

URBAN UTOPIAS

Memory, Rights, & Speculation



Edited by
Barnita Bagchi

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U R B A N
U t o p i a s

MEMRY, RIGHTS,
AND SPECULATION

Edited by
Barnita Bagchi

Jadavpur University Press

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Urban Utopias: Memory, Rights, and Speculation.

Edited by Barnita Bagchi

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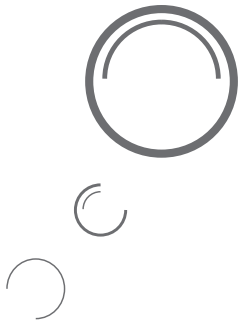
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INTRODUCTION

Barnita Bagchi

Utopia has been defined as ‘social dreaming’ (Claeys and Sargent 1999, 1–5), expressing the desire for a better life and hope for the future (Bloch 1995). A utopia combines social and imaginative experimentation. The Greek neologism ‘utopia’ was invented in Europe in 1516 by Thomas More. But utopia manifests itself, and travels, across cultures (Bagchi 2012). It has been argued recently by Chaudhuri that

Utopia is a city. Or at least it is a polis: in Thomas More’s foundational text of 1516, Utopia, the island of his imagination contains fifty-four city-states, each one exactly like another, so that to describe the capital, Amaurotum, which lies at the very centre, is to describe all the rest. Between the cities there is agricultural land, but this is organized not so much on the model of the village as of the farming commune. (Chaudhuri 2019, 2)

Across the world, utopia manifests itself in the city. In a globalising world where urbanisation is a constant factor at work, driving more and more of the rural population to cities, which are places of attraction and dynamism, cities function as sites of hope and desire. The city can and also does, therefore, mutate into a dystopia of disillusion and of nightmares. Technocratic and neoliberal agendas have led to globally engineered imaginings of urban futures which have utopian dimensions, such as the Smart City or the City of Culture. Datta, for example, writes about the Smart City policy in India as a 21st century utopian urban experiment (Datta 2015). David Pinder advocates a

[R]ethinking of utopianism through considering its potential function in developing critical approaches to urban questions. The authoritarianism of much utopian urbanism certainly needs acknowledging and criticising, but this need not entail a retreat from imagining alternatives and dreaming of better worlds. Instead, it is necessary to reconceptualise utopia, and to open up the field of utopian urbanism that for too long has been understood in an overly narrow way (Pinder 2002, 229).

David Harvey, too, writes, 'We cannot do without utopian plans and ideals of justice. They are indispensable for motivation and for action. Outrage at injustice and alternative ideas have long animated the quest for social change. We cannot cynically dismiss either. But we can and must contextualize them' (Harvey 2003, 940). Christine Boyer had earlier argued, 'If the spectator is mired in realistic narrations and offered no utopic visions, what will produce a disposition for social change. . .?' (Boyer 1994, 475).

There is much that is very utopian about human rights, too, as Authers points out:

[I]t does not seem strange to speak of human rights as utopian, as a negotiation between the atrocities of politics and history, the everyday cruelties of humanity, and an aspirational idea of how we might live differently cast against that context. Human rights are a project of global betterment; they are an attempt to conceive of a world that does not yet exist, and to describe the shape of that world and how we might live in it. They also manifest the gap between good place and no place at the heart of More's titular pun. (Authers 2016, 2)

Human rights have a dual impulse of a strong drive to articulate a desired set of norms, while knowing that their actualisation may always be partly elusive. Cassese, for example, saw the space of international civil society rights actors as utopian (Cassese 2012, 653). On rights, scholars such as Levitt and Merry argue that appropriation and local adoption of globally

generated ideas and strategies create a vernacularisation of human rights in many parts of the globe outside Europe and North America (Levitt and Merry 2009). While they argue that the language of human rights may be taken from international documents and localised to fit a variety of contexts, Bagchi (2016) has argued that rights activism at the local level in contexts such as South Asia contributes to and is co-constitutive of how rights are articulated and enshrined internationally.

The social dreaming of utopia, also manifested in urban science fiction (hereafter SF), the claims of human and environmental rights, the dynamics of urban memory: a heuristic, speculative, mobile approach to cultural texts capturing these phenomena can help us understand better the shifting layers and many kinds of movements the phenomena manifest, in the plural sites of the urban, in an uneven, globalised world. The city also yields texts and practices of memory and amnesia, while such reconfigurations of the past often help to constitute utopian urban visions of the future (Boyer 1994; Crinson 2005).

This volume is based on deliberations between scholars based in the Netherlands and in India, in which Utrecht University and Jadavpur University played leading roles. This book brings into foreground issues of rights and justice, one connotation of the scales of memory discussed recently by scholars such as Kennedy and Nugent (2016). Memory and utopia both involve temporality and values, and the spaces of the urban function as spaces of memory and utopia. The book is embedded in literary and historical studies, and in the context of the urban, brings into dialogue utopia, rights, memory, and media in South and South-East Asia and Europe. How are cities remembered and envisioned as utopian spaces of hope by those who live in and with them, from a bottom-up approach? How do memory and utopia intersect in such spaces? What debates and contestations emerge in the framing of the city as a place of hope, desire, and future-making?

We pay particular attention to megacities such as Jakarta and Kolkata, as well as other urban centres in South and South-East Asia, seeing them as sites and contexts for the production and circulation of utopias and memory across nations and cultures. The ever-growing urbanisation of South

and South-East Asia, with large city populations, contributes to the contestations and debates round urban utopias. Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal (India), has a population of 5 million, while the larger Kolkata metropolitan area has a population above 14 million. It is thus one of the largest cities in South Asia and in India, and part of the ever-growing urbanisation in the region (30.9 percent in 2011) (Ellis and Roberts 2016). Equally, scholars in the volume write with a strong historical slant on urban regeneration movements in the city of Amsterdam in post-World War II Amsterdam, and on what utopia can look like from the perspectives of disability activists in the Netherlands, and how that can or cannot come to terms with how disability is viewed in India. Undoubtedly, the volume affirms common strands across different urban spaces and imaginaries, with India and the Netherlands being the most prominent examples, while often also showing the limits and boundaries of urban utopian imagination and practice. The authors make clear that there are such limits as there are contestations and debates at the heart of urban utopia, whether, for example, in positioning the city-dweller in relation to rights (see Sakkers and Bagchi in this volume) or in collating and curating vignettes of primarily white male-centred Hollywood film imagery for an exhibition on the city as a place of hope (Hassler-Forest in this volume).

With speculation of the capitalist kind at the heart of urban real estate development and planning, how do speculations and play with the utopian and with sites of memory create alternative imaginations of the city, bringing up submerged histories sought to be extirpated by the march of the neoliberal urban? This volume brings such issues up. Participants uncover new insights by reading off aspects of urbanism and utopianism in Western Europe and South and South-East Asia in a connected framework. On speculation, the book finds inspiration from critical work such as the anonymous manifesto *Speculate This!*

To speculate may mean to contemplate, to ponder, and hence to form conjectures, to make estimations and projections, to look into the future so as to hypothesize. And it may also mean to buy and sell so as to profit from the future rise and fall of market value, to invest in the hope of

profit but with the risk of loss. and hence, more generally. to engage in business transactions of a risky nature that may yield unusually high returns in the future. The bridge that spans across the two registers of modern speculation and that binds them indissolubly to one another consists of a certain conception of the future: both intellectual or financial investments project into and stake claims on the future.... Both registers index an attempt to represent and calculate a future that is unpredictable, unrepresentable, incalculable by definition: both registers index an attempt to fix and capture a potential future in and as the actual present.... unlike ancient divination, modern speculation knows no bounds and is limitless: it operates as if there were no limits to the annexation and incorporation of the future... To divine is to dream the future—namely, to live the present in the tense of the future anterior, to let the present be formed by the futures of the past... (Uncertain Commons 2013, n.p.)

Such playful speculation weaves through Deborah Cole's opening piece in this volume, a chapter that is itself dramatic and performative. We begin and end this volume with chapters that methodologically reflect on or take a metatheoretical position in relation to urban utopias. In between are chapters on urban history (Gupta, Verlaan, Mukherjee, van Trigt), on contemporary urban social dreaming (Bagchi and Manche), and chapters on manga and film (Vodopivec and De, connecting also to the chapter which follows, by Hassler-Forest).

Cole composes a one-act play that makes use of elements of the philological essay, poetry, stream of consciousness, and absurdist theatre. The purpose of the play is to perform utopia and dystopia showing us the human brain capturing infinite possibilities for development in finite form (Bagchi 2012, 19). In this dialogic piece, there is an argument that formal incongruencies that are surprising are also memorable and that we might use surprising formal experiments to create new memories. Literary more than scientific genres present more options for exploring and speculating

with formal, semiotic incongruencies, it is argued. Roman Jakobson appears as protagonist in this chapter, and the set or orientation is towards the message and its poetic function, and to the code and its metalinguistic function. Two poems about Jakarta, Rayani Sriwidodo's, 'There's something I love about Jakarta' and Zeffrey Alkatiri's 'Passage of Time: The Tanjung Priok Train Station', alternating utopic and dystopic elements, are analysed. Narrativity, memorability, and how storytelling helps enact rights and justice all figure in this unusual chapter.

Sujaan Mukherjee examines urban planning in Calcutta, the second city of the British empire, in relation to two case-studies. With the formation of the Calcutta Improvement Trust (1911), a new phase in the history of Calcutta's urban planning began. Designed to circumvent the 'problems' of representative politics, the CIT sought to impose a form of planning that has been described as Haussmannian. This chapter attempts to locate the CIT within a larger nexus, which included impatient colonial administrators and bodies of trade and commerce. The utopian programme of the CIT, scuttled by want of funds, envisioned an exclusionist space, however ordered and sanitised. An alternative imagining of the city was offered by Scottish biologist and urban planner, Patrick Geddes, who was working in India at the time. This chapter is an attempt to distinguish between the two contrasting utopian visions without discounting possible overlaps, in conjunction with a work of speculative fiction, 'Calcutta Fifty Years Hence', written by Everard Digby in 1914. The approaches of the CIT and of Geddes are read in this chapter in the light of three broad problems in urban thinking: the survey, the reordering of space, and urban memory and history.

Abhijit Gupta examines contested utopian dimensions of a leading university in India, Jadavpur University in Kolkata. The National Council of Education (henceforth NCE) was set up in 1906 during the high noon of the 'Swadeshi' movement against the British in Bengal. It became the modern-day Jadavpur University by an act of Parliament in 1956. The chapter reengages with the utopic imagination which went into the founding of the university, as opposed to the largely neoliberal and instrumental logic which informs higher education today. The chapter suggests that we need

to understand the imagination of the public that animated the founding of the NCE. The case of the NCE, the chapter proposes, is a study in the art of the possible. The chapter considers many issues, including the place of the Humanities in a university that originally valorised the STEM subjects. The chapter considers the university as a public space, and the relationship between the university and the larger city, through the years: in this regard, the years after the Partition and independence of India, which saw the birth of refugee neighbourhoods, commonly called refugee colonies, are especially fascinating, with both socio-political and educational alliances and synergies that grew between Jadavpur and its neighbouring refugee colonies such as Bijoygarh. Jadavpur University was, and remains, an open campus, with free entry and egress allowed to the university community as well as the general public. This has been in general contrast to other 'gated' educational communities, where, increasingly in the current century, the right of physical access has been technologised by the use of first, identity cards, and then, biometrics, leading to 'closed' systems. The Jadavpur campus walls have a relationship with the street which is often messy and chaotic, but also productive of solidarities.

Hans Sackers and Barnita Bagchi discuss the Local Human Rights Coalition that was born in Utrecht in 2011, a coalition consisting of local civil society organisations, lawyers, the municipality, academics, NGOs, grassroots initiatives, cultural institutions, socially responsible businesses, and others. The Coalition aims to create awareness and ownership of local human rights in order to enhance the translation of global value(s) into local practice. The Coalition focuses on a local, bottom-up approach, while at the same time sharing best practices and strategies with other cities, nationally and internationally. The chapter describes how the Coalition developed and explores how the local Coalition could be seen as a form of urban utopianism and urban social dreaming. The local human rights approach is first described and the organisational aspects of the Coalition and its main characteristics are delineated, followed by reflections from some members of the Human Rights Coalition. The authors then draw some cautious conclusions about the impact that local nurturing of human rights can have on urban social dreaming.

Paul van Trigt investigates the politics of time, including utopianism, within the global disability movement. His main focus is the book *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living With a Disability* (1982), written by Irving Kenneth Zola. Zola uses the concept of utopia to describe his experience of ‘Het Dorp’, or The Village, a fully accessible neighbourhood of the Dutch city Arnhem that was designed to promote ‘the optimum happiness’ of people with physical disabilities (Zola 1982). This book, fascinating in itself, enables us to investigate the role of utopias in the global disability movement. Van Trigt explains, based on a close reading of the book, how utopia is framed by Zola, and argues that *Missing Pieces* represents a dominant perspective in the global disability movement. However, he also shows that this perspective contains a framing of the ‘Third World’ as a dystopia. This also makes the book somewhat ineffective for a global Disability Studies project, leading Van Trigt to reconsider, in the last part of his chapter, the politics of time in a way that might be productive for the global disability movement.

Tim Verlaan opens up new perspectives on the struggle over urban redevelopment in Amsterdam, from its original intentions to the transformation of its meaning by urban action groups. He selects three case studies with different participants in different parts of Amsterdam. Underpinning each case study was a specific version of utopia: one in which long-time residents sealed themselves off from the outside world, one in which protesters reworked the results of urban redevelopment into a dystopian mirror image, and one in which an action group passionately embraced Amsterdam’s sociocultural diversity. Together, these case studies demonstrate how the business-minded plans of municipal planners and private developers were eventually replaced by an urban utopia in which people of all ages, classes and cultural backgrounds could thrive. Understanding urban utopias as the bottom-up visions of engaged local residents born out of street-level observations and everyday realities is, Verlaan argues, certainly a productive way to examine the built environment. The typologies in this chapter were no conceptual arguments for the self-serving interests of a designing elite, but sincere attempts to create a better world triggered by concerned locals. Throughout modern history, city centres have been at

the heart of debates over the future of urban societies, both as material and imagined spaces. Verlaan's chapter demonstrates that urban space should be studied as something that is actively produced instead of given.

Solange Manche also focuses on an actively produced urban space. Building on the work of David Harvey and Saskia Sassen, and the awareness that urban spaces are increasingly being controlled by capital and increasing privatisation, to the detriment of diversity, social inclusion, and room for creativity, she turns to an analysis from an anarchist perspective of the anarchist stronghold of Exarcheia in Greece. Exarcheia, she argues is a utopian space, being both a secluded place escaping legislation that normally forces urban life to abide by the terms set by corporate investment, as well as a place of solidarity, diversity, and mutual aid that engages in the daily praxis of hope. She develops a definition of utopian space primarily based upon the literary characteristics of the genre. Building upon Bernard Stiegler's notion of proletarianisation, she also shows how the temporal and spatial organisation of the neighbourhood, which are exactly those factors that make Exarcheia utopian, overcome the short-circuiting of memory retention. This not only cleans up the mess we have 'collectively made' of the possibility 'to shape the world according to our visions and desires' (Harvey 2000, 281), in technological terms, but it equally sets in motion a rebellion against the cognitive effects and affects of the current politico-economic organisation of life.

Maja Vodopivec seeks to examine several manifestations of futurity in contemporary Japan through readings of a Japanese SF manga. Her chapter is interested in the relationship between historical time and subjectivity or, in other words, how people make sense of their contemporary experiences within discourses of the past, present and future. The chapter offers no uniform vision of a future for or by Japan, but reveals that 'futurity' is a site of much contestation in the present as Japanese people continue to grapple with the triple challenges of economic, social and ecological change. The chapter examines how politics has been constituted in Japan after the set of disasters that unfolded in Japan on March 11, 2011, commonly known as the 3.11 disasters: Japan underwent a massive undersea earthquake, which then produced a devastating tsunami, with the tsunami

in turn causing a multireactor meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. This set of catastrophes claimed almost 20,000 lives, and destroyed many cities. Vodopivec re-reads a pre-3.11 SF comic that foreshadowed an irradiated future. *Coppelion* (2008–15), a futuristic story about a 2016 nuclear catastrophe in Tokyo's Odaiba district triggered by an earthquake, that surprisingly speaks to the post-3.11 condition in multiple ways. The chapter addresses the following questions: What are the roles of traditional concepts of time/space (expressed in a present-ism and a national body strictly distinguishing inner and outer spaces) in understanding and criticising the past and imagining possible futures? And how, in a given present that is often characterised in Japanese critical circles as a massive historical amnesia, are the temporal dimensions of past and future, experience and expectation, related? Most importantly, is there a vital and energising political agency for the post-3.11 Japanese society?

Esha Niyogi De examines a series of Urdu Action Heroine films directed and produced in the era of Pakistan's Islamisation (late 1970s through 1980s) by the illustrious female star of the Urdu screen, Shamim Ara. With titles such as *Miss Hong Kong* (1979), *Miss Colombo* (1984), and *Lady Smuggler* (1987) the films bear the imprint of a 'trans-urban' culture of production roving through fashionable cityscapes. The chapter engages in an intertextual reading of the dialectically wishful momentum possible within popular industrial cultures. Niyogi De argues that a depleted Urdu film industry that sought for new sources of economic collaboration and of commodity culture within and across the state borders of Pakistan spawned a utopian aesthetic. The artistry on the Shamim Ara screen was reclaiming female bodies from impending phallic violence and also rehabilitating women-centered practices of same-sex nurturance against the grain of militarised masculinity. Niyogi De's intertextual approach to the corporeal dialectics born of the Shamim Ara cinematic tradition illuminates how specific conditions of trans-urban industrial mobility—in this instance, small-scale family-like collaborations often revolving around women directors/producers/stars—could yield politicised wish images of social relations, at one and the same time conventionally familiar and intelligible to multiple audiences and also dissident against normative con-

trol.

Dan Hassler-Forest writes about an exhibition titled *Places of Hope*, that took place in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands in 2018, on the March of Hope that opened it, and Hassler-Forest's own contribution to the programme, the video essay 'Imaginary Cities', each in its own way attempting to resurrect a form of utopian theory and practice that has come to feel tragically but increasingly anachronistic. As both a contributor to the project and an observer trying to align the exhibition's objectives with his own practical and theoretical perspectives on the cultural logic of global capitalism, Hassler-Forest in this chapter draws on the exhibition's grand ideals as a way to reflect on the larger problem of late-capitalist futurelessness. More specifically, the chapter uses the intersection between scholarly and creative work to map out the tension between the kind of optimism that informs much of the field of sustainability studies, and the productive but also potentially immobilising negativity of critical and cultural theory. Hassler-Forest approaches this firstly by sketching out the interlocking set of social, political, economic, and environmental crises that underlie our current culture of futurelessness. This section brings together some of the work in critical and cultural theory that has given us the conceptual tools to describe this set of problems. The second section then documents Hassler-Forest's own work on the video essay 'Imaginary Cities', a piece that was originally commissioned as an educational installation on progressive and utopian urban environments in SF cinema. Connecting the theoretical material from the earlier section to the research he performed alongside his creative work on the video essay, he concludes by reflecting on the limitations and opportunities inherent in using Hollywood SF as the raw material for a utopian project.

The collection shows in what diverse ways and through what diverse media of expression and action urban social dreaming can be found and analysed. Whether colonialism or different stages of capitalism—structures of domination and hierarchy are negotiated with, faced as highly resistant barriers, but also subverted and resisted in the urban social dreaming studied in these chapters. The analyses in this volume break apart stereotypes of East/ West and racial binaries: from Pakistani heroine-centred ur-

ban action films, to the Scottish town planner, utopianist, and sociologist Patrick Geddes's planning for Calcutta that tried to respect existing local features, to poetry, memory, and utopia in and about Jakarta, the analytic stories told in the volume, editorially informed by methodological and ideological pluralism, offer invaluable insights into experiments in urban social dreaming and their representations—as well as their boundaries and limits. The book is grounded in a comparative approach, with the surprising connections and resonances across the chapters offering space to the reader for crystallisation of comparative insights and laying the groundwork for more such analyses connecting different parts of the world and domains of expression and action. Editorially, the present writer would contend that no sutured and isolated urban cultures are to be found in the analyses in this volume, but rather, informed scholarly understanding of the social, historical, medial, and aesthetic relational particularities of each casus is affirmed.

Utopia is a speculative method, and this collection shows the value of seeking to understand urban utopia, with dimensions of heuristics, experiment, play, and risk-taking at the forefront, and by using historical, literary, linguistic, and medial approaches. This collection shows what kinds of exciting results can be attained when the aesthetic, medial, and literary dimensions of urban utopia are focused upon. This volume also, however, argues against facile generalisations such as those which claim that urban planning proposals by planning bodies and individual planners and social dreamers are to be written off from the start as authoritarian and top-down (see Mukherjee's chapter in this volume). We invite readers to consider and connect points and regions, imaginatively and intellectually, across the shifting, sometimes overlapping, sometimes separating maps of urban utopia, memory, rights, and speculation presented in this volume.

