermission by reflecting on the reach and changing face of these technologies, in order to situate the search for their opaque and stubborn places. We are arguably now witnessing (and experiencing) another phase of the "colonial boomerang" that Stephen Graham introduced.<sup>24</sup> This could not only refer to the (post)colonial imposition of technics of control developed in overseas colonies onto the workers/population at 'home,' but also the more recent technology transfer from overseas warfare into domestic policing. In addition to De Cauter's discussion of Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT), we could even follow this as the US Army Humvee returns as a vehicle for urban policing<sup>25</sup>; or the movement of biometric scanning technology into more routine domestic border checks, a trip to the bank or to school; or even the fingerprint and facial scanning technologies I use when starting my computer in the morning.

There are different, and arguably more, asymmetries to these technologically mediated or governed relationships now, many of which affect how 'we' are able to circulate, live and work in

buildings and cities. It is widely acknowledged that the darker one's skin, the less accurate facial recognition software is. (Not that human beings do any better, as the police misidentification of Jean Charles De Menezes as an Islamic terrorist suspect for the 2005 London bombings reminds us.) Other, more deliberate versions of this racial profiling are reported in the widespread use of such surveillance technologies by the Chinese state, accused of targeting Uighur or Tibetan minorities. Technologies also feature in the asymmetries that can be witnessed in the weakened state power in some geographies (Europe and the States, the traditional capitalist colonial powers and their heirs), accompanied by the euphemistic off-shoring of many of the (Western) world's most powerful companies. To stay with the boomerang metaphor, it is no longer clear who makes or throws the boomerang or who it comes back to hit. This also involves multiple asymmetries between territory, technologies and finance, played out in many ways but none so topical (on this day, Russia has invaded Ukraine) as the Western 'Bank v Tank' response (in the form of attempted financial sanctions) to Russian military aggression, the latter also countered by the asymmetrical urban resistance and warfare of the Ukrainian military and volunteers. While inequalities are widening worldwide, the super-wealthy can move themselves and their money with increasing ease around the globe while avoiding the need or obligation to contribute to local economies and services through taxation.<sup>26</sup>

The strange, invisible-but-ubiquitous contact between these different systems of exchange and technology are, by design, near impossible to identify or understand. As the coverage laid out by the various chapters in this volume indicates, some parts of the world can be subject to more scrutiny than others (it was difficult to solicit contributions from China, Myanmar or the Gulf States, for example) and freedom of expression and political critique is itself increasingly offered as a substitute for fuller political agency and control over the means of production.<sup>27</sup>

To take these jaundiced complaints into the more specific disciplines of architecture and urban design, it is important to acknowledge the uneven access to authorship associated with them – to who is able to write (and perhaps, write in English), as well as who can educate and why. In many professional-legal jurisdictions, architectural and planning education and practice takes place within, and is often governed by, the particular strictures of those professions. (Here again, there are stories of colonial 'exchange' and global power dynamics to be told.) While many of the chapters that make up this handbook are contributed by colleagues working partly or wholly in the academic sector, and while the particular politics of these contributions will have colored teaching in numerous institutions around the globe, maintaining sufficient space in the curriculum to allow students to explore complex, inter-disciplinary problems, issues and responses is a constant challenge. In my own context, the criteria that govern and frame architectural education in the UK is currently undergoing a periodic review that will look to refocus it more around Health and Life Safety (of building users) and the climate crisis. While the urgency of these two topics is undeniable, the outcome of such a review could potentially have the consequence that architectural education will become even more beholden to techno-functional competences and responses, rather than providing more space for critical thinking. This review is in many ways a microcosm of the debate initiated and sustained across the pages of this handbook. For example, many of the urgent calls for a focus on life safety came in response to the Grenfell Tower Fire (London, 14 June 2017, where 72 people died in a fire that spread rapidly up the external cladding of the residential tower block). The fire was arguably linked to significant reductions in the state testing of materials and oversight of construction, as well as the profit-driven mis-selling or mislabeling of cladding system products, while the state response seems to have pushed the crippling costs of reparation onto individual homeowners across the country. Architectural education is going to have to organize and advocate robustly to make sufficient space to explore the complexity of this disaster. Moreover, there is socioeconomic

pressure on architectural education that might see the period of time students have to spend in education reduced to 4 years or that might see the location of education swing back to practice, with a reprieve of something like the 19th Century apprenticeship – none of which bodes well for providing students and educators with the headspace and stimulus to develop their architectural thinking beyond the technical built object/solution to these urgent global issues.

This also raises broader questions concerning where and how knowledge is produced and circulates, and who has access to it. Switching from one crisis to another, in his introduction to “Mapping landscapes and big data” of this volume, Ate Poorthuis offers a more upbeat acknowledgment that “the coronavirus’ genome was sequenced within mere days of its discovery and subsequently the sequence data was openly published and shared around the world at lightning speed.” While there are some uplifting examples of collaboration and open-source provision in the global search for a Covid-19 vaccine and broader public health response, it is not true to say that this picture holds for the majority of academic publishing. Indeed, for many working in this area of biomedical sciences, there has been recent news coverage of Taylor & Francis’s long-standing *Accelerated Publication* option to hasten the peer reviewing and publication of work that is of interest to big pharma. In a version of a speedy boarding supplement, academics have the ‘option’ of paying US\$7000 (£5500) to have their articles published within three to five weeks of submission (or US\$3900 (£3000) for a seven-to-nine week turnaround), amounts and speeds that are almost unimaginable to academics working in other fields. This is at the extreme end of the global markets in academic publishing, offering well-resourced researchers the ‘opportunity’ to speed up their access to publication, with concomitant increases in exposure/currency, potential commercialization and career progression. In contrast, academics and practitioners working on the topics collected in this volume may have to be more canny about where and how they disseminate ideas, while holding onto posts and progressing within an institutional structure. Of course, the publications produced through this system are themselves normally available at a differential cost. Free at the point of use to many academics working in institutions in the Global North, which subscribe to large bundles of academic journals and eBooks on behalf of their faculty and students, but prohibitively expensive or inaccessible to audiences elsewhere.

If we were naïve enough to believe that architecture, the urban or politics were static, watching these texts develop almost in real time over the past many months emphasizes and enacts the need for constant and flexible reframing. Covid-19, with associated lockdowns and other public health measures, provided something of a backdrop to the chapters collected here, and the impact of and responses to the pandemic have been touched on several times (most explicitly by Ignas Kalpokas’s chapter on the posthuman city). As I have been writing and we have been talking about this intermission, there has been a stream of other events running through the news that resonate powerfully with these texts and emphasize just how much the contributions in this volume remain urgent and topical.

Perhaps the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and whatever happens after, will remain most visible for longest. Over the past few weeks, the issues of borders, territorial claims, imperialist and colonial ambitions, troop build-up and military preparedness have taken up increasing amounts of media space, along with acknowledgments of the complexities of reporting, false-flag stories. Without repeating the important military-financial asymmetry of sanctions noted earlier, a significant play has been made by the West on the leverage of celebration capitalism, discussed in several different contexts through this volume: now we see examples such as the governing bodies of football, motor racing and the winter Olympics eventually mobilizing either in support of Ukraine or to avoid reputational damage. In other news stories, as already mentioned, the Colston 4 were exonerated in Bristol, marking a significant step in the debates



concerning public statutes and street names relating to Britain's colonial and slave-trading past. Also, and unexpectedly in the news, thanks to the lifestyle choices of tennis star Novak Djokovic – and his protracted and very public dispute with, and ultimate deportation by, the Australian authorities – came a broader scrutiny of Australian immigration policy, resonating with contributions here by both Mirjana Lozanovska and Daniel Grincer.

I will not go on. If there was ever any doubt about the continuing relevance of studying other histories and geographies in order to understand the specificities of our own present political, architectural and urban situations, these are surely silenced. In addition to the wide range of the focused chapters included here and the detailed insights and reflections they provide, this first volume of the handbook also invites extensive connections to be made between different places, challenges and approaches. These connections can be straightforward or surprising, they can come about due to unexpected similarities or good fit, they can be intrinsic to the approaches set out here by their authors or they can be suggested by external events that suddenly reshuffle and recombine these approaches in new and relevant ways. At this halfway stage, the handbook has set out many more questions than answers, more problems than solutions; but in so doing it has articulated the need for more precise, sustained questioning and rehearsed multiple modes of asking about the spatialization of oppression. Volume II will continue this work in a more propositional direction.