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THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE: A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Deborah Cole

Curtain rises.

From off stage we hear a chorus of the word ‘Surprise!’ uttered by multiple voices, as if someone off stage has walked into the group of actors waiting to come onstage, and as if it was that person’s birthday, and the other actors and stagehands and costumers have planned a surprise party in that person’s honour.

Jakobson dances onstage singing loudly to himself, ‘Oh the linguist and the literary scholar should be friends’ to the tune of ‘The farmers and the ranchers should be friends’ from the musical, *Oklahoma*. On stage, the writers are at work at the individual desks, but are also clearly waiting for Jakobson to arrive.¹

JAKOBSON: So where are we at? And what are our relevant constitutive elements?

¹ The persona of Roman Jakobson invoked here and his approach to this topic are based on his concluding statements to an interdisciplinary conference of linguists, literary scholars, and psychologists on the subject of ‘style’ (Jakobson 1960).

WRITER 1: Our audience, or our addressees, are our fellow conference participants, colleagues, and students of language and literature.

WRITER 2: Our form is a one act play that makes use of elements of the philological essay

WRITER 1: and poetry, and maybe some stream of consciousness,

WRITER 3: with a dash of absurdist theatre.

JAKOBSON: Ok. And our purpose?

WRITER 1: To perform an example of this statement: 'Utopia and dystopia show us the human brain capturing infinite possibilities for development in finite form' (Bagchi 2012, 19).

JAKOBSON: How?

WRITER 2: By demonstrating our hypothesis, which is also our message, that incongruencies between the audience's expectations for continuity of form,

WRITER 3: or their expectations for continuity of reference,

WRITER 1: produces surprising and potentially memorable text fragments.

WRITER 1: We'll also argue that literary genres more than scientific ones, at least with respect to how these genres are currently conceived as products of research dissemination, present more options for exploring and speculating with formal and referential incongruencies.

JAKOBSON 2: And what are our examples? Our data?

WRITER 2: A couple of poems that alternate utopic and dystopic elements.

WRITER 1: And also the text that we are writing together.

JAKOBSON: What are we set toward? What's our einstellung?

WRITER 2: We're set toward the message and its poetic function.

WRITER 3: And toward the code and its metalinguistic function.

JAKOBSON: Ok. So a double-setting. I think we're ready. How shall we begin?

WRITER 1: Well, we've collected some voices for weaving the story, but when last we worked together we hadn't decided on their order of presentation.

JAKOBSON 2: So we still need to work out the sequence. How about we start by laying out some of our selected voices?

WRITER 3 (*Slowly, thinking*): We're developing the argument that an improbable emotive expression by an addresser or an unexpected disjuncture in the expected linear flow of time

WRITER 2 (*interjecting*):—within the flow of a given generic narrative structure—

WRITER 3: triggers the addressee to pay extra attention.

JAKOBSON: Extra attention to what?

WRITER 2: In our two examples, the unexpectedness triggers the addressee to pay extra attention to the emotive function of the addresser or to the referential function of the context, respectively.

WRITER 1: We are hypothesising that it's possible that this trigger to pay extra attention is a way for the performer, or the addresser, to raise the probability that the message will be remembered by the audience, or the addressee.

WRITER 3: We are focusing on excerpts from two poems, both English translations out of Bahasa Indonesia: Rayani Sriwidodo's *There's Something I Love about Jakarta* and Zeffrey Alkatiri's *Passage of Time: The Tanjung Priok Train Station*.

WRITER 2: The surprises we noticed, that is the ones that caught us by surprise when we were in the flow of these narratives, were what seem to be an improbable emotive evaluation by the addresser

WRITER 2: and an improbable or fractalised timeline in a particular referential context.

JAKOBSON: We're ready to take a closer look.

WRITER 1: So in Sriwidodo's poem, the referential context of the narrative description of the canals and waterways in Jakarta focuses on details of humans using the canal water for daily activities.

WRITER 3: As well as on some details about other organisms that live and die in the water.

WRITER 2: The surprise comes from an apparently improbable valuation in the emotive function.

WRITER 1: It turns out that the addresser loves the waterways because they bring back good childhood memories,

WRITER 3: even while they indicate ecological ruin and social inequality.

JAKOBSON: Show me the evidence in the text.

WRITER 1: The poem begins,

(Reading slowly and carefully)

There's something I love about Jakarta;
namely, its multicolored ponds and waterways,
the chocolate milk of Ciliwung canal
(a reminder of every glass I ever drank),
the foamy white of Krukut
(like milk, that amusingly smelled of urine, from the neighbor's cow),
the viscous black of Sunter
(a Chinese sketch, an inky trail across millions of sheets of paper)

WRITER 2: And then a little later, it goes...

(Continuing WRITER 1's voicing and timing)

Despite the water's glassy surface
a surge of current about three inches wide
reveals the amazingly rich life
tasseling the sediment below

The water dances, worming
relentlessly, obsessively
at the speed of the earth's rotation,
apparently in protest of the intentions
of those most ancient, unevolved creatures,
the billions of germs floating in sparkling, dark sludge,
celebrating, as they devour a bounty of metropolitan refuse,
the cat, its carcass tangled in a bougainvillea branch,
in mute dispute with a gutter rat rotting at its feet...

WRITER 3: The poem ends with—

And look there, upstream,
three kids bathing and splashing around,
exasperating a woman
rinsing her laundry
who notices that her husband's only white shirt
has been hit with a strand of black slime
inevitably staining it
This outrages the sediment's inhabitants as well,
though only momentarily—
anger vanishes quickly
in the creep of Kali Pasir's lazy current

Really, there's something I love about Jakarta
beyond its multicolored canals and ponds
Though a public graveyard lies near my home
when I drink the groundwater, I have no qualms

(Finishing, apparently proud of himself)

JAKOBSON: So we were surprised because we expected the addresser to express a negative emotive evaluation of the city's canals given the details

of the referential context.

WRITER 1: Exactly. She says she feels love for the city, even while looking at evidence that we would expect to trigger disgust, or dismay, or some other negatively valued emotion.

WRITER 2: It's surprising given the established referential context.

WRITER 3: And given the narrative flow.

JAKOBSON: Ok, and our other example?

WRITER 2: Well, in Alkitiri's poem, there are ruptures in the expected linear flow of time which disrupt the continuity of a shared referential context.

WRITER 1: His poem seems to start in the present, with a description of the physical building and the temperature conditions at the train station...

WRITER 3 (*interrupting*): Where it's blazing hot!

WRITER 2: And so at the beginning of the fourth stanza, the poem reads

(Reading dramatically, maybe in the style of a lounge singer, with gestures to complement the content)

From outside:

The structure looks like a primordial beast.

Which only time

Can turn to dust.

In the waiting room:

Stylish young girls

Chatter like a family of shrews fighting over breadcrumbs

Young Meneers wearing hats and Gatsby suits

Stand hands on hips

Waiting for the coach's arrival

And dandling their long-handled umbrellas now and then

Like characters in a silent film.

WRITER 2: The narration of images and actors continues in the past until it is interrupted with

(Continuing the dramatic voicing)

Ah!

I thought I was in the olden days,
But it turns out I'm foundering in the Tanjung Priok train station.
The late afternoon sun grows fierce.

(...skipping over some lines, then continuing)

From outside:

The building is like a neglected dinosaur
Which only time
Can turn to dust.

In the waiting room:

The railway company staff practices volleyball
Their voices echoing excitement.

WRITER 3:

(Jumping in and getting into the act)

In the former VIP room:

Some men play badminton.
The space is partitioned like termite nests
into offices and storage.
People are lying around haphazardly
Like refugees during the revolutionary war.

In every corner:

Dregs of urine seep and spread.
The place smells like it used to be used to sell sacrificial animals.

(Continuing, winding down)

From inside its belly:

We ask ourselves,
What else is left for it to devour?
The Tanjung Priok train station
Is a colossal cocoon decomposing

Its own demise.

JAKOBSON: So here we are surprised because time doesn't pass from past to present. It flows back and forth, around and between.

WRITER 2: This is improbable with respect to received narratives about the human lived experience of time as a vector moving from the past, through the present, and into the future.

WRITER 3 (*as an aside, breaking the fourth wall and looking directly at the audience*): This is neither the only cultural narrative of how time passes, nor the only scientific narrative, but it is, within the generic and narrative traditions we are working with here, the expected narrative.

WRITER 1: This particular narrative about the passage of time is improbable, but perhaps only so within some generic narrative traditions (*gesturing in agreement to WRITER 3*).

JAKOBSON: Explain.

WRITER 1: So, backing up a bit. You have previously highlighted a distinction between the poetic and the metalinguistic functions of utterances.

JAKOBSON: Yes, in terms of their different principles of projection: 'The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence into the axis of combination' (Jakobson 1960, 358).²

WRITER 1: Right, so in poetry, or in messages that are set to the poetic function, equivalent units of measure are used to build a sequence.

WRITER 2: The equivalent units of measure are set first, like lines, syllables, rhymes, etc. And then the sequence is built up from combining equivalent units of measure.

WRITER 3 *gets up and goes to the writing board, which faces out towards the audience and starts drawing a figure and continues until the figure below is complete.*

2 The following discussion is a restatement of Jakobson, pages 357 and 358.

WRITER 1: However, in metalanguage, or in messages set towards the metalinguistic function, equivalencies are built up from the sequencing. You create equivalencies of meaning, for example, by the way you sequence the elements that articulate your message.

WRITER 2: Think about how we define words. We place one set of words on one side of an equation and another set of words on the other side, and we declare them to be equal.

WRITER 3 (*over the shoulder to the audience*): Meta-linguistic means, or equals, ‘about language.’

WRITER 2: In metalanguage, it is by sequencing different referential units that we establish equivalencies. Scientific writing relies on the metalinguistic principle of projection, using sequences to build equivalences, unlike the poetic principle of projection, which uses equivalences to build sequences.

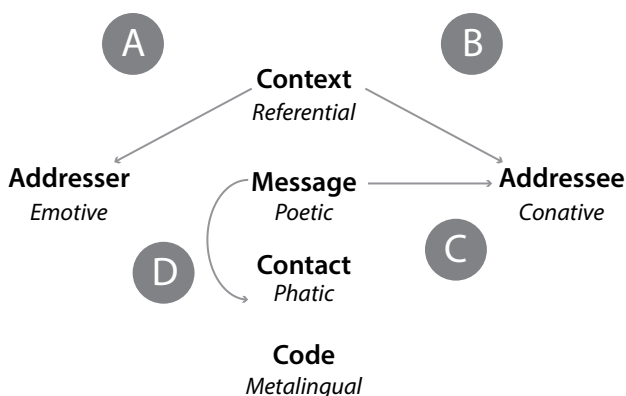


Figure: Jakobson's model of text elements and functions with four labeled surprises

JAKOBSON: Right. Thanks for refreshing my memory.

WRITER 1: Scientific writing is set to the context, however, and is thus referential in that the message is directed to the context: Its claims are meant to refer to the context of the physical world. Scientific writing functions by prioritising conventionalised, equivalent units of reference. The sequencing

of a scientific text is used to construct referential equivalence.

WRITER 2: This is even true of scientific writing produced in the social sciences where ethnographic styles are permitted, and in the humanities where persuasive expository essays are allowed.

WRITER 1: But poetry, or messages set to the message itself, prioritises equivalent units of measure, like syllables, lines, sounds, images and uses these equivalences to build the sequence.

WRITER 2: So the surprises in our two examples occur because the poets play with our expectations about equivalences in the texts (*turning towards the board.*)

WRITER 3: Exactly. In surprise B, (*pointing to the B in the figure*) the poet directs the reader to count present-day Jakarta and colonial period Djakarta as equal in the time and space context described by the narrative, thereby conveying a message that the dystopic demise of the contemporary train station is continuous with and inseparable from utopic visions and realities of former colonisation.

WRITER 2: This violates the facts of the referential space-time context. We would expect to count present day and colonial period Jakarta as separate, though of course continuous, time periods.

WRITER 3 (*points to B*): The message in the first poem is set to the context,

WRITER 2: and it calls on the reader to accept an unexpected contextual equivalency.

WRITER 1: In surprise A, however, the message is set to the addresser.

WRITER 3 (*points to A*)

WRITER 1: We expect that the addresser would have a negative, dystopic, emotional evaluation of Jakarta's lack of infrastructure for sanitary water. But the addresser instead articulates a positive, utopic emotional response to the city's polluted canals and waterways.

WRITER 2: As the addressees, we are asked to count the author's 'unexpected' evaluation as equally relevant or equally valid as our own, despite the fact that it defies our expectations.

JAKOBSON: Ok. (*pausing*) And our text? Does it create any surprises?

WRITER 2: I think we're definitely trying to.

WRITER 1: Our text is set to the message and functions poetically in that it projects the principle of equivalence into the axis of combination.

WRITER 3 (*points to C*)

WRITER 2: Multiple voices,

WRITER 1: as both many and one,

WRITER 3: and as many turned one,

WRITER 2: count as one voice: that of the addresser.

WRITER 1: The equivalence of voices is used as the structure for combining the ideas of the message.

WRITER 2: Our text functions poetically in another way as well, in that it starts by unexpectedly asserting the equivalency of generic forms for achieving similar functions.

WRITER 3 (*pointing to D*): Elements from different, traditionally separate, genres—like the philological essay, drama, poetry, stream of consciousness, and absurdist theatre—are counted as equal units available for combination to construct a single message.

JAKOBSON: I get it. (*pauses, reflecting on the figure WRITER 3 has completed on the board*) Ok, we're running out of time for today's session. What other voices do we have that we'd like to weave into our argument? Maybe with respect to any ideas we need to enable further speculation?

WRITER 2: Well, since surprise is a cognitive thing, some voices connecting our narrative to cognition, with respect to memory and time percep-

tion, might be in order.

WRITER 1: And maybe some connections to probability, improbability, and the logic of surprise being constrained by localised contextual rules.

WRITER 3: Yeah, it turns out an experience of being surprised is governed not just by calculatable probabilities based on prior events but also by the experiencers' expectations about the future given the vector of unfolding current events as well as by the experiencer's present, momentary, topological, and ideological position within that current event vector.

WRITER 2 (*hurriedly*):

So quickly. We've got this from biology (*reading*): 'It is as if the nervous system is tuned at successive hierarchical levels to respond strongly to the unexpected, weakly or not at all to the expected' (Dawkins 1998, 264).

WRITER 1: And we've got this from narrative and memory studies: "Narrativity" is a cognitive scheme rather than a property of events... experiencers are not in themselves stories, but become narrativized through the application of models of storytelling which help turn events into meaningful structures' (Rigney 2015, 70).

WRITER 2 (*keeping the pace*): And from that same field we have an invitation to redefine genres, especially life narratives as being able to operate both literarily and legally (Rizwan 2018).

WRITER 1: We also have an invitation from city planners to redefine what counts and who counts as the storyteller, with the suggestion that cities become addressers and addressees, performers and audience members for each other, swapping stories to enact human rights and imagine a better future, by focusing on similarities across differences (Sakkers and vom Scheidt 2017).

WRITER 3 (*transitioning smoothly, slowing and growing thoughtful, as if becoming mesmerised by a spell*):

The performers and audiences of the cities dialoging and driving innova-

tive, social change...

(suddenly) Wait, what are the implications?

WRITER 1: The implications of what?

WRITER 3: The implications of what would happen when ‘in rare cases, the two bond together’ (Sargent 2010, 48)?

WRITER 2: What are you talking about? The two what?

WRITER 3 *(completely lucidly but with the words tumbling out quickly)*: The audience and the performer. When it’s cities doing the story telling, and we’ve redefined life narratives as operating legally and literarily, and the two cities bond together by swapping stories, what happens? What does this driver of social change drive? If storytelling is a dialogic process, a dialectic if you will, with a performer and an audience...

WRITER 1 *(jumping in)*: Right, I can see where you’re headed with this.

(Quoting from memory while grabbing a book off a desk and flipping to find a page) ‘In every performance, be it music, dance, theater, or some forms of public art, there are at least two things going on, one among the performers and one in the audience’ (Sargent 2010, 48).

(Continuing to read from the text, having found the appropriate section) ‘In rare cases, the two bond together and a truly utopian moment is created, but more often there are what might be thought of as similar utopian moments. More often, but still rarely, the performers create the utopian space among themselves in that one performance and performance theorists have made the utopia connection’ (Sargent 2010, 48).

JAKBOSON *(musingly, committing the key words to memory)*:

Genres—Literary and Legal. Human rights. Similarities across differences. The dialectic of the storyteller and the storytell-ee, weaving across genres, creating experiential moments.

WRITER 3: of back and forth, and to and fro... *(arms swinging in time to the phrasing)*

(Everyone is suddenly quiet, reflecting. WRITER 3's arms slowly come to rest, hanging loosely on either side of the body.)

JAKOBSON: So...should our audience be surprised?

WRITER 1: By what?

WRITER 2: Well, we had hoped to surprise them with the projected equivalency of voices and the performed equivalency of generic conventions.

WRITER 3: The answer is maybe, but maybe not. It depends on whether or not our projections and message forms are considered by the audience to be rare or not, given the probabilities of other, expected and accessible narrative alternatives.

JAKOBSON: Go on...

WRITER 3 (*rummaging on a desk for something*): I'm remembering there was a Science Monthly article published back in 1948 called 'Probability, Rarity, Interest, and Surprise'. It was addressed to an audience of scientists, and the writer concluded, (*having found the journal, flips to the appropriate page and starts reading*) 'that *probability* and *degree of rarity* are essentially identical concepts: that a *rare* event is *interesting* or not depending on whether you consider it interesting or not and that an event is *surprising* only providing its probability is very small as compared with the probabilities of the other accessible alternatives. This requires that a surprising event be a rare event, but it does not at all require that a rare event be a surprising event' (Weaver 1948, 391).

JAKOBSON: So we'd have to ask the audience whether or not they were surprised?

WRITER 2: Indeed.

JAKOBSON: How would we articulate such a question?

WRITER 2: How about, for starters, 'Was this text rare for you? And were you surprised given your expectations about narrative alternatives?'

JAKOBSON: That sounds like a good first draft. And then if they were surprised, we'd need to check our hypothesis and ask, 'Can you articulate the message?' and 'Do you think that surprise made the message more memorable?'

WRITER 1 (*quoting*): 'The power of the aesthetic to make things memorable makes it all the more urgent to take imagination seriously, both for its misleading and its enabling qualities' (Rigney 2015, 74).

WRITER 2 (*facing the audience*): There are drawbacks to the written medium: Messages take a long time to produce, we don't know for sure who our addressees are, and there's a long wait time for a response, which may never arrive. (*Then clearly reciting*) 'This almost inevitable dialectic of hope, failure or at least partial failure, despondency and the rejection of hope, followed in time by the renewal of hope, seems to be the basic pattern of social change... This dialectic is part of our humanity' (Sargent 2010, 127).

WRITER 3 (*clearly audible, but as if to self while the stage lights start to fade*):

all the various genres and messages
all the different kinds and kindnesses
all the different forms and functions'

WRITER 2: overlapping across and around
articulating against and among

WRITER 1: responding, resending, repeating, reticulating
together, together, together, together

WRITERS 1, 2, 3 (*2 and 3 joining in, in a rhythm of triplets with stress on the second syllable, and returning to their desks and inward to their writing work, mumbling, chanting, quietly to themselves*):

together
together
together
together...
(*continuing and fading out*)

Jakobson waltzes offstage to the rhythm of the fading ‘togethers,’ while the writers settle back into their writing work and the curtain closes.

CODA

As I am reviewing the proofs for this chapter in May 2020, we are cycling through a myriad of utopic and dystopic scenarios, trying to capture as many possibilities as we can for dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic in the finite forms of the earth’s resources and in the consciousnesses that inhabit and shape it. We ask ourselves: What happens if...? What will the world look like a few weeks from now? Will it be better than it is now? Will it be worse?

In this chapter, I have tried to capture some possibilities for developing our thinking about the potential impact of our messages in the finite form of the written word. The utopic vision that motivates me is one in which our arguments and insights about the way the world is and could become are less rigidly constrained by the traditions and ideologies that have shaped our discourses and genres in the recent past. I have suggested that purposefully pushing genre boundaries in written form may open up some surprising trajectories in the pursuit of that vision. Perhaps this experiment will be of some use to my readers as we search together for new and better ways to construct and evaluate the messages we must create and exchange together in order to answer the pressing questions we currently face.

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CONTESTED IMAGINATIONS OF AN URBAN UTOPIA: CALCUTTA IN THE 1910s¹

Sujaan Mukherjee

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twentieth century it was widely acknowledged that Calcutta was in dire need of urban reordering. There had been efforts to address it through the nineteenth century (e.g. the Lottery Committee (1817–37), the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act (1876), and the Building Commission (1897)), which had met with partial success. The 1901 census revealed that ‘the population of Calcutta stood at 8.5 lakhs, which made it the second largest city of the British empire after London (Nair 1989, 327; in Datta 2018, 22). The rapidly growing city attracted business and mercantile communities from across the world and from different parts of India and, as such, it resisted efforts at turning it into a more ‘rational’ space (Datta 2013, 140). Rudyard Kipling was not the only one who fantasised about drastic measures when he suggested in *City of Dreadful Night* that there was ‘reason...to turn several Haussmanns loose in the city’ (Kipling, 1888, Chap. 6). How this problem was to be addressed remained to be determined.

1 My thanks to Prof. Barnita Bagchi for giving me the opportunity to present a previous draft of this chapter at the ‘Urban Utopia: Memory, Rights, and Speculations’ conference at the Utrecht University on February 21–22, 2018. I am grateful to Prof. Partho Datta for sharing elusive research material. My introduction to the work of Patrick Geddes happened because of him. Kamalika Mukherjee at the Hitesranjan Sanyal Archives at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, and Smita Khator at the School of Cultural Texts and Records guided me through the CIT and BCCI material. Without their help this chapter would not have been possible. I have used the older spelling ‘Calcutta’ instead of ‘Kolkata’ since all references are to a period of time when that was the standard spelling.

Governor-General Curzon in his speech to the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) on February 12, 1903, flirted with the idea of direct involvement in urban planning: ‘I almost feel—you may regard it as a strange ambition—as if when I laid down the post of Viceroy I should like to become Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation’ (Curzon 1905, 131). He warned, however, that as Chairman, he would ‘exact rather large conditions,’ which included ‘ten years of office, sufficient cash, and a free hand’ (131). In other words, he desired absolute power to transform the city. Curzon proclaimed that to him, ‘Calcutta is the capital, not merely of a province, great as that province is, but of the Indian Empire.’ It was, in his opinion, ‘one of the most striking extant monuments, for it is second to London in the entire British Empire...to the energy and the achievements of our race’ (126).

Discourses of health and sanitation had dominated urban development programmes through the nineteenth century (Datta 2013, 140). According to Partho Datta’s survey of the different attitudes towards town planning, ‘in retrospect’ these efforts ‘can be construed as precursors of urban planning.’ Radical restructurings of older cities like Delhi and Lucknow had taken place in the aftermath of 1857, when ‘the fused and cohesive character of old towns’ was destroyed. He notes around the end of the nineteenth century a ‘shift in emphasis in colonial planning from a military imperative to a medical one’ (140). With the plague in Bombay (1896) and wide-scale complaints about the insanitary conditions of the colonial cities—particularly the ‘native quarters’—improvement trusts began to be formed. The Bombay Improvement Trust was established in 1898, and after much debate and deliberation, the Calcutta Improvement Trust (henceforth, CIT) was instituted by an Act in 1911.

In principle the CIT was empowered to demolish and build at will, a claim the Municipal Corporation could not readily make. Even with the increased powers of the executive that came with the new Municipal Act of 1899, these bodies did not have their own corpus of funding and were, at least notionally, representational. Thus, as Datta has demonstrated, there was a political agenda, disguised as apolitical efficiency, behind the insti-

tution of the CIT (140), as it continued to function within a wider nexus of power. This urgency for sweeping changes could be symptomatic of the frustration of a regime to which its urban geographic space was becoming increasingly ‘illegible’ (Scott 1998, 54–55), but it also betrays a will to absolute power. This was not the only reason, however, for the institution of the CIT. As the CIT archives reveal, they were invested in staying updated on the developments in town planning that were taking place in Europe and the USA at the time. Plans to implement similar projects in India surface from time to time in their minutes.

Taking the CIT’s emerging role in re-imagining Calcutta as a starting point, this chapter attempts a comparative reading of the alternative visions of urban planning that were played out in Calcutta in the mid-1910s. The following sections focus on three aspects of these contesting visions: the survey, the reordering of space and solving the re-housing problem, and the question of a city’s memory and historical identity. As points of comparison, we will consider three ideologically informed approaches to this: the state-driven top-down approach of the CIT, which imagines a closed utopia; its critique by Patrick Geddes, who aims to identify ‘utopian impulses’ in the lived spatial reality of a city; and a radical solution to the problem of urban expansion that is offered by a work of speculative fiction, ‘Calcutta Twenty Years Hence’ (1914) by Everard Digby.

The most significant critique of the CIT’s vision came from Patrick Geddes. A Scottish biologist and urban planner, Geddes had been invited by Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, to display his Cities and Town Planning Exhibition that had attracted attention in England, Ireland and Scotland, and to advise on matters of civic development (Datta 2012, 253). Unfortunately, the ship that was carrying the Exhibition was sunk close to Madras by the *SMS Emden*. The CIT partly funded Geddes’s trip to Bengal (CIT 1914, 1), where his views on the CIT’s Bara Bazar plan were solicited. Apart from his revealing and controversial report which he presented to the Municipal Corporation, and other miscellaneous suggestions, such as regarding the widening of Russa Road in Calcutta (CIT 1914, 1), Geddes delivered a set of lectures as part of his exhibition at the Town Hall on a genealogy of cities (antiquity, medieval, Renaissance, industrial and ‘railway

cities'), on the problems of Indian capitals and of smaller cities.² Geddes was, however, considered as somewhat an 'outsider' (Hysler-Rubin 2011, 'Introduction') among urban planners. His popularity with the CIT suffered from around the time of the exhibition, following which suggestions by Indian members of the board to consult Geddes on various matters, e.g. Grand Trunk Canal connector (CIT 1915, 2), a park near Shyambazar (CIT 1916a, 2), were rejected outright and the CIT disagreed to pay a quarter of his costs for travelling to Dhaka (CIT 1916b, 1). The chairman, C.H. Bompas, spoke unflatteringly: 'The lectures of Professor Geddes may not have seemed to bear on practical matters, but I think he must have convinced every one of what is a truism' (CIT 1916c, 6–7).

Although the ideological debate was not articulated overtly in the context of Calcutta, the CIT's schemes and the Geddesian view of urban planning represent two distinct schools of thought. Datta has argued that the former was inspired by the Haussmann model, while Geddes believed it necessary to understand towns and cities on their own social and historical terms before implementing 'conservative surgery' (Geddes 1919, 25). The CIT's vision was driven by colonial administrators, technocrats, chambers of commerce, and other trading associations and, as such, its mode of functioning during the first decades must be studied with this nexus of power and influence in mind. The result of its endeavours may have made the city a more rational and habitable one, but only for those, who, as in Haussmann's Paris, were not pushed to the peripheries (Scott 1998, 62). A better living condition across classes was hardly the endgame, and this is evident in the sketchy plans drawn for re-housing.

This distinction drawn by Fredric Jameson between two contrasting understandings of the utopian is useful in this regard. His first category imagines a 'closure or enclave structure that all utopias seemingly must confront in one way or another.' This 'utopian programme,' by and large, is

2 Fig. 9.1, 'Syllabus of Lectures, Cities, and Town Planning Exhibition, Calcutta 1915,' from Strathclyde University Archives and Special Collections, in Hysler-Rubin, Noah. 2011. *Patrick Geddes and Town Planning: A Critical View*. Oxon: Routledge. Kindle e-book. For Geddes's contributions in India, see Chapter 6 and 7 of Meller, Hellen. 2005 [1990]. *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner*. Taylor & Francis e-Library.

what the CIT sought to approximate. The city would thus become a utopian totality, which must necessarily 'posit limits, boundaries between the utopian and non-utopian' (Jameson 2010, 25). At the other of the spectrum, where Geddes might be situated, we have what Jameson calls the 'utopian impulse,' which constitutes

a hermeneutic, for the detective work of a decipherment and a reading of utopian clues and traces in the landscape of the real; a theorization and interpretation of unconscious utopian investments in realities large or small, which may be far from utopian. (26)

Both the CIT experts and Geddes knew, however, that a full realisation of their utopian visions was impracticable. This is evident in the alternatives E.P. Richards presented in his study of Calcutta's civic condition, which were given as 'the moderate Ideal for Calcutta,' 'the Sub-Ideal,' 'the Sub-Ideal cut down,' and 'the Sub-Ideal cut down, and re-considered'—that is, 'if the present Trust income and powers cannot be increased' (Richards 1914, iv). Geddes was also aware of the charges of impracticality that could be levelled against his evolutionary view of cities and their future development. Yet, he believed that these 'practical and practicable Eutopias' could be realised 'city by city' through the 'unification of idealistic feeling and of constructive thought with practical endeavour' (Geddes 1972, 270). His model invited the active participation of citizens, who could have an impact not just upon spatial organisation but also on the city's memory and identity. 'Eutopia, then,' wrote Geddes, 'lies in the city around us; and it must be planned and realised, here or nowhere, by us as its citizens—each a citizen of both the actual and the ideal city seen increasingly as one' (112).

As a counterpoint to these implementable strategies, it is productive to read 'Calcutta Fifty Years Hence,' a curious work of speculative fiction penned by Everard Digby, a familiar name in Indian journalism at the time. It appeared in *Indian Ink* (1914), a journal started with the purpose of supporting the 'Imperial War Effort.' The seven-page travelogue was a modest projection into the future. A visitor from 1914 visits the city in

1964 and is utterly disoriented as they find that technological innovations have allowed planners to build higher and higher, until Calcutta had lifted itself off the ground (Digby 1914, 25). The traveller only remembers the time of his departure: a time when the CIT had just taken its first stuttering steps. Even with its initial budget of twelve crore rupees, the only changes the citizens could foresee 'were a few more wide roads patterned on the roads they knew and the clearance of insanitary areas' (24). This had been the limit of the CIT's urban ambitions, until some two hundred miles from Calcutta cheap iron ore was discovered, which facilitated the production of steel. A 'prominent engineer' soon remembered that Chicago had been building forty-storey buildings on 'Lake mud,' and with this realisation began the skyward rise of Calcutta (24). Essentially, what 'Calcutta Fifty Years Hence' offers is a radical solution to the limits of lateral spatial growth of the city, which in turn restrict the possibilities of the civic administration's project of making Calcutta efficient in terms of traffic and more sanitary.

Each of these approaches has their ideological implications and Calcutta around the time of World War I offers a productive context in which the study can be situated. This chapter is an attempt to understand the utopian impulses behind the different re-imaginings of the city in the 1910s. As such, it looks at the work of the CIT through the minutes of the board meetings of the CIT along with other key texts in their library that have been digitised by the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences (Calcutta). Keeping in mind that the CIT did not operate in a vacuum (Datta 2012, 278) and was part of a larger nexus that included non-state actors aided by the state machinery, the BCCI reports digitised by the School of Cultural Texts and Records, Jadavpur University, have also been considered. The CIT papers remind us that the CIT was not purely Haussmannian in its views and strategies. They were also open to new ideas, as is evident from the diversity and volume of recent writings cited in E.P. Richard's Report. Besides, the CIT had also joined the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association at an annual subscription of Rs. 15, so as to 'acquaint themselves with the latest developments of Town Planning in Europe, if they should be so disposed' (CIT 1912a, 1). Rather than rehearsing the binary between a Haussmannian model and the 'conservative surgery' approach

of Geddes, the present chapter tries to situate these visions and their ideological foundations in a spectrum that ranges from immediate policy and planning decisions to speculative fiction.

SURVEY

‘How long does it take to know it [Calcutta] then?’

‘About a lifetime, and even then some of the streets puzzle you.’

Rudyard Kipling, ‘*City of Dreadful Night*’

In the section on ‘Spatial Practices’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau drew a distinction between the ‘ordinary practitioners of the city,’ who operate ‘below the thresholds at which visibility begins’ and the city planners and cartographers who reduce the complex text to a “‘theoretical” (that is, visual) simulacrum’ (de Certeau 1984, 93) and make themselves alien to the experiences of daily life. David Frisby points out that a similar distinction between the street-walker and the urban planner is present in the works of other Marxist theorists as well, most notably Henri Lefebvre (Frisby 2003, 58). While de Certeau’s binary has been invoked time and again in urban scholarship, there is also recognition of its somewhat reductive nature. As David Pinder writes, ‘Absent from Certeau’s account of ordinary urban practice is an adequate sense of the historical geographies of the city through which they take place, and of what specifically they are supposed to “resist”’ (Pinder 2010, 214). Frisby observes that the ‘clear text’ produced by city planners, far from glossing over a complex and variegated history of urban practices, were in fact open questions in the late nineteenth century. He cites the example of debates between German city planners, Karl Henrici and Joseph Stubben, and Austrian architects, Camillo Sitte and Otto Wagner, who argued over the aesthetic and functional properties of straight and crooked streets. These debates were not ‘merely theoretical,’ writes Frisby, but had a ‘significant impact upon the practices of city planning and, for post-1890 Vienna’ (Frisby 2003, 59–60).

The ‘simulacrum’ produced by urban planners is itself a multi-layered and consciously selective tool. In the early 1900s surveys of towns in the Unit-

ed Kingdom (conducted by the Ordnance Survey) and in other parts of Europe were using a rigorous method of data gathering that began with the age-old technique of triangulation. The technique first used in Europe and perfected in India to chart and measure mountain ranges, 'offered the potential perfection of the map's relationship with the territory' (Joyce 2003, 35–37). The standard device used by the Ordnance Survey in cities was a 7-inch Everest's Vernier Theodolite, designed by George Everest in the service of the Trigonometric Survey of India (Stanley 1901, 258–60). C.L. Robertson, Deputy Superintendent of the Survey of India, attempted to adapt for Indian cities the methods used in the United Kingdom, which he described in *A Report on the Practice of Town Surveys in the United Kingdom and the Application to India* (1913). The triangulation would involve setting up 'up' stations, ('points on the tops of buildings and other high and conspicuous places within the area of the survey,' each separated by about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile) and 'down' stations (1200–1800 metres apart), following which, for the benefit of the 'detailed survey,' supplementary traverses would be run between the down stations, often coinciding with the network of streets. The detailed survey would be reviewed on the field, before the notebooks were sent to the office for examination (Robertson 1913, 4–8).

Robertson was aware that the experience could be a disagreeable one for the person on the street. This objective mapping of one's geographic reality was likely to invite hostility. He suggested that while conducting surveys in Bombay or in other Indian cities, 'statutory powers, similar in kind to those under which the Ordnance Survey of the U.K. work, be sought and obtained' (22), and that the police be notified to ensure protection of the surveyors. Police protection had been found necessary in the United Kingdom, Robertson claimed, and its need may be felt even more keenly in India 'when dealing with a population of mixed creeds and social prejudices' (22).

The Ordnance Survey method formed the basis of the topographic survey of cities, on which proponents of the emerging urban planning movement added several layers of information. Raymond Unwin, who is cited in E.P. Richards's monumental survey of Calcutta (1914) was looking back at Seebohm Rowntree's survey of York (1899; he conducted two more after Un-

win's book was published), T.R. Marr's survey of Manchester (1904) and Charles Booth's extensive survey of East London (1886–1903) as examples of meaningful city surveys. Unwin's principal inspiration, however, seems to be Patrick Geddes, who had by then published and lectured on survey methods, which involved not only a great deal of statistical data but also a sensitive reading of the city's history, which would help compile a historicised geography. Unwin clarified:

though it may not always be practicable to carry the survey to the extent suggested by him, there can be no doubt about its importance, if the development is to grow healthily from the past life and present needs of the town. The greater part of the work must necessarily be done by the sociologist, the historian and the local antiquary. (Unwin 1909, 141)

The information that would be made accessible as layers upon the Ordnance Survey maps was to be supplied not only by experts but also by citizens who volunteer to participate in the research. (Where would this volunteer citizen be positioned in the spectrum of power between the person on the street and the god-like view of the state?) This does not, however, absolve the planner of direct responsibility to study the area under survey. For Unwin, the responsibility rests ultimately on them to interpret the data in the light of their experience and expert understanding of the city, and to suggest a plan that will enable the most important aspects of the town to develop without compromising its historic character (146). Interestingly, in *Conditions*, E.P. Richards quotes a substantial passage from Unwin's manual as supporting evidence, he chooses to omit the paragraph immediately preceding where Unwin pays a glowing tribute to Geddes's work on formulating the surveys (Richards 1914, 43).

The walking tour, therefore, could add layers of information onto the topographic city survey—the totalising of an 'immoderate' human text (de Certeau 1984, 92) could be achieved even without literally ascending heights. The state could see intrusively from the streets as well. Geddes, Richards, and Albert De Bois Shrosbree (Chief Surveyor and Valuer to the

CIT), despite their ideological differences, acknowledged the importance of this method. While on the one hand the panoptic view of the cartographer appears to exercise its power by ignoring the social life of a city and by reducing it to geometric form and shape, the street-level view offered by the walking survey was not necessarily less problematic. Despite his Haussmannian inclinations, E.P. Richards was eager to bring to public attention the desperate condition in which he found Calcutta. He discovered this over a period of five or six months, in which time he claimed to have covered a staggering 600 miles on foot (Richards 1914, 238). Despite all the state-sponsored surveys that had attempted to 'reduce the chaotic, disorderly, constantly changing social reality...to something more closely resembling the administrative grid of its observations' (Scott 1998, 82), Richards concluded that very few Europeans knew what the city looked like behind the first row of buildings that lined the major streets, 'of the dense back-blocks that compose three quarters of the city' (Richards 1914, 77). There were members of the CIT, such as the Chairman, C.H. Bompas, and D.L. Monro, who made the cut for Richards, but on the whole, he wrote:

Most of us have no occasion to go about anywhere except in the Dalhousie Square, Old Court House Street, Chowringhee, and Park Street areas, which make a mere fringe along only half the west side of the built-up mass of Calcutta...One can walk day after day for hours in the lanes of North Calcutta, without meeting a single European. (77)

It would appear that the problem of legibility of the governed territory was not entirely solved by Haussmannian cleansing projects either. In a 1944 proposal for a 'New Howrah,' W.H. Prosser, Chief Engineer of the CIT, noted that:

The great weakness of the splendid road system carried out in Paris in the middle of the last century by Haussmann is that many of the areas [behind] the magnificent tree lined boulevards were left untouched and are, even to-day. (Prosser 1944, 10)

He claimed that the same defect marks some of the earlier schemes drawn

by the CIT, and he warned that the development of Howrah must avoid such errors. The plan he drew up for Howrah was based on Ebenezer Howard's 'Garden City' model (Prosser 1944, Fig. 2). Unsurprisingly, it never came to be realised. The question of legibility in Calcutta is perhaps better understood in terms of a distinction between the façade (buildings lining the main streets) and the interior, that becomes evident from Richards's or Prosser's study, rather than the now discarded (Chattopadhyay 2005, 76–79) zonal demarcation of White and Black Towns.

Called on to offer his views on the CIT's Bara Bazar report, Patrick Geddes undertook a similar walking survey. He wrote:

Every street and accessible lane has of course been studied by the writer and his assistants, and this repeatedly, both separately and together; and every place of business great or small, has been noted. Every accessible house has been entered—at least its courtyard, often its back-yard also—indeed when possible ascended so as to form an idea at once of its immediate neighbourhood, and of its own sanitary condition and repair. (Geddes 1919, 27)

What Geddes saw in these lanes was markedly different from what his colleagues working closely with the CIT saw or recalled. In his *Note on Barabazar Improvements* Shrosbree recalled three mornings he had spent walking around the Bara Bazar area. The only remedial suggestions Geddes had supposedly made were that 'individual houses should be demolished at close intervals so as to provide ventilation space for the surrounding houses,' and that shrines to Hindu deities be built to prevent 'nuisance corners' (Shrosbree 1916, 6). Geddes may have undertaken the walks for his own survey at a different time, or he may not have disclosed all his thoughts to Shrosbree. It becomes evident from his *Report*, however, that in comparison to Richards or Shrosbree, who gathered information from these walks that corroborated their overall design for the area, Geddes's vision was informed by an analytic lens that studied not only circulation of traffic around the streets or the narrowness of the lanes, but also the spatial practices of the locals along with their social traditions that interacted

closely with architectural forms (Geddes 1919, 29).³

‘Officials of the modern state are, of necessity, at least one step—and often several steps—removed from the society they are charged with governing,’ writes James Scott (Scott 1998, 76). While the view from above, to continue with de Certeau’s metaphor, enables political powers to achieve this useful ‘typification,’ the knowledge of the street can also be intrusive and hegemonic. All said and done, the walking survey remains just that: a survey that enables the state to achieve a clearer understanding of its subjects. The very notion of legibility of a society presupposes, as Scott says, ‘a viewer whose place is central and whose vision is synoptic’ (Scott 1998, 79). Whether this intelligence is used against the people in some way or it is employed in a manner that benefits them, depends on at least in part on the surveyor’s sensitivity to local customs and traditions. Geddes has been subjected to criticism on these grounds, to which we will return. In the context of the present political scenario especially, it is impossible to ignore the cost of accepting benefits promised by the state in exchange for personal information, which in the best case scenario is liable to be misused by the state.