## Notes

- 1 *Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, 1680. For an open-source pdf, see [www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/leyes\\_indias.aspx](http://www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/leyes_indias.aspx).
- 2 See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975*, eds. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 2003) esp. Lecture 2 (January 1975).  
On *dispositif*, see Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Harvester Press, 1986).  
On *biopower*, see *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1977), Volume 1.  
On *micro-physics*, see *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977).
- 3 For examples of challenge to Foucault on his own terms, see Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), who argues that Foucault overlooks or underestimates the dynamics/complexities of normativity, or Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), who challenges Foucault for ignoring examples or periodizations of madness that failed to fit his specific framing of madness.
- 4 Teresa Hoskyns, *The Empty Place: Democracy and Public Space* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 4.
- 5 Hoskyns focuses particularly on Mouffe's thinking on agonism, which runs through much of her work. A useful summary can be found here: Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).
- 6 Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 2016), esp. the chapter "The Integration of Critique."
- 7 Douglas Spencer, *The Architecture of Neoliberalism: How Contemporary Architecture Became an Instrument of Control and Compliance* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
- 8 Judith Rugg, *Exploring Site Specific Art: Issues of Space and Internationalism* (London: I B Tauris, 2010), 33; and see Elizabeth Wilson, *The Contradictions of Culture: Cities, Culture, Women* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001).
- 9 Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 353.
- 10 Although Lynch's work has been criticized for promoting a universalizing approach bound up with his well-known tool kit and graphic language, it remains popular among architecture students and practitioners. For one cautious, critical investigation of the extent to which Lynch's cognitive mapping techniques can be applied to non-Western cities, see Rully Damayanti, "'Kampung Kota' as Third Space in an Urban Setting: The Case Study of Surabaya, Indonesia," in *Transdisciplinary Urbanism and Culture: From Pedagogy to Praxis*, eds. Quazi Mahtab Zaman and Igea Troiani (London: Springer, 2018),

- 127–139, and Rully Damayanti and Florian Kossak, “Extending Kevin Lynch’s Concept of Imageability in Third Space Reading: Case Study of Kampung, Surabaya–Indonesia,” *A/Z ITU Journal of Faculty of Architecture*, 2016, 13 (1), 57–67.
- 11 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1974), 50.
- 12 Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (London; New York: Verso, 2021).
- 13 Fuller and Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics*, 15.
- 14 Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha, “Beyond Urbanism: Mumbai and the Cultivation of an Eye” in *Distributed Urbanism: Cities After Google Earth*, ed. Gretchen Wilkins (New York: Routledge, 2010), 142.
- 15 Mathur and da Cunha, “Beyond Urbanism,” 140.
- 16 Arthur Korn, *History Builds the Town* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1953), 3. On the Geddes’ exhibition with a different direction of travel, see Pierre Chabard, “Competing Scales in Transnational Networks: The Impossible Travel of Patrick Geddes’ Cities Exhibition to America, 1911–1913,” *Urban History*, 36, no. 2, Special Issue: Transnational Urbanism in the Americas (August 2009), 202–222. See Fig.2, p.206, for layout (“suggested arrangement”) of the Edinburgh exhibition.
- 17 Paul Rotha, *A City Speaks* (B&W film, 1947, 66 mins) <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-city-speaks-1947-online>.
- 18 Ella Harris, *Rebranding Precarity: Pop-up Culture as the Seductive New Normal* (London: Zed Books, 2020), 25–26.
- 19 Harris, *Rebranding Precarity*, 269–270.
- 20 Leandro Minuchin, “De la demanda a la prefiguración: historia del derecho a la ciudad en América Latina,” [From Demands to Prefiguration: History of the Right to the City in Latin America] *Territorios*, 41, 2019: 271–291. <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/territorios/a.6363>; and Leandro Minuchin, “Prefigurative Urbanization: Politics Through Infrastructural Repertoires in Guayaquil,” *Political Geography*, 85 (March 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102316>.
- 21 Artist’s website: [www.suyuhsin.net/water-sleep-II-Akaike-river-under-Xizang-Road](http://www.suyuhsin.net/water-sleep-II-Akaike-river-under-Xizang-Road).
- 22 For a wide-ranging exploration of some of these issues, see Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin, eds. *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).
- 23 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (LA: University of California Press, 1984) Chapter VII, 200–201. His push here more broadly is, following Michel Serres, for a “multiplicity of points of view.”
- 24 On the colonial or Foucault’s boomerang, see Stephen Graham, *Cities under Siege* (New York: Verso, 2010).
- 25 See Fadi Shayya, *Politics of Survivability: How Military Technology Scripts Urban Relations* (PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2021).
- 26 On broader discussions of the ‘economies’ of these movements, see, for example, Anthony Elliott and John Urry, *Mobile Lives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010); and John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).
- 27 It is perhaps no surprise that there is a correlation between the geographies represented here and the countries that perform better in the World Press Freedom Index (WPFI), published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).



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