REORDERING SPACE, RE-HOUSING THE DISPLACED

Partho Datta has argued that the CIT’s planning was inspired by the Haussmann model (Datta 2012, 212–17). He cites the CIT’s *Joint Report*, compiled by James Maden and Shrosbree (1913), where the authors claim that since ‘the work of remodelling Paris was undertaken by Baron Haussmann in 1853,’ no comparable case of urban reorganisation is to be found. There is a note of optimism in the report, which goes on to say that the work has taken into consideration ‘traffic, sanitation and architecture’ (CIT 1913, 6), and to this end, private citizens and political representatives alike have shown their willingness to suspend their personal gains. While there can be no doubt that the Haussmann model attracted experts working with the CIT, they were all too aware that realistically the colonial administration in

3 For a detailed analysis of Geddes’s reading of Indian cities see Srinivas, Smriti. 2015. ‘Biocentric Eutopias in South Asia.’ In *A Place for Utopia: Urban Designs from South Asia*, 11–49. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

India in the early twentieth century did not wield the same kind of power as Napoleon III in mid-nineteenth century France, nor did they have access to sufficient funds. Much against their wishes, they had to contend with political representation on the one hand, and on the other, persuade the Secretary of State, who considered Calcutta's urban planning a provincial matter rather than something of interest to the Empire. In fact, one of the main reasons behind the setting up of the CIT was to circumvent this 'problem' of answerability to the people. As Datta has shown, the 1899 Municipal Act had already significantly increased the power of the executive in the Municipal Corporation, but even with stronger European control over planning, this was not sufficiently efficient when it came to implementing its programme. The second major impetus came from the international urban planning movement that had taken shape in the early twentieth century (Datta 2013, 140).

Urban improvement schemes that aim to make the city a healthier, more pleasant place to live in, often succeed in doing so. However, when the ultimate goal of such schemes is not to offer better housing for the financially weaker sections, this improvement usually comes at the cost of pushing these groups towards the peripheries. Post-Haussmann Paris was a healthier city, but as Scott points out, it was healthier only for those that were not expelled. 'The hierarchy of urban space in which the rebuilt centre of Paris occupied pride of place,' wrote Scott, 'presupposed the displacement of the urban poor toward the periphery' (Scott 1998, 62–63). This hierarchisation of space is part of the improvement schemes' commitment to the city's future. In the case of Calcutta, for example, the CIT's brief 'included future planning in the form of development of land in the interests of economic efficiency and common welfare' (Datta 2012, 208). For the CIT, the utopian dream would have been to have the free hand to destroy and build at will. The matter of rehousing those who were displaced was a matter of concern, but it was not one that was prioritised. At the fifteenth CIT board meeting, Charles Banks 'pointed out that the Trust was created primarily to improve sanitation and that its first duty was to relieve the congestion of the centre of the city' (CIT 1912b, 1).

As noted earlier, the Curzon administration was keen on making Calcutta

a city worthy of its title as 'second city' of the Empire, and to this effect, apart from the municipal and government authorities, commercial and trading bodies such as the Bengal Chamber of Commerce were brought into the dialogue. There was also the matter of financing the Improvement Trust. In his speech to the BCCI, Curzon warned that the scheme produced might be rejected by the Secretary of State on the grounds that the Government was offering too much financial support with the local tax-payer contributing too little. They were working on a new scheme, however, 'in consultation with the local bodies such as the Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Trades Association, who are most concerned' (Curzon 1905, 130). By the Act of 1911, the CIT Board had a total of eleven nominated and elected members, which included a member each elected by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce. The chairman of the Calcutta Corporation was an ex-officio member, along with three others elected by the Corporation, and four members were appointed by the government. The chairman of the CIT would also be by government appointment (Datta 2012, 207–208; CIT Act 1911). It is not surprising, therefore, that the impulse behind the CIT's schemes for Calcutta was commerce, more than anything else. In the interest of realising a more rational city, which enabled freer circulation of people and goods, certain sanitation projects had to be undertaken, but the betterment of living conditions of the labouring classes was hardly the focus.

The plans for re-housing were vague at best. Accommodation for the displaced working classes could be found in the docklands, although 'Kidderpore and Watgunge were extremely insanitary areas and should be dealt with as such *in view of the commercial interests at stake*, should epidemic disease break out' (CIT 1912b, 1). The one dissenting voice was of Babu Ram Dev Chokany, who suggested that 'before undertaking any Street schemes, the Trust should acquire a number of *bustees* in the centre of the town and lay them out, so that sanitary buildings should be erected on them' (CIT 1912c, 1). The chairman rejected this idea on the grounds that improving isolated areas before deciding on the street scheme might later force the CIT to destroy its own improved working-class housing (CIT 1912c, 1). The displacement plan envisioned by the CIT, especially when

it came to more gentrified areas, was not one of uprooting and reinstalling in the peripheries. When Rai Sitanath Raibahadur pointed out that ‘people displaced from Burrabazar would not move to a newly-laid out suburb in Manicktolla,’ he was assured this would not be the case (CIT 1912c, 1). In essence, the scheme did not propose the displacement of one group from a central region to the periphery, but rather a ripple effect, where all inhabitants in given radius would be displaced one step at a time. In C.F. Payne’s words ‘the population would move away in layers. The people from Burrabazar would not go far, but they would displace others, who in turn would go further afield till the class of people, who would be willing to live in Manicktolla, was reached’ (CIT 1912c, 1).

Patrick Geddes suggested a radically different solution. He observed with disappointment that the ‘facile dishousing of the Bastis and Tenements of the labouring classes’ had not been followed up by any effort at re-housing, despite the attention drawn to the problem during his Town Planning Exhibition of 1915 (Geddes 1919, 33). Geddes argued against this plan of pushing the labouring classes to the periphery: it is only the upper and middle-classes ‘who have the time and the means for such journeys, or even the physical energy after the day’s work; and who find recreation in this change from their sedentary life’ (33). Even if they were to be considered ‘only as our machines,’ Geddes believed that following the American ‘Efficiency Management’ model would be more beneficial to commerce. ‘Their houses must be near their work; though by no means necessarily ours, which may quite well be located at a reasonable suburban distance’ (33).

But was there any conceivable alternative to pushing labourers to the peripheries? It is instructive to look at works of speculative or science fiction that emerge at moments of urban crises, real or anticipated. They have the unique ability to take urban innovations and push them to their logical (or often illogical) extremes, thereby revealing some of the long-term ideological implications of these decisions. Nathaniel Robert Walker’s study of science fiction in the immediate aftermath of Paris’s Haussmannisation, for example, refers to Jules Verne’s first completed work, *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (1863) (Walker 2014). Verne took Haussmann’s project to what appeared to him as its logical conclusion: a dystopian city, where ed-

ucation has become wholly practical and subservient to a 'scientific state bureaucracy' (Verne 1996, 28), and affordable housing has been dramatically reduced. In 'Île de la Cité...there was room only for the Bureau of Commerce, the Palace of Justice, the Prefecture of Police, the cathedral, the morgue' (72). Verne does not, however, dispatch the labour force to the city's peripheries, at least not laterally. Paris in 1960 (approximately a hundred years later) has built high-rises, and the labouring classes are allowed to occupy the upper storeys of these houses: 'what they gained in proximity they lost in elevation—a matter of fatigue, henceforth, and not of time' (73). Elevators or lifts were still very much a novelty and the master of science fiction seemingly failed to anticipate its subsequent ubiquity.

In his Barra Bazar Report, Patrick Geddes mentions the use of elevators in cities in the United States of America which serve 'sky-scrappers,' although he appears unsure of the future of buildings of great height (Geddes 1919, 31). In Barra Bazar there were four storey tenements, and on Harrison Road a few that went up to five or six storeys. In Edinburgh, where there were existing buildings up to nine or ten storeys high, Geddes confesses to have built a couple that were five storeys or more. He himself occupied a flat on the fifth level. But it was pointed out to him by a 'professor and consultant in gynaecology' that in his architectural designs, Geddes thought 'like a man.' He had urged Geddes to think of himself, 'with only a woman's strength,' (casual, predictable sexism) 'with your food basket on one arm, your baby on the other, and another growing within' (31).

Unlike *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, Everard Digby's 'Calcutta Fifty Years Hence' (both are set in the 1960s) is not an overtly critical take on the improvement plans waiting to transform Calcutta. Digby cited H.G. Wells as his inspiration, but claimed that speculative fiction had a geographical bias (global north), having 'their locale either in London or in some large reading centre of the United States' (Digby 1914, 23). The course of Calcutta's future has changed dramatically because of a serendipitous technological discovery rather than an ideologically driven plan. Owing to an additional zero that had crept into the calculations of one Mr. Tregantle, and his subsequent meeting with Johan Behr, 'too profound a scientist to know why he had come to India' (27), Calcutta was able to build higher and higher

until it seemed to lift itself off the ground. Roads have vanished altogether: ‘there is a constant flash of air-trains—a succession of aeroplanes gripping their travelling wires. Over them and under them is the traffic of the faster free aeroplanes’ (29). This would have appealed greatly to the urban imagination of Le Corbusier (Pinder 2010, 204). Twenty wire-ways connecting Calcutta and Darjeeling bring in tea, which is then sent in a tea-train to the sheds in Cossipore. Copper from Sikkim and wool and gold from Tibet arrive in the city in the same way (Digby 1914, 28). This highly mechanised and efficient city is built on a foundation of mud. A law had been passed to the effect that all suburban buildings must be constructed on compacted mud up to ten feet high, and ‘good class settlements’ on twenty. Thus, ‘from the top most flats sentimental couples, newly married, would gaze northward and imagine they could just glimpse the Himalayas’ (25).

In 1914, the narrator notes, ‘there were a score of lifts in the city and the extreme height of the buildings was six storeys’ (24). Digby’s utopian solution to housing the labouring classes is an innovative one, which does not involve any peripheral relocation, lateral or altitudinal:

On the ground level again except where power houses, factories and the houses of superintending engineers run up a couple of hundred feet, there are the well modelled dwellings of the cheaper labour of the city. To them this is not a gloomy underworld. It is cool and shady; work in the lower town is eagerly sought for by labourers from all over India and the neighbouring countries. (29)

Technological innovation disrupts the binary between the city’s centre and its peripheries. It remains unclear, however, if there is any scope for physical or professional mobility between these two classes of society.

MEMORY AND HISTORY IN THE STREETS

The narrator of ‘Calcutta Fifty Years Hence’ struggles to pick out bits of the city that might ring familiar to a visitor who knew Calcutta in 1914. Among the vestiges, he draws what one might describe as a steampunk image of one of the city’s best recognised icons:

The Victoria Memorial has reached one and a half storeys and has stuck there. Three builders' cranes of the 1907 pattern crown its labours as a token of the intention to complete the memorial ultimately. (Digby 1914, 29)

Curzon, the prime mover behind the Victoria Memorial (a deserted project in Digby's account) never tired of proclaiming his love of history. On board the ship that brought him to India, Curzon read H.E. Busteed's monumental *Echoes from Old Calcutta*, which gave him a clue to many historical events that had supposedly slipped out of public memory. During the unveiling of the replica of the Black Hole monument, in a speech delivered on December 12, 1902, he declared that to him the 'the past is sacred' (Curzon 1905, 83). He claimed impartiality when it came to his acts of commemorating historic events and lamented the lack of historical awareness in the city of Calcutta, which he described as 'one great graveyard of memories' (Curzon 1905, 83). In the speech to the BCCI where he spoke about the urgent need for urban improvement, Curzon noted that respect for the past and his vision of the future were in no way contradictory:

My view is well known that no place and no country can afford to be so absorbed in the pursuit of its future as to forget its past. But in remembering the past I have also had one eye fixed on the present, and another on the future. (Curzon 1905, 128)

Curzon took great pains to find archaeological evidence for the controversial Black Hole incident: evidence that would have been the final piece of the puzzle (Carnduff 1902, 13).⁴ He had put in efforts to mark on the existing buildings and roads the boundaries of the old Fort William and the exact location (according to his researches) of the cell. Disinterested respect for history was not his only motivator—colonial subjects and the colonisers had to be reminded of this event, whose guilt/martyr narrative could be deployed to justify colonial rule and inspire future rulers.

4 For earlier excavation attempts see Chatterjee, Partha. 2012. 'Bombs, Sovereignty, and Football.' In *Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice*, 264–310. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The past lived on in the present. In *Calcutta Old and New* (1907), H.E.A. Cotton paused before delving into the city's history: 'Yet before we can summon up the ghosts of the succeeding generations, the glare of the present comes swiftly to blind us to the glamour of the past. A new Calcutta is rising in our midst' (Cotton 1907, iv). At best it lived in the form of 'shades of departed Governors-General' that 'hover about the marble halls and corridors of Government House,' or 'forgotten worthies in ancient costumes' who 'haunt the precincts of this historic square' (Curzon 1905, 83). The function of history according to this school of thought, represented by Curzon and Cotton, was to serve as a constant reminder of official history: of 'great men' and 'watersheds.' In this view of history, the past was firmly in its place: this would selectively be represented in public by the state authorities, who also held monopoly over their symbolic function. Perhaps this was necessary before the 'new era' could be ushered in, what with 'the talk...of an Anglo-Indian Haussmann who is to transform the teeming Indian quarter' (Cotton 1907, iv). The debate over the presence of colonial monuments in a post-colonial city continued well after India's independence.

In a 1937 essay, Lewis Mumford, one of Patrick Geddes's students, declared the death of the monument. Mumford 'rejected nineteenth-century monuments for springing from death and for displaying a fixation with the past,' and, inspired by Geddes, saw the city as a space of constant regeneration and renewal (Welter 2003, 45–46). Mumford's rejection of the older monuments was part of his project of defining a new monumentality, one that would not reject its history, but through active engagement give it a distinct form. Similarly, for Geddes, history was not demarcated by the historian's time periods. It was not a celebration of 'the best that has been known and done in the world,' nor was it 'that which mourns or meditates among the tombs' (Geddes 1908, 14). History flowed through time, enriching the present without encumbering it, and offering new, syncretic possibilities for the future. This idea of history, not without its problems, made Geddes a more sensitive reader of the urban environments he encountered, compared to the planners working with the CIT. In his address to the Utopian Society at Chelsea, he articulated his understanding of a

city's history and its uses in society.

Though to historians and their readers the past may too often seem dead, or at best a record to be enshrined in libraries for the learned, it is of the very essence of our growing sociological re-interpretation of the past to see its essential life as continuous into the present, and even beyond, and so maintain the perennation of culture, the immortality of the social soul. (14)

As Welter points out, a key element of Geddes's understanding of historicised geography was the idea of a *locus genii*, or a space that would invoke the nascent tutelary spirit (to put it crudely) of a place, that is, its *genius loci* (Welter 2003, 40). The way to discovering this, Welter suggests, was to 'adopt a passive position and "wait in reverence for the genius of the place to work its miracle in its own way"' (40), hopefully before getting run over. This fit in well with Geddes's preference for 'conservative surgery,' a strategy his biologically inclined mind saw as a hallmark of the new medical practices manifest during the World War, where surgeons opted for minimal intrusion over 'Heroic Surgery' (Geddes 1919, 25). For instance, the removal of the old government mint had been the subject of debate. Geddes was not opposed to this shift, and he drew up a plan to repurpose the land occupied by it, in a manner that might serve to create healthier living space. The old building, 'one of the fine architectural monuments of Calcutta,' was adaptable for social use. He recommended converting it into a school (17–18). Perhaps, it would constitute for Geddes the *locus genii* of Bara Bazar.

Without attentive understanding of the functioning of the existing 'biopolis' (Welter, 2002), there could be no urban re-planning. In the report on Lahore, Geddes wrote that the existing network of streets was the 'past product of a practical life, its movement and experience,' and that these essentially function 'in the right directions, and therefore needing only improvements' (Geddes 1917, qtd. in Welter 2002, 118). As for Bara Bazar, Geddes observed:

When one goes through the old streets one sees this: the

planners of Cotton, Bartala and Banstala Streets knew perfectly well the real requirements of their situation, though their breadth has turned out insufficient for a traffic so vastly beyond what they could anticipate. (Geddes 1919, 11)

For instance, he felt the network of lanes that connected this apparently confusing area, were of great value and the existing spatial practices of the pedestrian could be manipulated to enable a more efficient system of circulation of goods. The management of lanes counted as 'minor improvements,' and was in the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation. The CIT's scheme could not incorporate any plan for them. Geddes suggested that rather than viewing these lanes as problems, they could be recognised as an important part of the urban network and extended, so as to free up 'vehicular streets' for speedier traffic only (12). Lanes, he admitted, were 'much out of fashion.' 'A lane after all is a pavement without a road beside it: and some people value its quietness,' wrote Geddes. 'People like short cuts and use them when provided' (12). The Geddesian surveyor, therefore, would pay attention not just to the network of streets and lanes as static objects on a cartographic space, but include in their understanding the spatial practices and habits that keep seemingly irregular organisations running.

Yet, Geddes's view of traditional practices was not an uncritical one. On the one hand, 'the strong Indian attachment to hereditary homes' (29) was not seen by him as an impediment to modernity, as it was for the 'City Fathers,' who had no patience for private sentimentality (in Indians). Geddes believed that this attachment to their homes could be turned into something productive: 'by stimulating them to repair and sanitation with the hope of thus rescuing their homes from condemnation, and leaving them to their children in a better state than they received them' (29). On the other, when it came to 'big business' accommodations, which used the area surrounding the courtyard as storage space, with its office on the ground or first floor and residences above, Geddes felt that a more efficient and healthier system had to be implemented. In tune with his training in evolutionary biology, traditions such as these need not be perpetuated, and it was the

responsibility of the planners to encourage best practices only. Compact, purpose-built warehouses could solve this problem (13). Following German and US models, Geddes recommended that the handling of goods also be made more efficient, perhaps mechanised as far as possible (16).

Colonial rulers and bureaucrats were not oblivious to the city's history. A dedicated team of history enthusiasts that included H.E. Busteed, H.E.A. Cotton, C.R. Wilson, Walter Firminger, complemented each other's work and compiled a narrative, select parts of which were given public articulation by Curzon. The city was seen as a space where colonial historiography (or imperial ideology) could be inscribed monopolistically, whether in the form of statues, buildings, the naming of parks and streets, or Curzon's commemorative plaques similar to the plaques of London. In Geddes's view, history was an active presence in the city: citizens were supposed to feel invested in it, and in turn, everyday practices (the immortal 'social soul') of citizens were also to be included in a holistic perception of the city's past (Branford and Geddes 1919, 131–34). For Geddes, historical appreciation, which in turn signalled a belonging to a spatially defined community across time, possessed healing powers, as is evident from his conceptualisation of city walks in London. It was to be gained from identifying and enjoying the restorative power of the city's 'personality,' which is difficult to discern from its 'first approach' or in the 'town plan.' 'Nevertheless it exists. It is historical and spiritual; and to be effective it must be made manifest in these terms' (137).

CONCLUSION

A common feature of Haussmann's work in Paris, Robert Moses's in New York and the CIT's in Calcutta, although to varying degrees, is the desire to circumvent bureaucracy. Backed by state power but not directly answerable to the electorate, theoretically the CIT could function as an independent body articulating the commercial interests of a section of citizens while making the city a more habitable and sanitised but also exclusionist space. (The imagination of the author of speculative fiction, however, requires none of these conditions.) While writing about the street in the modernist imagination of the city, David Pinder posits as two opposing sides of the

argument Moses with his ‘high modernist’ mode of urban planning and Jane Jacobs ‘as a defender of neighbourhoods, streets, and local democratic engagement’ (Pinder 2010, 221). Many critics, Pinder writes, advocate the need to learn from both, ‘arguing that the grand vision of Moses is required so long as it is tethered by the humane lessons that Jacobs taught.’ For the Situationists and for Lefebvre, the street was a part of ‘a revolutionary struggle to transform everyday life and sociospatial relations,’ which targeted ‘capitalist development and state-led modernization’ (221). Was it possible to reach a compromise without resorting to speculative fiction, as Digby did?

The tacit argument between the CIT and Geddes was not articulated in these terms, but Geddes was aware of the political implications of the Haussmannian model. Cities such as Paris, Berlin, Petrograd, Dublin and Chicago had witnessed labour unrest as a result of urban improvement projects ‘of the older demolition type.’ He writes:

one of the most experienced and eminent of the Mayors of Paris, himself at once a man of action and a historian of distinction, explained clearly to me in conversation, as well as by his writings, how deep and thorough was the influence of the “City Improvement” of Paris by Napoleon III towards the causation of the subsequent troubles in Paris in 1870-71. (Geddes 1919, 34)

Geddes warned against ‘the artificial exaggeration of house-famine,’ the practice of demolishing labour housing before construction of new accommodation, and thereby artificially increasing land value in certain sections of the city (Geddes 1919, 33–34). Geddes’s warning would have gone out not only to the colonial planners but also to local trading and commercial bodies, which benefited from the colonial state’s paternalistic approach to citizens. The need for policing and ordering Bara Bazar could be justified by the colonial state citing instances where they were called in to intervene by commercial bodies such as the Marwari Association, who lodged several complaints to the municipal authorities about cases of petty theft. One such described the area thus: ‘This locality affords consider-

able attraction to the classes who are disposed to commit offences against property combined, when necessary, with offences against person for the purpose of theft and burglaries' (BCCI 1914, 720).

As Partho Datta argues, the presence of industries in and around Calcutta at the turn of the twentieth century does not necessarily imply that it was an industrial society. Following Atiya Kidwai, he sees Calcutta as a 'late pre-industrial city,' one that had urbanised but not yet been industrialised (Kidwai 1990, qtd. in Datta 2018, 22). This follows Anthony King's elaboration on the idea of 'dependent urbanisation' (Castells 1971, qtd. in King 1977–78), which saw metropolitan centres in the colonising countries urbanise alongside industrial growth, while those in the colonies urbanised without being industrialised as effectively. Under these circumstances and with the support of the business classes, the CIT was able to implement in the following decades some of its schemes that cleared up congested areas in the city (Datta 2018, 23–27). The CIT's work was characterised by the three features of 'high modernism' identified by Scott, although how far its convictions lay in 'scientific or technical knowledge' (Scott 1998, 88–89) that came out of the Industrial Revolution, is debatable. The only drawback for the CIT was the relative lack of financial power.

Although opposed to the CIT's methods, Geddes's modernism had its own problems. Noah Hysler-Rubin contests Geddes's identification as a 'planner without politics' and argues that his work cannot ultimately be read out of the imperial context within which he functioned as part of a 'complex network of imperial connections...determined by a multiplicity of local realities' (Hysler-Rubin 2011, Chapter 15). For Hysler-Rubin, Geddes's understanding of history does not stand up to scrutiny either as it 'seems to be that of a well-educated visitor, pointing mainly to widely acknowledged highlights of the local cultures and resulting in a superficial and rather homogenous reading' (Chapter 16). Smriti Srinivas has argued that 'Geddes's views sometimes positioned him in opposition to subaltern groups who invoked the language of rights to secularise public spaces,' as non-Brahmin groups could oppose Brahminical hegemony through measures that were proposed by the municipal governments (Srinivas 2015, 20). Arguing for wider side-walks along Russa Road in Calcutta, Geddes

suggested that the reason behind ‘the perversity of the natives’ who spill on to the streets meant for motorised traffic, needed to be understood sympathetically. ‘The only course is to recognize the fact that caste tradition keeps the Indian crowd a divergent one—and that the close-placed European pavement is here impossible,’ he wrote (CIT 1914, 6), representing a static view of what he understood to be regional realities. Although well-intentioned, Geddes’s recommendations often betrayed a paternalistic approach towards the people of the city. While arguing for municipal interventions in the matter of maintaining ancestral buildings he asked, ‘[w]hy should not a Municipality become paternal enough to make some advance towards improvements’ (Geddes 1919, 29), and urged the ‘City Fathers’ to work with locals towards this end.

Scott acknowledges, however, that ‘it would have been hard not to have been a modernist of some stripe at the end of the nineteenth century in the West’ (Scott 1998, 90), and Geddes was no different. Given the imperial context and Geddes’s involvements not just in India but also in Israel (Hysler-Rubin 2015), it is reductive to read Geddes only as a champion of the people’s right to the city in opposition to municipal authority. His suggestions were often backed by state powers (e.g. Indore), and his influence on town planning and civics is recognised today. In the context of Calcutta in the 1910s, he offers a welcome alternative to the CIT’s vision, which would demolish and impose designs with little regard for the city’s sense of continuity. His reading can be occasionally uninformed but the tools and methods he brought to his own practice, when employed with a deeper understanding of existing spatial practices, constitute a valuable critique to the Haussmannian way of thinking about cities. Geddes’s ‘eutopia’ is processual and constantly negotiating with the practical realities of urban planning, and perhaps it can also expand its own understanding of what constitutes the local and how to effectively read such histories.

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TECHNOTOPIC IMAGINATION AND THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CALCUTTA

Abhijit Gupta

The university is the one place where by concession of state and society a given epoch may cultivate the clearest possible self-awareness. People are allowed to congregate here for the sole purpose of seeking truth. For it is a human right that man must be allowed somewhere to pursue truth unconditionally and for its own sake.

–Karl Jaspers, *The Idea of the University*

This chapter is written at a time when universities in India are under attack as never before. At threat is not just the space but the idea of the modern university, forged painstakingly over nearly a century and a half in south Asia. Part of the threat emanates from the larger context of global neoliberalism from which higher education is obviously not immune. But in the case of contemporary India, more direct and immediate forces have been brought to bear upon this sector, leading to visible and rapid distortions of what the space and idea of the university had stood for in pre- and post-Independence India. For those of us directly connected with the work of the university, there is a real sense of cracking ice-floes and slipping footholds as we struggle to perform day-to-day tasks. In such moments, it might perhaps be productive to revisit and examine the originary impulses behind the university spaces and places we inhabit, especially those which evolved outside the ambit of colonial control. A case in point is the National Council of Education (henceforth NCE), set up in 1906 during the high noon of the ‘Swadeshi’ movement against the British in Bengal. After the inde-

pendence and partition of India in 1947, it would become the modern-day Jadavpur University by an act of Parliament in 1956.¹

What purpose would such a retelling serve? To begin with, it would enable us to reengage with the utopic imagination which went into the founding of the university, as opposed to the largely neoliberal and instrumental logic which informs higher education today. It is a logic by which universities are sought to be transformed from ‘a free, protected space of enquiry, dissent, *parrhesia*’ to ‘no more than a government department,’ subject to the same bureaucratic regulations and restraints. Supriya Chaudhuri has written about this eloquently in a recent article and has proposed that there is an urgent need to ‘rethink the public university as *public space*, perhaps the only kind we have’ (Chaudhuri 2018, 90). I suggest that a similar imagination of the public animated the founding of the NCE in the early decades of the last century. It may not have been a fully thought out or fleshed imagination, and many of its limits and weaknesses would be shown up in the decades which followed. At the same time, its early history may serve as an example of what might be achieved when a number of impulses—including statist intervention—converge productively. In her article, Chaudhuri asks whether it is even possible for us to revisit the idealism that animated Karl Jaspers’s idea of the university in 1923 (Jaspers 1923). She cites Jürgen Habermas’s critique of Jaspers, in which the philosopher asks whether there is still a ‘collective consciousness’ which informs the idea of the modern university, or whether the idea of ‘normative self-image’ is impossible, even undesirable (Chaudhuri 2018, 80). The case of the NCE, I propose, is a study in the art of the possible, as distinct from—though not necessarily opposed to—the Jaspersian upholding of a pure ideal.

Let us then examine the multiple impulses which went into the making of the NCE. Most noticeably, there was the rising tide of nationalism during the high noon of the ‘Swadeshi’ and ‘Boycott’ movements, following the proposed partition of Bengal. But equally, there was also an international imagination which was beginning to take shape. For the purposes of this

1 After 1956, the NCE continued to function as an independent organisation.

chapter, it is not possible to talk about these impulses in any but the broadest of brushstrokes, but that should not blind us to the various shades of nationalism that obtained during this period, ranging from the romanticist European nationalism to more locally-produced varieties and hybrids. Likewise, India's engagement with internationalism resulted in positions as divergent as Tagore's universalism on the one hand, and fuzzy and not-so-fuzzy encounters with fascism on the other (Zachariah 2015).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the landscape of higher education in India was dominated by the three presidency universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Among them, Calcutta University was pre-eminent not just in British India but all over Asia. From 1906 to 1914 (and later during 1921–23) it was helmed by Asutosh Mukherjee, one of the most visionary and charismatic among its vice-chancellors. Mukherjee was fiercely protective about the autonomy of Calcutta University and tilted frequently with the Bengal government over the latter's clumsy attempts to cut the former down to size². According to Kris Manjappa, Mukherjee's tenure at the university was marked by two broad tendencies: the first, to replicate a Humboldtian model of the university in which teaching and research would go hand in hand, to which end he created a 'spectrum of research chairs across the humanities, social sciences and, experimental sciences'; and second, to reorient Calcutta University 'toward nationalist aims right under the nose of anxious colonial administrators' (Manjappa 2014, 47–8). However, just before Mukherjee assumed his first term of office, the Indian University Act had come into being in 1904, and had, among others, 'placed Calcutta University under the most complete governmental control'³ (Bandyopadhyay 2004 [2006], 249). The act was one among a series of measures during the viceroyship of Lord Curzon (1899–1905) which came to antagonise the Bengali public. According to Sumit Sarkar: 'The real confrontation between Curzon and the nationalist intelligentsia came through three successive measures: changes in Calcutta Corporation in 1899, the Universities of Act in 1904, and the Partition of Bengal in

2 For a more detailed account of this, and particularly Mukherjee's duel with Lytton, see Broomfield 1968 [2018].

3 A detailed account of the resistance to the Universities Act may be found in Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 13–18.

1905' (Sarkar 1983 [2014], 90). Of these, the last was to result directly in the setting up of the National Education Council.

The decision to partition Bengal resulted in a massive outbreak of protests all over Bengal, and on August 7, 1905, the formal announcement of the Boycott-Swadeshi movement was made at a meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall. It was not long before the call for boycott reached Calcutta University. A number of lectures and meetings in October–November, 1905 moved inexorably towards the idea of a national university. On October 25, Hemendra Prasad Ghose, sometime editor of the *Dainik Basumati*, published a letter titled 'What to do? A Proposed University' in which he wrote: 'Can we not undertake to teach our boys without that help? ... Can we not found a university of our own?'⁴ (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 26). Already a number of students of Calcutta University had opted not to appear for the MA and PRS examinations to be held in November–December that year: 'Rabindra Narayan Ghosh, the best MA candidate of that year, assumed leadership in the boycott move against the officialised university' (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 19–20). This was followed by the 'historic manifesto' issued by the barrister Ashutosh Choudhury on November 14, 1905. Giving the call for a rally at the Bengal Land-Holders' Association two days later, he wrote (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 36):

A very large number of students has apparently determined not to go up for the university examinations this year. Their idea is to sever all ties with Calcutta University and join some educational institute under national control. There is no such institution now and the question of establishing one, if we are to provide for those students, and others who are likely to follow their lead, must be at one taken up and finally determined.

Most of us were unaware of the intense feelings among the student community...until last Saturday when I attended

4 Later, Ghose would write: 'Though it is a fact that a word spoken at random may determine the fate of a career it would be foolish to claim much credit for the achievement because this letter had appeared before the establishment of the National Council of Education, especially because the idea it expressed had been in the air and the possession and property of every patriotic Bengali' (Ghose 1956, 74–86, 80).

a meeting of the students....At the meeting consisting of over five thousand students, I felt for the first time the urgency of the matter.

At the meeting which followed on November 16, it was resolved to set up a National Council of Education which would 'organise a system of education—Literary, Scientific and Technical—on National lines and under National control' (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 39). Events moved at a furious pace henceforth, with more meetings being held, monies being raised and committees being formed, till the NCE formally came into being the following year, on March 11, 1906. A leading role in shaping the early contours of the NCE was played by the Dawn Society of Satish Chandra Mukherjee.

TOWARDS TECHNOPIA?

How would the new 'university' be different from the ones already existing? What would be its aims and objectives? Where was it to be sited?

One of those who were present at the meeting of November 16, 1905 was Rabindranath Tagore, at that time very much at the forefront of the nationalist upsurge. He was also present on August 14, 1906, on the day of the formal inauguration of the 'Bengal National College and School', and read a famous paper titled 'Jatiya Bidyalay' (National School). He wrote (Tagore 1942):

One of the problems with our land is that we have forgotten that we are responsible, to a certain extent, for the attainment of our own education, health, and wealth....We are secure in the knowledge that all responsibility is the government's; therefore there is no possibility of any work which arises out of a realisation that we lack something....

After a long time, the Bengalis have truly gained something. It is not that there is only an immediate gain in this, but rather, we have gained strength. We have realized that we have the strength to receive, and we know what that strength is and where it resides. With this receiving, we

widened the path to the possibility of further receiving. It was not just that we gained a school, we in fact recognised the truth within ourselves, and the strength in ourselves.

Other speakers spoke in a more prosaic strain. Gorooodas Banerjee, the first Indian to be vice-chancellor of Calcutta University in 1890, outlined the aims and objects of the NCE, and the principles along which 'education on national lines' was to be carried out. Importance was attached to education through the vernaculars, and preparation of text-books for the same. Promotion of physical and moral education was proposed without the 'enforcement of religious rites and practices.' The curriculum was to consist of knowledge of the country, its literature, history and philosophy, 'incorporating with the best Oriental ideals of life and thought the best assimilable ideals of the West.' More importantly, 'education should not be limited by considerations of nationality, but should proceed upon a cosmopolitan basis.' At the same time, argued Banerjee, the existing system of English education had failed to produce results as it had not attached sufficient importance 'to a knowledge of the country, its literature, its history, and its philosophy' (Mukherjee and Mukherjee 1957, 79).

This was an ambitious programme, and one of the first attempts in India to decolonise the imperial curricula. But before long the NCE found itself riven by two distinct pulls. There were those who wanted the NCE to embody the nationalist impulse to the fullest, which would necessarily cast the fledgling institution into an adversarial position with the government. The others counseled caution and a more conservative approach towards curriculum-building. According to Hemendra Prasad Ghose: 'While some of the prominent patrons and workers...aspired after instituting the "three dimensional system"—Literary, Scientific and Technical combined...others wanted only "to supplement the all-too literary education of the existing system by a regular arrangement for technical education under national management"' (Ghose 1956, 82). This frustrated Aurobindo Ghosh—revolutionary, and the first principal of the Bengal National College—who resigned in 1908 and in an article titled 'The Apostasy of the National Council', remarked: 'All that we can now accept of the Council is to be a centre of scientific and technical education; it can no longer be a workshop

in which national spirit and energy are to be forged and shaped' (Ghosh 1970, 230).

Tagore, too, was similarly affected. He had stopped attending meetings of the newly set up NCE; his son Rathindranath would later record (Tagore 1958 [1981], 61):

Father undertook to draft the syllabus of studies and other details for the institution to be started under the Council. In this way the beginnings of the Jadavpur University were laid. Father was, however, disillusioned after one or two meetings of the Council when he found that the members were more interested in establishing a rival to the Calcutta University, with perhaps a bias towards technical education, than in breaking away from the traditions and conventions of the code of education established by the British in India and boldly adopting a system Indian in character but suited to modern conditions. He ceased to attend any further meetings.

In 1919, Tagore himself would write (Tagore 2009, 152):

When the National Council of Education was being founded in Bengal, I asked one of its enthusiastic workers, whether he really believed that the great spreading tree of a University could come into being, with root and branch and foliage all complete, in a day. His reply was, that if not, it would not succeed in capturing the imagination of the country; so that the complete thing must be held forth from the beginning. Well, it was duly held forth, the imagination of the country was captured, money flowed in, and nothing seemed to be wanting except just one casual factor—the truth—the truth which never disdains small beginnings, which is never ashamed to carry its immense future in a tiny frail package. And the imitation tree, after vainly trying to prove its fruitfulness, has shrunk and shrivelled to such fragile precariousness that it does not

have material enough to deceive even itself. So let us repeat, it does not follow that, by merely founding a University oneself, and keeping it under one's own control, it can be made one's own.

Here was the utopic imagination—and its frustrations—expressed through one image: that of a spreading tree, which would subsequently 'shrivel' to become an 'imitation tree.' For Tagore, the spreading tree would subsequently strike root in the red alluvia of Birbhum, in the form of Visva-Bharati, his 'world university.'

There were other concerns as well. Sumit Sarkar claims that '(n)ational education with its negligible job prospects failed to attract...the bulk of the student community' and what remained after two years was the Bengal National College and a breakaway faction called the Bengal Technical Institute. While the latter was able to open a number of national schools in the east Bengal districts, the Calcutta-based NCE 'largely ignored such district or village schools...and they shared in the general decline of mass-oriented movements' (Sarkar 1983 [2014], 101). Elsewhere, it is noted that though 'there was much in common between the two groups the gulf that separated them proved unbridgeable at the time' (National Council 1956, 9). Chittabrata Palit refers to a veritable 'culture war' which was then afoot in Bengal's educational world: 'One party had its centre in the National Council of Education...the other in the Society for the Promotion of Technical Education in Bengal (Bengal Technical Institute)' (Palit 2011, 860). It was the society which set up the Bengal Technical Institute (BTI) and which found itself at loggerheads with the more nationalistic ideals of the NCE. Though the society dissolved itself and merged with the NCE on May 25, 1910, this, according to Palit, was a 'glorious *harakiri*' as 'in the course of a few years, the Bengal National College found itself with empty benches and automatically ceased to exist' (Palit 2011, 861). The BTI, on the other hand, continued to provide bread-and-butter technical education till 1928, after which it was rechristened the College of Engineering and Technology (CET).

Were there, then, two imaginations at work? And were they not separately

capable of capturing the imagination of the country, as Tagore deplored? According to the social scientist Benoy Sarkar, the twin imaginaries could be designated thus: ‘The National Council wanted to function as University and a *Technische Hochschule* in combination, a Harvard University together with a Massachusetts Institute of Technology,’ while the ‘Society had no such ambitions but wanted to simply function as a body for the imparting of industrial education such as had been ignored by Calcutta University and the Department of Public Instruction’ (Sarkar 1946, 95). In this context, Sarkar repeatedly uses a term of his own coining, ‘mistrification’, to indicate a holistic process by which the ‘worker, the industrialist and the white-collar professional would...be joined together by the individuality of the workshop’ (Sen 2015, 6). (the word *mistri* literally means master mechanic but is more commonly used to indicate the calling of a tinker or repairer). It is perhaps in the person of Sarkar in whom we may discern most clearly the twin impulses that were animating the project of the new university. Sarkar, a votary of National Education, was at the same time an unrepentant internationalist who went so far as to declare in 1925 that ‘Indian nationhood was fictional and unity unimportant’ (Sen 2015, 4). But it was in his formula of ‘mistrification’ that we see the clearest articulation of what the divided vision of National Education could yield (Sarkar 1946, 97):

This polarity of views conveniently boiled itself down into the antithesis: nationalism vs materialism, and culture vs crude *mistrification*. As the exponent exclusively of technical education the Society was condemned by certain sections as materialistic, unpatriotic, denationalized, anti-national, or Western-minded. On the other hand, national glory, patriotic idealism, historic culture-sense, all-round nationalism, *mistrification* combined with science and culture, war against Western domination in culture and politics, all these virtues were applied to all those who worked for a literary, scientific and as well as a technical education.

As a number of scholars have reported, Sarkar, despite his immense versa-

tility and creativity, flirted with fascism and early Nazism. Benjamin Zachariah has shown how Sarkar's drive to craft a Swadeshi curriculum for the NCE was informed by a 'professed need for a return to authenticity,' and an on 'almost post-colonial insistence that India could provide or had provided the world with great and worthwhile intellectual products' (Zachariah 2015, 10). In the case of NCE, Sarkar was able to channelise these impulses into a technotopic imagination, in which the triad of literary, scientific and technical education would result in the ideal figure of the *mistri*. The workshop or the factory floor was to be the heart of this new technotopia.

HOME AND THE WORLD

As indicated earlier, the rise of national education was congruent with the beginnings of an international imagination, notably among the Bengali *bhadralok*. This was reflected in the fate of the early graduates of the NCE, though possibly more by compulsion than choice. Both Bengal National College and the Bengal Technical Institute—were regarded as hotbeds of seditious activities by the British government—with its students variously involved in the Chittagong armoury raid of 1930, and a host of other revolutionary programmes. (An Ex-student 1956, 88–9) In a sense, this forced the NCE to send its first students overseas for further studies. Thus, seven students from the first cohort of 1910 went to Harvard, Michigan and Yale Universities to study physics, chemistry, economics, experimental psychology and mechanical engineering, on the strength of a fund created by Radha Kumud Mookerjee and Benoy Sarkar himself. The condition was that they would serve the institution on return for seven years on a fixed salary. Two of the seven in fact served till retirement (National Council 1956, 46). In 1915, the authorities of City and Guilds of London Institute Examination recognised the BTI courses, followed by the University of Edinburgh in 1925. According to one estimate, of the 30 sponsored scholarships between 1909 and 1919, nineteen were sent to the USA while Germany and Britain accounted for eight and six respectively (Manjapra 2014, 54).

The decision to send students to the West for higher study, and the role played by Benoy Sarkar therein, requires some comment. Radha Kumud

Mookerjee has related, in a somewhat humorous vein, how he and Sarkar went about raising funds for the purpose, which included a clandestine delivery one afternoon of rupees thirty thousand in ten rupee-notes packed in a steel trunk. The courier, who was also the donor, ‘went hurriedly down the steps saying: “Take care of my promised contributions”’ (Mookerjee 1953, x). In a recent study, Clemens Six designates Sarkar as chief among a growing body of transnational actors who were active in the creation of a ‘transnational social field.’ Thus, Sarkar and a number of Indian activists went to the United States during this time, both ‘to escape from war-related censorship, as well as to benefit from the rich academic life of the United States’ (Six 2018, 436). In doing so, they were able to create a dialectic of cosmopolitanism and nationalism ‘that resulted from global transfers’ (Six 2018, 433) and a sense that ‘anti-imperialism is not mainly the result of domestic struggles against colonial repression, but appears as a cosmopolitan project strongly influenced as much by outmigration and life experience abroad as return’ (Six 2018, 434).

Elsewhere, Manjapra has described this process as ‘entanglements,’ especially in the context of the Indians who went to Germany in the late Twenties and early Thirties. Such entanglements were to bear the most visible fruit in Tagore’s *Visva-Bharati*, where he was able to attract a varied cadre of overseas lecturers and artists to give shape to his ‘world university.’ Likewise, during his last term as vice-chancellor at Calcutta University, Asutosh Mukherjee was able to recruit a glittering cast of overseas professoriat. Lacking such resources, the National Council required of its foreign legion to devote at least seven years of teaching at the parent institution. Thus, we have two of the original seven who went to the United States—Hiralal Roy who studied chemistry at Harvard University, and Banerjee Dass who studied chemical engineering at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign—taught all their lives in the chemistry department of the College of Engineering and Technology, Jadavpur. In 1935, a publication of the Indian Science Congress was able to report: ‘The Technical Institute is served by an efficient staff including seven Graduates of the best American, German and British Universities and Technological Institutes, besides some brilliant scholars of Calcutta University and our Institute, and on

an average there is one teacher for 15 students' (Indian Science Congress 1935, 135).

SENSE OF A CAMPUS

Despite these early successes, the nomadic⁵ existence of the NCE in its formative decades prevented it from realising some of its aspirations. Going through its early memoranda, one is struck by the minutiae of details, and the thoroughness with which the logistics is worked out. At the same time, there is no sense yet of the physical space of a university emerging. What would this new place look like? How would it manage to carve out a place for itself in the urban jungle that was Calcutta? The one instance we have of a clearly articulated vision of what the new university would look like is from a reminiscence half a century later, by Brajendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury, *zamindar* of Gouripur in Mymensingh district in east Bengal, and one of the earliest benefactors of the National Council. His dream of the new university, and educational institutions in general, was more akin to that of Tagore (Roy Chowdhury 1956, 52–3):

Educational institutions should be located in healthy spaces, far away from the din of cities and tentacles of artificial environments, comprising large areas of land to be utilized for various purposes and preferably by the side of a flowing river providing ample scope for bathing, swimming, rowing etc. They should be housed in modest huts and not in palatial buildings in order to instill the principle of plain living and high thinking in the tender minds of boys. These Institutions should be purely residential, where students would live along with their teachers who will give them constant company in every sphere of life.

Where, in Calcutta, would such a bucolic location be found? Certainly not during the early days of the National Council when it shifted from one rented building to the other. But in 1922, the NCE was able to secure from the Calcutta Corporation, a hundred *bighas* of land on a 99 years' lease at a

5 The first site of the Bengal National College was at 191/1, Bowbazar Street, after which it shifted to numbers 164 and 166 on the same street in June 1907.

monthly rental of Rs 210. A later lease secured an adjacent plot of another 92 *bighas* on the same terms (National Council 1956, 30). Jadavpur then was on the southern outskirts of Calcutta and a wilderness for all practical purposes, but the search for a physical habitation of the new university was over. From this point, the Jadavpur campus would become synonymous with the university.

At this point, let us take a step back and consider the relationship of the new campus with the bustling metropolis which lay to its west. Traditionally, and to this day, it has not been a relationship which has been marked by a sense of mutual acceptance and ease. This is something I will discuss later, but there is no evidence that there was a sense of symbiosis between town and gown, such as envisaged by Patrick Geddes, visionary town planner and sociologist who wrote a series of town planning reports on India. In his *Utopian Papers*, published in 1908, Geddes writes thus about the idea of the university: 'Here has long been growing up the tradition of many culture-activities, and here are now, the essentials of the University City in the general sense; for as the community in its religious aspect was the Church, as the community in its political aspect is the State; so also the community in its cultural state will be the University' (Geddes 1918, 35). And elsewhere, in a eulogy on the French university system in the 1870s, he would write (Geddes and Branford 1919, 346):

The University is thus no specialised caste of culture: it is *solidaire* with all true citizens in all their occupations, all their classes, above all, then, with the People, whose sons we largely are, from whom all classes rise, and whom we students are in training to serve...So in this faith let us work on, to develop City and University together, augmenting, multiplying all their culture-institutions, farther and without end, yet never forgetting in our academic life their larger civic and social purpose; so that every citizen, that is every worker, woman and child among us, shall increasingly enter into their manifold inheritance, and continue it for themselves in their own day and way.

Geddes would have noticed an imperfect realisation of most of his ideals

had he lived to see university campuses in independent India, especially those located in urban centres. In the case of Visva-Bharati, Tagore had seemingly managed to achieve the miraculous task of imagining and realising a university which grew organically out of the very landscape of Birbhum. But in its early decades, the Jadavpur campus would very much be regarded as an outlier, at least till the partition of India and the consequent influx of refugees after 1947. Again, it was Benoy Sarkar, who by coining the terms 'Jadavpurian' and 'Young Jadavpur' sought to create a new identity for the fledgling campus. The shift from 'Bengal' to 'Jadavpur' signalled a simultaneous affiliation to the global as well as the local: this would become particularly marked after the large-scale arrival of refugees from East Bengal, to the area south of Jadavpur after the partition of 1947. A number of refugee colonies came up in and around Jadavpur, on land which had to be fought for and defended. Udit Sen reports how the taking and holding of the Bijoygarh (lit. victory fort) colony adjacent to Jadavpur could only be effected with the help of 'students of Jadavpur Engineering College, who shared close ties with the founding members of Bijoygarh due to their common socialist affiliations' (Sen 2018, 181). Samir Kumar Das reports that as part of the efforts to rehabilitate the refugees, provision was made to train 328 students annually at the Jadavpur Engineering College (Das 2003, 131).

A first-person account of students coming to the aid of defending refugees is given by Nitai Basu, an early student of the engineering college. The time is not mentioned but it was likely early 1949 when a group of students learnt of attacks by hooligans on the shanties set up by refugees in and around a field called 'Layalkar maath', a stone's throw from the university campus. Basu writes (Basu 2018, 36):

About 30-40 of us armed with T-squares set off towards the Layalka-Bijoygarh area as soon as we heard of the attack. On seeing the demeanour of the students, the goons fled in the transport in which they had come....Sometimes the police would conduct nightly raids on [nearby places such as] Azadgarh, Bijoygarh, Netajinagar, Sri Colony. There were some students' hostels at Ranikuthi. The stu-

dents would carry out night patrols there....Fearing police reprisals, many refugees hesitated to set up houses in that area. So we (the Ranikuthi hostelites) built temporary fences as marks of our ownership of the plots of land; I had three such plots myself. At that time, it cost between two to three hundred rupees to make fences and thatch roofs with *hogla* leaves. Every student contributed out of their own savings.⁶

What kind of communitarian relationships emerged out of this encounter? One must try to locate the answer in the lived experience of the campus with the world outside it, a process which continues to be under negotiation even after nearly a century. This is largely owing to the open nature of the Jadavpur campus, with free entry and egress allowed to the university community as well as the general public. This has been in general contrast to other 'gated' educational communities, where, increasingly in the current century, the right of physical access has been technologised by the use of first, identity cards, and then, biometrics, leading to 'closed' systems akin to those described by Richard Sennett in his classic formulation of open and closed cities, and boundaries and borders (Sennett, 2018). To this day, the Jadavpur campus with its five gates serves more as a border than a boundary, with a relationship with the street which is often messy and chaotic, but also productive of solidarities. Not surprisingly, the figure of the *bohiragoto*, or the outsider, is invoked, both politically and administratively, as a threat to the well-being and integrity of the campus.⁷ At the same time, it must be admitted that there has been a certain poverty in recent imaginings of the place and space of the university. Owing perhaps in part to recent aggressions on higher education, campuses in India have resorted to a siege mentality, and Jadavpur has been no exception. The urgency to secure the physical and organisational boundaries of the universities (not always with success) has resulted in a battening of both physical and ideological hatches.

6 Translation mine.

7 This was most in evidence most recently in 2014 during the 'Hok kolorob' agitation in Jadavpur University.

THE ARTS AND THE SCIENCES

Eight years after the independence of India in 1947, the variously named council/college/institute created by the NCE became a university by an act of government. How would the new avatar be imagined differently from its predecessors?

One of the questions which agitated the early shapers of the university was its relationship with the humanities. So far, the Jadavpur campus had been synonymous with the teaching of engineering and the technical disciplines, with humanities teaching functioning as ancillary or 'service' to engineering. For example, in a 1938–39 prospectus of the college, we find that the programme of studies in all the engineering courses included readings in history and economics. Thus there were a 'Historical Study of India and its Civilization', a paper on world history, and one on 'economics and accounting' (College 1938–9, 23–5). Nevertheless, there was a sense that the graduating engineers were becoming over-specialised in their own disciplines and suffering from a 'paralysis of personality.' This phrase was used at the second annual convocation of the new university in 1956 by C. D. Deshmukh, the then chair of the University Grants Commission. In his address, Deshmukh remarked: 'This specialization is a boon in so far it leads to greater skill; but when it results in the narrowing the vision of the specialist, its harmful aspect is termed as compartmentalization...the only remedy to guard against the compartmentalization of human personality is to supplement the training of the student with a liberal dose of general education' (Deshmukh 1959, 9).

Deshmukh's prescription has reappeared in a new avatar in recent times under the guise of the 'liberal arts', a particular favourite of a clutch of private universities which have come up in the last two decades or so. Chaudhuri alerts us to the perils of this model, particularly in case of the public university. Instead, she proposes the idea of a 'new humanities' which could result from the recent interdisciplinary turn in higher education. One of the legitimate criticisms which may be levelled against the Indian public university is its obsession with disciplinary boundaries, making it difficult for any kind of conversation to take place across disciplines. In

1959, C. P. Snow was to famously bemoan the great divide between the humanities and sciences in his Rede lectures: ‘Between the two a gulf of mutual incomprehension—sometimes...hostility and dislike, but most of all lack of understanding’ (Snow 1959 [2003], 4). Jadavpur too was likewise divided into three neat silos of the arts, sciences, and technology and engineering, but in the new century, it became one of the first Indian universities to break out of this rut, pioneering interdisciplinary research in a host of new areas. In these, we may see a somewhat different fruition of the ‘literary-scientific-technical’ triad envisaged by the founders of the NCE. For the latter, the ‘three-dimensional’ system was intended to function as a set of ancillary skills for the specialist, a corrective against the possibility of ‘compartmentalisation.’ In our time, it is perhaps in these new intersections of disciplines and methods in which the university of the future might be fruitfully reimagined.

And what of the unfinished retelling of the council-turned-university? A different narrative would unfold in the troubled years of the Naxalite movement of the late Sixties and the early Seventies, when campuses across the city acted both as incubators of revolutionary politics as well as a last refuge for students in conflict with the state, leading to poignant tests of loyalty and courage for the scholarly community. But the result was a bitter harvest, and one that would require a different kind of retelling, not within the scope of the current discussion. For this chapter, the utopic impulse abides in the possibility of change which is incremental, and the respite in which to imagine the shape of the change.

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SOCIAL DREAMING BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL: THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION IN UTRECHT AS AN URBAN UTOPIA

Hans Sakkers and Barnita Bagchi

In 2012, in the presence of the Queen of the Netherlands, the High Commissioner for UN Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, declared Utrecht the first human rights city of the Netherlands (van den Berg 2016, 51). This was a great honour for an initiative that had started just three years before, when Utrecht began to conceptualise the translation of human rights to the local level. Labelling several policies and initiatives as human rights gave a new drive, synergy and extension to things that had happened already, and put more weight on them. Instead of using human rights primarily as a legal frame, the aim in Utrecht was to develop what has been called ‘a local human rights culture.’ In 2011, a Local Human Rights Coalition was born (henceforth ‘the Coalition’), consisting of local civil society organisations, lawyers, the municipality, academics, NGOs, grassroots initiatives, cultural institutions, socially responsible businesses, and others. The Coalition aims to create awareness and ownership of local human rights in order to enhance the translation of global value(s) into local practice. The Coalition focuses on a local, bottom-up approach, while at the same time sharing best practices and strategies with other cities, nationally and internationally.

This article describes how the Coalition developed, and it explores how the local Coalition could be seen as a form of urban utopianism and urban

social dreaming, as discussed in this volume. First, the local human rights approach is described and the organisational aspects of the Coalition and its main characteristics are delineated; reflections from some members of the human rights coalition follow; in a few parenthetical boxes within the text, we provide excerpts from blog posts by Coalition members; we then draw together some cautious conclusions about the impact that the local nurturing of human rights can have on urban social dreaming.

THEORISING LOCALISING HUMAN RIGHTS

We theoretically position our case study at the intersection of social dreaming, human rights and the city as a globalised space of interaction. With this, we choose a specific focus among the multitude of studies, projects and experiments in the field of urban future studies, urban scenario planning and local utopian thinking. In this article, we focus on the active role of the residents of cities, the inspiration of the internationally shared concept of human rights on these residents, and how they also take joint action to achieve their aspirations.

Rights, which are claims to well-being and justice, are often fought for, gained, and lost, in cities (Oomen, Davis, and Grigolo 2016). Human rights are mobile, globally prolific and yet contested and vernacularised drivers of justice and visions of a better world (Merry 2006), and human rights manifest in art and literature too (Authers 2016; Bagchi 2016). Cities are frequently the focus for people and ideas that move globally, as well as social laboratories for justice (Oomen, Davis, and Grigolo 2016) often enacted through literary, artistic, and media activism (Bagchi and Monachesi 2016; Deb 2016). Oomen has argued that human rights have had a paradoxical position in the Netherlands: there is a contrast in the emphasis on human rights in foreign affairs policies of the Netherlands, and the lack of domestic reference to these rights in the Netherlands (Oomen 2016, 42). Oomen's urging that human rights be 'brought home' in local Dutch policy contexts is concretised by an initiative such as the Utrecht Coalition.

Utopia articulates dreams of a better life and anticipations of the future (Bloch 1995); a 'social dreaming' (Claeys and Sargent 1999, 1–5), utopia

combines social and imaginative experimentation. Even though the word was invented in Europe in 1516 by Thomas More, utopia has manifestations in and has travelled between all inhabited continents. Utopia manifests itself in the city, across the world. David Pinder, who published on critical urban utopianism, asked in 2002: ‘What is the role of utopian visions of the city today? What is their use at a time when, for many people, the very concept of utopia has come to an end?’ (Pinder 2002, 229). He then argued against the abandonment of utopian perspectives, instead advocating a

[R]ethinking of utopianism through considering its potential function in developing critical approaches to urban questions. The tendency to authoritarianism in utopian urbanism certainly needs acknowledgment and criticising, but this need not entail a retreat from imagining alternatives and dreaming of better worlds. Instead, it is necessary to reconceptualise utopia, and to open up the field of utopian urbanism that for too long has been understood in an overly narrow way. (Pinder 2002, 229)

David Harvey, too, arguing for the reclamation of the right to the city by its citizens, writes, ‘[w]e cannot do without utopian plans and ideals of justice. They are indispensable for motivation and for action. Outrage at injustice and alternative ideas have long animated the quest for social change. We cannot cynically dismiss either. But we can and must contextualize them’ (Harvey 2003, 940). The city also yields texts and practices of memory and amnesia, while such reconfigurations of the past often help to constitute utopian urban visions of the future (Boyer 1994; Crinson 2005). Historian Samuel Moyn argues that the human rights paradigm is a utopian programme: ‘with the political standards it champions and the emotional passion it inspires, this programme draws on the image of a place that has not yet been called into being. It promises to penetrate the impregnability of state borders, slowly replacing them with the authority of international law’ (Moyn 2010, 1). Following Moyn, Utrecht developed a human rights approach that places the inspirational character more at the centre than the legal character. In the words of the historian Nicole Immler: ‘Departing from a definition of human rights that describes alongside its *legal* nature

also its *utopian* character' allows one to explore how 'human rights function as a *social imaginary* on the individual level and their impact in the political but also broader social and cultural realm' (Immler 2018, 194). According to Immler, considering human rights as a *social imaginary* has much to offer for a critical, bottom-up approach in the human rights field, as it reveals the 'need to be *transculturally justified*, but also to be translated into *local practice*' (Immler 2018, 199). For all cities the increasing pluralisation of the last decade has had its challenges. As Arjun Appadurai has taught us: 'Globalization is not simply the name for a new epoch in the history of capital or in the biography of the nation-state. It is marked by a new role for the imagination in social life.... more persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by mass media in all their forms' (Appadurai 1996, 11, 54). This process of globalisation asks for new ways to moderate diversity in a positive way. We follow Hans Alma who advocates a kind of *active pluralism* 'in which differences are not just tolerated, but in which people actively search for understanding and mutual respect' (Alma 2018, 7).

To differentiate between cities Richards and Duif emphasise that it is particularly important for smaller cities to connect imagination as social practice to the city as a place and space:

Dreams are intangible, ephemeral, and mobile. This gives them considerable power and immediacy. But it also means dreams are vulnerable. To become reality, dreams need to be shared: they need to be owned by more than one dreamer. For small places, it is important to link good ideas, or dreams, to the location. Big cities will take ideas from everywhere, and appropriate them. (Richards and Duif 2019, 223)

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

In 2009, the City of Utrecht was asked by the European Fundamental Rights Agency to collaborate on an international 'Joining Up' Fundamental Rights project, which investigated how cities, together with national governments and NGOs, could take responsibility for human rights at the

local level. In this initial phase the municipality of Utrecht, together with the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) of the Utrecht University and the national Equal Treatment Commission, investigated the quality of its municipal policies. Ten policy areas were selected in relation to their relevance for the political agenda at that moment, and were critically reviewed from a human rights perspective. The policy assessment (City of Utrecht, 2012) was sent to the City Council and functioned as a starting point for improving local policies. The assessment did not cover all policy areas, but tried to strike a good balance between policy themes that had priority on both sides of the political spectrum. During this initial phase of becoming a human rights city, municipal officials were trained (by staff members of Amnesty International) and the involvement and knowledge of the Utrecht population on human rights issues was surveyed. After this first stage, the focus of the local human rights approach changed *towards* the direction of creating a local coalition with many local, national and international parties (Sakkers 2017, 369).

REFLECTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION

In three boxes below, some events, which members of the Coalition co-organised or took a leading role in, are described, through extracts from blog posts, most to be found on the Coalition website (humanrightsutrecht.nl). In the agenda or diary section of the website, the Coalition places notices of activities and meetings around human rights in Utrecht. In the blog section, Coalition members write posts offering background information, personal contributions and news.

Through the years, the human rights narrative became a regular point of reference politically. Although the local human rights project in Utrecht was embraced from the beginning by politicians such as the Mayor and some Deputy Mayors, it had at first a sceptical reception in the administration and its management. Between 2010 and 2018, a particular Deputy Mayor was appointed with responsibility for local human rights issues.

Slowly the higher administrative levels too—perhaps because of the bottom-up process and the political will to support the initiative—started to realise that human rights could truly work as a framework to improve the quality of life of citizens. Crucial in this change was the fact that members of the City Council too slowly began to refer to human rights treaties during the assessment and discussion of concrete situations and policies. In 2018, for the first time the City Council referred to Utrecht openly as a human rights city in the Coalition Agreement for 2018–2022 (Gemeente Utrecht 2018, 16).

Mariangela Lorenzo and Friso Wiersum, then active members of the Coalition, reported on an event (March 15, 2018) about opportunities in education, as part of the run-up to the municipal elections. The role that education can play in the creation of equal opportunities was debated. The Dutch Inspectorate of Education published in 2017 their report on the state of education, and one of the key points in it was to highlight large differences between schools, as a result of which much social talent remained untapped. The kick-off to the Utrecht event was provided by Mohammed Saiah, who told his personal story of how important motivational teachers are, and he highlighted the difficulties that young people who grow up in deprived areas often face, sometimes because schools in such areas do not challenge their students to perform at their best. As a candidate for councillor, he laid out concrete measures he would support to advance education, such as smaller classes and bridge classes. Many of those issues also recurred in the public interview with Ilja Klink, head of knowledge and innovation at the Inspectorate, and in the presentation of Micha de Winter, Professor of Education and Pedagogy at the University of Utrecht. De Winter advocated the Utrecht initiative of the city schools that counteracts segregation because pupils from different schools meet each other there. According to him, education should offer hope to the development of students who participate as full

citizens in our society. The Inspectorate would therefore measure not only data (language and mathematics skills) but would also evaluate schools on other points pertaining to inclusion and the shaping of full citizens.

From the very beginning, the initiative and the Coalition have attracted the attention of researchers and institutions. A research application was jointly written by the Coalition with Barbara Oomen, an expert on human rights from a sociological perspective. On the basis of this application, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) made available two years of funding for reflection on the way the Coalition generated impact on the local level. The research was conducted by Esther van den Berg, and accompanied and supported by the Coalition from 2012 to 2014. Scholarly thinking was brought to bear on the project and ideas from researchers such as Oomen, Sally Merry, Moyn, Appadurai, Immler and Alma started to play a major role in the self-reflection and positioning of the Coalition. Some dilemmas and tensions accompanied the context in which Utrecht worked on establishing a human rights coalition, and understanding these would help in comprehending its dynamics:

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SOCIAL DREAMING BETWEEN
THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL:
THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION IN
UTRECHT AS AN URBAN UTOPIA

Firstly, generally when people in the Netherlands think of (violating) human rights, they often think of situations in countries far away (Oomen 2011, 2). They do not realise that these rights are also violated at the local level and that by preventing these violations and raising consciousness and ownership of local human rights, the quality of life of all inhabitants—and especially of those who are marginal in mainstream society—can increase significantly. This means that the Coalition works against the background of a broader view and set of opinions at the national level that is slowly transformed at the local level.

Secondly, there exists an interesting tension between two apparently opposite ways of looking at human rights. On the one hand, we have the pragmatic and instrumental question of how human rights contribute to and have an impact on the city as an open, inclusive and just space; and

on the other, we have the view that human rights are a more general, ethical, imaginary and, above all, inspirational framework in which impact is much more an indirect, fluid and long-term phenomenon.

Thirdly, the cooperation in the Coalition touches upon a local ideology with regard to why the initiative was undertaken in the city of Utrecht: a priority of the City Council is to govern the city through a high degree of citizens' engagement and by multi-stakeholder processes. The local human rights coalition is an example of what such cooperation between a local authority, civil society, scientists, businesses and citizens might look like, and represents the critical bottom-up cooperation that Utrecht wants to achieve. However, the active participation of the municipality itself in the creation of a local human rights platform creates a paradoxical situation: the opportunity for using the human rights narrative for empowerment increases, but the direct participation of the municipality in this awareness process could also augment the possibility of the government controlling social criticism of itself at an early stage.

ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE COALITION

The Coalition brings together many organisations, with crossovers between different initiatives, which would otherwise remain unexplored. A platform is offered where citizens, experts, companies, NGOs, the cultural sector and other stakeholders might meet each other. By discovering crossovers, organisations learn which topics or integrated policies to work on and which partners would be beneficial and effective for collaborations. In this way, interesting and useful new partnerships arise. Through these partnerships, local policies are strengthened and cooperative conversations are started with other cities in the Netherlands and with places in other parts of the world.

These partnerships have the structure of the public-community-private. Since the Coalition is unique in the Netherlands, several national organisations (ministries, the Dutch association of municipalities, the Ombudsman, researchers, the national human rights institute), in addition to the

local partners, have been supporting the initiative. So far, the leading partner, or to state it better, the facilitator, is the City of Utrecht. However, the Coalition is becoming increasingly horizontally-structured, with the City of Utrecht becoming more and more a member of the Coalition like the others. Therefore, the leading role may be seen as the facilitating role. Since the objective is to stimulate a bottom-up movement, the ideal form to realise this is an informal network structure with formal consequences. The network creates opportunities to grow by giving people and organisations the chance to exchange, motivate each other, and come up with new initiatives. Localising human rights became a connection—of local actions and awareness-building to a global imaginary—to build bridges between interest groups and to exchange experiences and ideas under one common ‘umbrella’. In the words of Arjun Appadurai, the Coalition became part of ‘a critical and new’ trend in ‘global cultural process’: the imagination became ‘a social practice’ (Appadurai, 1996, 31).

Within the network, actors meet on many occasions and activities other than the planned meetings of the local human rights coalition. This facilitates a more informal and low-threshold way to exchange ideas, knowledge, resources, and important issues. Although the Coalition consists of many organisations, the core group consists of around 14 persons. In this core group, the municipality is also represented. The main task of this core group is to decide upon the (thematic) focus points of action in the coming period, and planning and preparing for the meetings (Cafés and other formats) that are open to the whole Coalition. In the Human Rights Cafés, which are organised each round a particular human rights-related theme, and which are open to city-dwellers, socially responsible businesses cater food and drink, while the topic for the day related to human rights is deliberated on, usually first facilitated by Coalition members and invited speakers, followed by discussions between the facilitators, speakers, and city-dwellers. Besides their function as a sounding and steering board, the core group of the Coalition also continuously includes more active players in the network. It is also engaged in mobilising organisations to be more conscious of the importance of local human rights and the contributions that they can make towards establishing a local human rights culture.

In addition to the many meetings of the Coalition and its associated organisations, a lot of time and energy is spent in setting up and maintaining a digital meeting place in the form of a Coalition website on which a blog and agenda for events, an archive, and member organisation overviews are updated on a weekly basis, and which gives an introduction to the local human rights community.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UTRECHT APPROACH

What are the key characteristics of Utrecht's human rights approach? A *first characteristic* is related to the many cultural expressions—such as exhibitions, theatre, music, symposia—in which widespread attention was given to local awareness of the importance of human rights. This is part of a longer process. When Utrecht was candidate for the European Capital of Culture in 2013, it combined the bidding process with organising a special programme for the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht (Vrede van Utrecht 2013), a programme focusing on local and international peacemaking as well as human rights. An analysis by Nicole Immler and Hans Sakkers (2014) of several cultural programmes of European Capitals of Culture at that time revealed that human rights issues had increasingly become an important topic in those cultural programmes. The authors observed a 'slight shift in the programme's content, from a competition-based marketing of local identity towards a more universal value-discourse,' suggesting that this emerging value paradigm illustrates how such cultural programmes, as a sort of cultural laboratory, could contribute to a conceptual reflection on changing Europe. They argue that this emerging value paradigm signals a slight shift in the definition of 'culture,' namely considering and evaluating culture with regard to its potential to create new forms of solidarity, by both strengthening 'local bonding' and linking it to global references at the same time. This indicates not only new approaches to cultural practice at the local level, but also to European cultural policy. This could be sceptically read as the shifting of the identity-debate and its limitations from one field (culture) to another (value), but could also be interpreted as a critical reflection on Europe and its cultural policies. The analysis of the ECoC programmes shows that

thematising the relations between local practices and global challenges indicates ways to rethink the format and the role of the ECoCs within European cultural policies. (Immler and Sakkers 2014, 23). Those insights were taken as inspiration when the Coalition was designed and decided to follow the line of imagination. The intention was to turn it into a kind of cultural movement with a universal moral point of reference. Many programmes were developed, amongst which were the ‘House of Eutopia’ in Zijdebalen, and a major human rights outdoor exhibition called ‘Making Peace’ at the Maliebaan. In 2014, the exhibition was offered to the city of Sarajevo during the commemoration of 100 years of World War I. With these kinds of cultural activities, the Utrecht human rights initiative therefore not only focuses on bringing local people to the attention of human rights and the relevance for their own city, but also programmes a new relationship between ‘local practices and global values.’

Barnita Bagchi, a member of the core group of the HRC, wrote, on The Utrecht Utopia Network website, a blog post on two Human Rights Cafes organised by the coalition. Her post was disseminated on social media by the Coalition. On December 8, 2017, at the venue Het Huis Utrecht, a space for authors, freelancers, and city dwellers, a Human Rights Café took place about Utrecht as a Human Rights City after the municipal elections. On December 10, World Human Rights Day, a broad manifesto of the Human Rights Coalition was circulated, which the Coalition encourages concerned people from Utrecht to support.

One of the main points that Bagchi made from the audience is that we need to get involved and involve others from many different migratory backgrounds, including the skilled migrants or Highly Skilled Migrant category, in civic initiatives and civic conversations—there is an even bigger pool of untapped talent, unheard voices, and expertise to speak about real achievements as well as continuing discrimination, and the ways to find solutions to these. A Nicaraguan activist for the land rights of in-

digenous peoples, now in Utrecht for a few months under the umbrella of Utrecht as Shelter City, spoke of the way in which legislation is endangering the rights of local communities in Nicaragua, with less and less possibilities for environmentally-sensitive development. She also spoke of how vital it is for activists such as her that Utrecht remain a Shelter City. Bright O. Richards, who came from Liberia to the Netherlands as a refugee, and is now an acclaimed theatre-director, presented us with a first draft of his show, *The Bright Side of Life*, about the lives of asylum-seekers, refugees, newcomers in the Netherlands, in an interactive way.

A second characteristic is that the Coalition shapes the ethical or moral background for new plans. The Coalition initiative has had a significant impact on the long-term societal ecosystem in Utrecht by concrete actions and stimulation of ongoing discussions—the outcome was a slowly but surely growing awareness of the importance of human rights. Co-initiated by the municipality itself, several policies were directly and indirectly influenced by this local human rights culture. A notable example is the Bed, Bath, and Bread project developed by organisations in the city of Utrecht, that exceeded national policies but perfectly suited the international human rights regime. The city of Utrecht provides shelter to destitute irregular migrants, espousing the right of the city to provide Bed, Bath and Bread to everyone, irrespective of residential status. On this issue, the city of Utrecht among others started a case at the European Committee of Social Rights for undocumented refugees against a decision of the Dutch state, that was won by Utrecht in 2013 (European Committee of Social Rights 2013). Working through local NGOs (such as SNDVU, Weerdsingel, Toevlucht, Seguro, MOO, STIL, and Vluchtelingenwerk) the City of Utrecht provides shelter and access to medical care. Safe spaces and trusted community partners make it easier to address underlying issues of irregular status, such as how to secure a legal residence permit, or assistance with returning home. Services also support mediation with national immigration authorities. In their first ten years, Utrecht found solutions in 94% of cases in the form of a residence permit, voluntary return or

restoration of the right to care within the federal asylum system. Another impact of the human rights culture in Utrecht was the establishment of the European-funded Plan Einstein—an innovative, ‘future free’ approach developed by the municipality of Utrecht and its partners in the reception and integration of refugees. At Einsteindreef in the Utrecht district of Overvecht, refugees live together with local youngsters. Residents of Plan Einstein and neighbourhood members in Overvecht can follow courses on Entrepreneurship and English here, and/or participate in a practical programme for entrepreneurship, work or join other activities (Oliver 2018). Participants can work to strengthen the professional skills they need, such as collaboration and networking. Furthermore, participants can get help with starting a business, acquire skills in entrepreneurship, receive individual coaching and expand their professional network. This can boost the prospects of a better future for both refugees and local residents, regardless of their status and regardless of where that future lies.

A third characteristic of the Utrecht approach is the principle that ‘human rights treaties are a legal regime, but also a cultural imaginary’ (Sakkers 2017, 371). The strategic challenge for cities is the connection between universal value encoded in international law and the local practice in translating the values into concrete imaginations and realities. Key in this approach is not putting too much focus on the juridical aspects. It is especially this conceptual level of learning that brings cities to new territory—there are countless experts in the field of human rights, and there are academics who have extensively thought about the development of local imaginaries, but its combination with practical experience is hardly present or even completely absent. Utrecht therefore started a collaboration with other human rights cities and developed, in line with the experiences of these other cities, its own Utrecht-appropriate approach.

A fourth characteristic is the relative political neutrality of the initiative. The Coalition has succeeded in placing several human rights issues on the political agenda without politicising them overtly and creating political tensions. This approach also reinforced the belief that human rights should inspire innovative initiatives with a kind of neutral language that is available for everyone, always and everywhere. Human rights should

be an inspiration for all political parties—human Rights are ‘simply’ there and the world community agreed on them by ratifying human rights treaties. In the Utrecht situation, this kind of neutrality is cultivated to minimise the risk that different political interests would turn against the use of human rights at the local level. The first aim of the Coalition was to make human rights a sustainable and long-term discourse of the city. This neutrality could negatively be seen as a kind of avoidance of the ‘struggle and conflict’ that is an inevitable part of a human rights process. Utrecht distinguishes itself with this approach, particularly from a number of Spanish, French and South American cities that rely more on Henri Lefebvre’s ‘the Right to the City’ (1968) concept, which is more the struggle to regain the city’s capital and power by its citizens. The Utrecht approach of localising human rights focuses, however, on its role of moderating the different views on urban reality, and offering interested parties a beckoning perspective.

Nynke Oude Vrielink, Coalition member, interviewed Laura Coello Eales of Inclusive Works, one of the member organisations of the Coalition, and asked her about the goals, opportunities and dreams of this organisation (August 18, 2018). For Inclusive Works, an inclusive society is one in which people with different backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate, for example, in finding a job. Through projects, research, training and workshops about jobs and about an inclusive labour market, Inclusive Works carries out its mission. It works with minorities as well as with majorities. Activities take many forms. After organising a children’s story writing contest, for example, many authors writing about multicultural subjects were inspired in their own work. Or, take the fact that in the job search training that Inclusive Works offers to young people, training in the improvement of writing skills is an important component. Interns and volunteers are welcomed, and mentored. Inclusive Works also actively propagates an international outlook, looking outward to global best practices, and to how

European policy is actually implemented in Europe. On being asked about how Netherlands is different to other countries in her sector, Coello Eales found that there is a slow change in which instead being defined as assimilation, integration was being viewed as a process of mutual learning and adjustment between migrants and the rest of society.

A fifth characteristic of the Utrecht approach is the relative absence of the national level in the local method of becoming a human rights city. Although Utrecht (together with the Dutch Association of Municipalities (VNG), Amnesty International, the Institute for Human Rights in the Netherlands, and human rights researchers) has tried (Amnesty International 2012) over the years to set up a national network to support local human rights in Dutch municipalities and create a common lobby aimed at influencing the national government, this did not get a foothold due to low enthusiasm in other municipalities (Oomen and van den Berg 2014, 170). Due to the lack of other cities in the Netherlands that could serve as sparring partners, Utrecht (later accompanied by the city of Middelburg), started to look for other human rights cities in Europe and beyond. For this reason, an intensive international network, supported by organisations such as the Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in Barcelona, has developed over the years with cities like Graz, Gwangju, Barcelona, Vienna, Gothenburg and Nuremberg. These cities learn from each other's examples on questions such as: how to communicate the theme of local human rights; how to embed it in the municipal organisation; how to develop a form of monitoring; how to deal with political changes; whether you would sign a specific city charter or just refer to the global conventions and agreements; how you make it a local movement; what themes you focus on; how formal the cooperation with many urban parties should be; what role scientists and journalists can play, etc.

A sixth characteristic is therefore the international connectedness of the local Coalition. Since 2011, members of the Coalition have regularly been invited to exchange experiences, within and outside Europe, about the

Utrecht human rights approach. Step by step, a worldwide network of mutually supportive human rights cities has been developing. To mobilise local human rights organisations and bring them into contact with each other under an international umbrella, the Coalition has been working on the annual week of local democracy and human rights (an initiative of the Council of Europe) under the title of ‘Human rights: What about your backyard?’ Local organisations opened their doors to the public during these weeks and offered special meetings to inform the general public about their activities. The promotion of the programme was centrally facilitated, inter alia through a website and a widespread activity calendar. By participating in such European programmes, the importance of human rights to local organisations becomes easier to explain—local organisations suddenly became part of a larger international movement. This gave many participants a clear additional meaning to their own activities. While an organisation used to focus its identity on locally relevant issues such as, for example, supporting the deaf in Utrecht society, the same organisation also became part of a worldwide movement of organisations that together try to give human dignity a face. Organisations and their members became part of a bigger story and a bigger dream.

A seventh characteristic is the attempt to stay away from city-marketing rhetoric with regard to the local human rights initiatives in Utrecht. There is no clear ‘branding’ strategy around the activities of the Coalition, which resulted also from the lessons that were drawn from the European Capital of Culture bidding process. The European Capitals of Culture analysis showed that there is a shift from city-marketing towards a more value-oriented rethinking of the role of culture. Immler and Sackers suggest that this emerging value paradigm also illustrates how such cultural programmes could contribute as a kind of laboratory to a conceptual reflection on (and beyond) Europe (2014, 3). Another reason for this position is that the Coalition believes that the sensitivity of human rights issues does not fit with selling stories about the city. When it comes to human rights, it is difficult to be perfect and to come close to the utopian dream: human rights remains a programme for the future, an aspiration to work on. Since Navanethem Pillay made her announcement in the presence of

a large audience, Utrecht communicates its human rights ambitions more openly, trying to find an inspirational but also a self-critical and reflective kind of storytelling.

An eighth and last characteristic positions the Coalition as an example of ‘public value management’ which is a specific contribution to the approach to enhance a local human rights culture. The public sector has known several kinds of management styles, from the old public administration towards the new public management, towards, lately, public value management (Stoker 2006). Whereas in academic literature a transition from the old public administration and new public management towards public value management has been described quite extensively, in practice this transition is rarely seen in cities and other administrations. Sally Merry et al. describe a third and increasingly influential meaning of human rights:

[h]uman rights are both a system of international law and a set of values. In recent years, as human rights have become fundamental to “transition to democracy” projects, they have also become critical to what is called “good governance.” These are three rather different ideas about what human rights are and when and how they can be used. (Merry et al. 2010, 106)

The Coalition could be seen as an experiment to define and challenge collective value inspired on the one hand by the set of values mentioned by Merry, and on the other by the bottom-up value creation by the changing combinations of local partners in the Coalition.

SCRUTINISING THE IMPACT OF THE COALITION

In this final part of the article, we evaluate the degree in which the human rights discourse of the Coalition could be called a collective dream on a local level. What can we say about the actual relevance of the local human rights narrative for Utrecht as a city?

Locally, a wide range of policies has been developed or changed since the

adaptation of the human rights discourse in 2009—a children’s rights agenda, LGBTI policies, anti-poverty programmes, healthy urban living and air quality measures, the shelter/refugee city programme, anti-discrimination policy agenda, free tap water (public space), improved accessibility for the disabled, participation (good governance) laboratories, privacy protection programmes, ombudsman facilities etc. But what exactly has been the impact of human rights as an imaginary? Is the ‘dream’ slowly but surely demonstrably becoming a mirror of and a check on human values? Are human rights seen as a realistic imagination, allowing the imagination to shape and change reality? How do people in Utrecht talk about human rights and do they manage to put the normative and judgmental legal narrative into perspective, and do they also see human rights as an inspiring alluring future that challenges innovative initiatives?

A survey (Gemeente Utrecht, 2010) shows that 90% of Utrecht residents consider it ‘important’ to ‘very important’ that the municipality protects human rights. According to Utrechters the 5 most important human rights are: 1) We are all free and equal; 2) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion; 3) Freedom of opinion and expression; 4) Right to education; 5) No discrimination. One in five Utrecht residents has done volunteer work in the context of human rights, and the best-known human rights organisations are: Amnesty International, the Equal Treatment Commission, the Discrimination Hotline, and Article 1.

In 2015, Marieke Duchatteau investigated what kinds of discourses are dominant among members of the Coalition and whether they differ greatly from each other. The results of this analysis show that there are two different kind of discourse-coalitions established in Utrecht. The first group approaches human rights from the universalistic discourse, while the second group looks primarily at human rights from an ethical point of view. Duchatteau compared the discourses of both groups and although there are some differences, the similarities are noticeable: in both groups the notion of ‘human dignity’ predominates. The differences are small—the first group emphasises the necessity of a legal system and the usefulness of proclaiming the title ‘Utrecht Human Rights City’ just like the other group. The other group places a little more emphasis on taking into account con-

textual differences (localising) when implementing human rights. However, not one of the groups sets other discourses above the ethical discourse (Duchatteau 2015, 7).

From the beginning, there was fertile social and political ground in Utrecht for the idea of a local human rights culture. That does not mean that the top management of the municipality regarded it from the start as an important strategic task to give human rights a central and integral place in municipal policy. Scepticism was everywhere, and the strategy of a few enthusiastic civil servants supported by a few administrators focused primarily on supporting a broad human rights movement in the city itself rather than within the municipal organisation. (Sakkers 2017, 368). Despite the fact that the top officials did not support local human rights initiatives, it was also not a great option for the top management to stop the activities intended to assist them, given their social and political support. In that sense, the strategy to first develop social support and to then increase impact on the municipal organisation over time has been successful. Since 2018, skepticism seems to be slowly diminishing.

Although the impact of the human rights imaginary on decision-making is mostly an indirect one, we could say that the moral dream of human rights has slowly arrived in Utrecht. In practice, however, a good cognitive and imaginative basis is not enough to actually work together. Therefore, the Coalition is all about facilitating cooperation and collaboration; and about mutual empowerment of the several specific initiatives and organisations. The Coalition works above all through people who volunteer to create connections and events. Communication in the Coalition takes place both virtually and face-to-face. Many interns, often students at the university, offer energy and skills to the Coalition. The Coalition offers a platform in civic society, in a growing and diverse city facing many challenges. One way to do this is to hold four Human Rights Cafés, the format of which was described earlier in this chapter, every year. These cafés are a way for organisations to network and explore crossovers. The cafés are also important in enhancing the use of the human rights narrative by organisations. Events such as Human Rights Cafés, and the theatrical and other cultural artistic performances that are often part of the events of the

Coalition, ground the human rights activism in an everyday world of dialogue, sharing and art.

The Coalition has gained solid ground in its first decade in Utrecht and the collective dream is broad and often tangible; in the second decade, however, it will have to become clear whether this dream, in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals, can also influence the municipal organisation integrally and fundamentally inspire its activities. Regarding the Coalition, the question is whether it will be able to develop further into an innovative co-initiator of social practices that make human rights a demonstrable inspiration for the 21st century. It also remains to be seen whether human rights, in addition to being a reactive normative assessment framework, will also become an active contributor to shaping new urban futures. The question is: are we going to bring our dreams to life?

Let us come back to the hypothesis of Richards and Duif that while big cities can afford to appropriate ideas from everywhere, for ‘small places,’ it is key ‘to link good ideas, or dreams, to the location’ (Richards and Duif 2019, 223). Perhaps we can best describe the Utrecht case as a medium-sized European human rights city fitting in between these two models. And perhaps it is the size of Utrecht that creates the mix of the local and the universal. On the one hand, there is the attempt to introduce the universal language of human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Shelter City, children’s rights, and multilingualism. On the other, at the localising level, Utrecht organises all those specific initiatives that are unique to the city—the annual celebration of Sint Maarten, the celebration of the Peace of Utrecht, the Gandhi statue and the annual Gandhi walk, the Climate Planet as a local SDG hub, the development of the Plan Einstein as innovation-oriented refugee shelter, the Esperanto Café, the Peace School movement, the initiatives of Vrijbit (the national privacy movement), and the national school for Sign Language. It is precisely in the amalgamation between the desire to take responsibility for the universal human rights agreements and for the initiatives rooted and motivated locally, that the feeling arises that human rights have become part of the local culture; or, in the words of Barbara Oomen, it is where the ‘homecoming of human rights’ becomes tangible and touchable (Oomen 2011, 7).

In projects such as Liveable Cities, carried out by Lancaster University's ImagiNation Design Lab, scholars have posited that urban futures, 'generated by a polyphony of multiple voices, should be envisioned in ways that enable their inherent pluralism to emerge as a defining characteristic of the vision. This is particularly important when dealing with the complexity of cities, the context of our research' (Pollastrri, Boyko, Cooper, Dunn, Clune, and Coulton 2017: S4366). Such scholars suggest ways of using participatory design methods and information visualisation techniques to co-create and represent urban futures as 'composite' scenarios rather than 'coherent' narratives (Pollastrri, Boyko, Cooper, Dunn, Clune, and Coulton 2017: S4366). While the use of such participatory design methods might be very fruitful in Utrecht too, the active pluralism of the everyday, socially, and culturally grounded work that the Coalition undertakes, and the large number of narratives of urban futures energised by the urban human rights-based initiatives in Utrecht we have mentioned earlier suggest to us that Utrecht is already a living laboratory of social dreaming in the specific form of a Human Rights City, driven by city-denzens, civic society actors, and planners and policymakers.

EPILOGUE

Since 2009, however, the world has changed. Although the financial crisis of 2008 has become less visible in most European cities, the situation from a human rights perspective has changed radically and become more dangerous. As Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, pointed out in 2017, '[t]he populist agenda that has made such dramatic inroads recently is often avowedly nationalistic, xenophobic, misogynistic, and explicitly antagonistic to all or much of the human rights agenda. As a result, the challenges the human rights movement now faces are fundamentally different from much of what has gone before' (Alston 2017, 1–2).

The wars in the Middle East, the refugee crises, the infiltration and fake news campaigns from Russia, disruptive policies from the US, all led to a strong rise of extreme right-wing and fascist politics in Europe (Snyder, 2018). In several European countries and cities, elections were won

by politicians who are now using their position to attack democracy, fundamental values and institutions. They openly battle constitutionality, human rights, truth and factuality. The campaigns threaten in particular a number of specific ethnic and LGBTI groups, but are also a frontal attack on the fundamental freedoms of everyone. Moreover, many cities, national governments and indeed Europe as a whole have designed new policies that strongly restrict the rights of migrants and refugees. Building borders of barbed wire has become a normal practice in large parts of Europe.

If the concept of a human rights city still had an aura of luxury about it ten years ago, in 2019 awareness is growing that the fight for the ethical and moral order defined by human rights is in full swing. Protest movements worldwide counter these new extreme right-wing and fascistic trends, showing that human rights do matter. Cities have been and will be the places where the European open democratic society is put to the test. They can continue to function as laboratories for a pluralised Europe in the largest sense of the term.

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MISSING UTOPIA: RECONSIDERING THE POLITICS OF TIME IN THE GLOBAL DISABILITY MOVEMENT

Paul van Trigt¹

INTRODUCTION

The *Guardian* recently published an article about accessible cities with the title ‘What would a truly disabled-accessible city look like?’ One of the reasons for this newspaper article was the recent United Nations’ declaration that poor accessibility ‘presents a major challenge.’ Although many countries ratified the so-called Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the reality on the ground—as *The Guardian* put it—can be very different. This is all the more surprising since in the 1990s several countries adopted anti-discrimination law with the aim to boost rights and access (Salman 2018). This begs the question as to why progress in the creation of accessible cities is so slow. There are of course many reasons for this, often determined by the specific contexts of particular cities. But one could also ask, as I shall do in this chapter, if there actually is a utopia in the global disability movement that could inspire people to work towards inclusive cities.

In this chapter, I shall investigate and reconsider the politics of time and

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utopianism within the global disability movement. My starting point is *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living with a Disability*, written by Irving Kenneth Zola and published in 1982. The author uses the concept utopia to describe his experience of ‘Het Dorp’ (The Village), a fully accessible neighbourhood of the Dutch city of Arnhem that was designed to promote the optimum happiness of people with physical disabilities. The book is interesting in itself—we do not know much about utopias and disability except the fact that eugenic utopias exclude disability—but it has a broader relevance because it came to be seen as a classic of the global disability movement. We know that utopias often play a role in social movements (there is much literature about feminist utopianism for instance [Crawford 2003]), and *Missing Pieces* enables us to investigate the role of utopias in the global disability movement.

In the first part of this chapter I shall show, based on a close reading of the book, how Zola frames utopia, and argue that *Missing Pieces* presents the dominant perspective in the global disability movement. However, as I shall argue in the second part of the chapter, this perspective frames the Third World as a dystopia. It is not for nothing that this book has received only limited attention outside the Global North and is, as Helen Meekosha has argued more generally, insufficient for an effective global disability studies project (Meekosha 2004, 731). Therefore, I shall offer in the last part of the chapter a reconsideration of the politics of time that I hope will be productive for the global disability movement.

UTOPIA

The author of *Missing Pieces* is Irving Kenneth Zola (1935–94), a professor of Sociology at Brandeis University in the United States who spent his sabbatical year in 1971–2 as consultant-in-residence in the Netherlands Institute of Preventive Medicine in Leiden (Zola 1982, 3). There he was invited to visit Het Dorp, a part of the city of Arnhem specially designed to house 400 people with often severe physical disabilities. He visited Het Dorp for a day in January 1972, and five months later he was resident visitor for a week. Zola approached Het Dorp, in his own words, as ‘I do many things, exploring and uncommitted,’ but ‘it became the setting for this chronicle

and the stimulus for the search for my missing piece, my physical handicap.' As a result of polio and a car accident, Zola wore a long leg brace and a steel-reinforced back support. For a long time this was, as Zola wrote, 'just something that got in the way, another difficulty to be overcome;' but during his stay at Het Dorp and the process of writing about it, he discovered that 'overcoming is not the same as integrating' (Zola 1982, 3). I shall come back to this disclosure, but let me focus first on the way Zola writes about utopia.

He does not actually use the word utopia very often. He describes his first, one-day visit to Het Dorp under the title 'Several Hours in a Utopia.' It becomes clear that Zola is not using the word here in an unequivocally positive way. He was clearly impressed: 'Het Dorp was unlike any long-term care center' he had seen. But he had also observed that 'Het Dorp was so self-consciously a total institution, that it sought to provide everything, including happiness.' 'It was,' as Zola continues, 'rooted in the tradition of long-term medical care institutions and idealistically linked to the utopian communities' (Zola 1982, 34).

Zola's unease with the utopia of Het Dorp has to do with the fact that this utopia was not the utopia *of* people with disabilities but one *for* people with disabilities. This utopia did not come from the people with disabilities themselves but was imagined and realised by able-bodied people. The idea of Het Dorp came from Arie Klapwijk, a physician working on the rehabilitation of people with physical disabilities, who wanted as he put it 'to find and help severe invalids achieve optimal human development and optimal human happiness.' (Zola 1982, 9) Klapwijk wanted to realise a place, and here I quote from Zola's translation of the founding documents, 'where life could begin anew, where its physically handicapped inhabitants could live with dignity and independence, without the sense of futility and hopelessness of being restricted in medical institutions' (Zola 1982, 10). In order to raise the money, he organised a telethon—a twenty-three-hour radio and television marathon that became a success. With the help of television celebrity Mies Bouwman, 12 million guilders (34 million euros today) were collected in 1962, and when Zola visited Het Dorp in 1972 it was inhabited by 400 residents.

During the 1960s, Het Dorp was built as a neighbourhood of the city of Arnhem, following a design of architect Jaap Bakema of the Rotterdam firm Van den Broek and Bakema. According to Wanda Liebermann, we have to see his design as ‘an important effort to humanize post-war architecture for a community of people with physical disabilities’ and an ‘early example of barrier-free architecture’ because it provided ‘uninterrupted wheelchair access.’ Liebermann interprets Bakema’s design as part of his plea for the open society as ‘a humanistic ideal against a political setting that included the escalating Cold War and technocratic government building programs.’ She argues that Het Dorp on the one hand offered ‘a counterpart to the narrow and arid functionalism of high modernism,’ but on the other hand could not ‘escape prevailing social values about disability’ and showed ‘top-down decision making, limits in recognizing human diversity, and a medical and technocratic emphasis’ (Liebermann 2016, 158–9, 178; cf. Verlaan 2015).

This was exactly what Zola encountered in Het Dorp during his stay and what he is writing about in *Missing Pieces*. As he writes in his prologue, he had decided that ‘for a week I would resume the role of a functional paraplegic ... back into the wheelchair I went. I did everything from that position.’ He had hoped that this experience would provide an ‘added dimension.’ Furthermore, he ‘expected to take notes but without a specific purpose in mind’ (Zola 1982, 4). Well aware of being a stranger, Zola nevertheless participated actively in daily life for a week and spoke with many who worked and lived there. From his notes he produces what he called a ‘socio-autobiography’—in his own words ‘a personal and social odyssey that chronicles not only my beginning acknowledgement of the impact of my physical differences on my life but my growing awareness of the ways in which society invalidates people with a chronic disability.’ Despite his criticisms of Het Dorp, he evaluates the experiment as a success: ‘not the answer for those with severe physical disabilities but an answer’ (Zola 1982, 5–7).

I cannot give all the interesting details of Zola’s experience here, but his choice to use the wheelchair, combined with the fact that the residents knew that he was an American professor with a disability, led to many re-

vealing conversations. Het Dorp seriously promoted the six rights that the founders had specified: the right to privacy, work, recreation, religion, culture, and self-governance; but the very existence of this special village and the way the residents were approached showed the often unequal relations between the ‘handicapped’ and the ‘normal.’ Moreover, what the residents, including Zola, found important was often ignored (Zola 1982, 213–14, 84). To paraphrase one of the most important slogans of the disability movement (Charleton 1998): the utopia was produced for them, not with them. It was therefore not their utopia. His experience in Het Dorp made Zola realise that his disability was more important in his life than he had thought. During his stay he realised that he felt ‘truly on someone’s side, the side of the Village against the world’ (Zola 1982, 194).

DYSTOPIA

Taking into account Zola’s disclosure and his statement that disability is not so much a problem of people with disabilities but a problem for an ableist world, it does not come as a surprise that this text became foundational for the disability movement (Meekosha 2004). Zola’s perspective corresponds to the so-called social model of disability, in which disability is understood as a social construction instead of an individual deficit. *Missing Pieces* is therefore, along with inclusion in the literature on social science methodology, often quoted in disability studies literature. However, when we look more closely at the citations (using Google Scholar), we can see that Zola’s book is hardly used in and for the Global South.

In order to understand the role of utopias in the global disability movement, I want to focus on this limited use of *Missing Pieces* outside the Global North. As Helen Meekosha has argued, work like that produced by Zola is insufficient for an effective global disability studies project because it is difficult to integrate perspectives from the periphery within the disability studies discourse. She argues that disability has to be conceptualised within specific contexts, as has been done in the case of India, for example (Addlakha 2013); but she also states that ‘the key debates around disability and impairment, independent living, care and human rights are often irrelevant to those [and she is speaking here about people with disabilities

in the Global South] whose major goal is survival' (Meekosha 2011, 670).

When we read Zola through Meekosha's decolonial perspective, it becomes clear that the context of the book is the post-War Western welfare state that gave social security to people with disability, but often not the emancipation and freedom that they hoped for. What we see in the Anglo-Saxon disability movement, as inspired by Zola and others, is the fight against a paternalistic, welfarist utopia in favour of an inclusive society that gives people with disabilities equal rights, independence, and a voice. However, I doubt if this inclusive society is imagined as a utopia. Forms of independent living since the 1970s and anti-discrimination laws in the 1990s are often seen as the most important achievements of the Anglo-Saxon disability movement (Heyer 2015). These achievements both centre on the individual—independent living gives an individual with a disability the opportunity to live his or her own life with minimal dependence on others; anti-discrimination law gives an individual with a disability the possibility to go to court when he or she is treated unequally. These achievements are huge, especially given how people with disabilities were treated in the past, but I doubt if they reflect an alternative society or city—a utopia. I would not say that the Anglo-Saxon disability movement is without utopias and alternative imaginations of the social, but fighting against the utopias formulated by others and finding ways to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities seems to have become more urgent.

It is not by chance that Zola presents at the beginning of his book a visit to a rehabilitation centre in New Delhi, where his broken brace has to be repaired. Under the title 'With Hierononymous Bosch in India' he sketched a non-Western dystopia, before he started his critical investigation of a Western utopia. It is part of his narrative about disclosure; he ends the story as follows: 'my three-hour experience was just another piece of information, just another incident in their busy day, recorded and quickly forgotten. But not for me, not for me' (Zola 1982, 22). Zola presented his visit to India, which took place shortly before he visited the Netherlands, as a first step in the search for his 'missing piece.' So let us delve a bit deeper into this part of the book.

In India, Zola was shocked by two things—in the first place, people from India asked him directly what had happened with his leg. That is, as Zola writes, ‘as any American would know... hardly a typical opening between strangers’; it was an ‘intrusion into what Americans regard as so private a matter’ (Zola 1982, 17); second, he was shocked by what he saw when he entered the Nehru Rehabilitation Centre: ‘within comfortable touching distance was a panorama of physical suffering. An old man in a turban, toothless, blind in one eye, with his foot missing below the ankle, stood quite straight, almost proud; a young man, twentyish, wandered around, speaking to many but with no one returning the attention; countless children limped to and fro’ (Zola 1982, 18). After this description, Zola concludes that he ‘seemed to be the only one showing signs of discomfort’ (Zola 1982, 19). These shocks helped Zola to discover his disability, but also made clear that the way people from India dealt with disability was not really attractive to him.

Thus, in this founding text of the Anglo-Saxon disability movement a position is taken between a Western utopia and a non-Western dystopia, with some preference for the first. At its centre we find an individual who is uncomfortable with the interference of others. I think the emphasis on the individual in the dominant disability studies discourse has made thinking in terms of utopia more difficult, especially as this utopia has to be imagined in both the Global North and the Global South. This has not become easier with the increasing influence of the human rights perspective on disability. As critical human rights scholars have pointed out, human rights often were, and are, not enough. They ensure in particular ‘negative freedom,’ namely freedom from the interference of others; but they are often not part of a utopian view on how to improve society structurally, and do not take the situation of people with disabilities in the Global South sufficiently into account (Moyn 2018; Hoffmann 2016; Van Trigt 2019). Although the anti-utopian stance of the Anglo-Saxon disability movement has its merits, a reconsideration of the politics of time and individualism seems a useful contribution to a global disability movement.

Scholars from the Global South are already building their own body of knowledge, sometimes using the Anglo-Saxon disability movement as

an inspiration, while at other times criticising it (Addlakha 2013). In the subfield of disability history there is an increasing attention to (post)colonial histories of disability, often related to anthropological work (Livingstone 2005). In the tradition of New Disability History, the agency of people with disabilities is highlighted when possible in this historical and anthropological research. The individualism that underlies the attention to agency is, however, questioned from a critical disability studies perspective (Verstraete 2012). An interesting move beyond individualism, especially in light of this chapter's aim to address utopias, is Pieter Verstraete's and Frederik Herman's recent plea for commonality. Although their plea is based on the Western context, it seems relevant also for other parts of the world (cf. Staples and Mehrotra 2016, 41).

Against the background of an increasing amount of historical work that deconstructs the 'contemporary distinctions between able-bodied and disabled individuals,' Verstraete and Herman propose an additional 'historical venture that seeks to uncover commonalities: places where the distinctions between persons with and without disabilities are temporarily forgotten and/or erased, moments when the boundaries between the self and the other are being reconfigured.' By analysing sources related to the practice of rehabilitation after the First World War, they show how existing distinctions were replaced with new ones; but they also trace 'some moments of lived and shared commonality' in which 'human beings celebrate what they consider to be important' (Verstraete and Herman 2016, 11). Verstraete and Herman reveal only short moments of commonality, but would it not be possible to find places where the boundaries between the self and the other were more profoundly and structurally reconfigured?

In order to explore further the possibilities of this 'historical venture,' I turn to writing on living with people with cognitive disabilities, and in particular to a recent paper about agency written from an anthropological perspective. In his paper, 'Receiving the Gift of Cognitive Disability,' Patrick McKearney (2018) argues that people with cognitive disabilities have not been valued 'just as rational moral subjects, or simply as passive objects of care, but also as charismatic and intuitive agents who actively depart from standard norms of personhood' (McKearney 2018, 40). As an anthropol-

ogist, McKearney has worked in a L'Arche community, a Christian charity that 'places people with cognitive disabilities at the heart of their social life through making their care more communal.' In the literature it is often stated that L'Arche communities 'learn to look beyond a hierarchy of cognitive capacities to recognize the vulnerability they share with people with cognitive disabilities' (McKearney 2018, 41). Therefore, these communities have often been seen as a 'utopia of dependence,' a 'somewhat-utopian fulfilment' of a 'caring society,' and 'a powerful alternative to a wider culture that supposedly values independence, agency and achievement above all else' (McKearney 2018, 43, 53). Could such communities be an additional source of inspiration for the global disability movement? My answer will be yes, but not within the framework of the 'caring society.' Moreover, the vulnerability to the abuse of power within these communities requires critical attention as recently became clear from an external report about L'Arche founder Jean Vanier (L'Arche 2020).

McKearney contests the idea of 'utopia of dependence' and shows that carers are challenged to recognise people with (cognitive) disabilities 'as people who inhabit the world in a different way' and as 'agents who can powerfully affect the ethical lives of others' (McKearney 2018, 41). He does not deny that 'carers cultivate their own sense of dependence and passivity,' but observes also that they 'make themselves more like those they support.' Carers do this 'to make themselves more open to what these distinctly different agents can do to them' (McKearney 2018, 53). McKearney relates this finding to what is argued by anthropologists of ethics, who have pointed to 'the potency and the worth that people find in forms of agency that are less autonomous and reflective than the cognitively able subject' (McKearney 2018, 56). A promising observation in McKearney's paper is his remark that these communities do not (only) show an alternative society in which people without disabilities recognise their own vulnerability, but also a social order in which people show and are open to different ways of inhabiting the world. In the last part of my chapter, I shall argue that such communities could better be understood as heterotopias than as utopias, and as such could contribute to the global disability movement.

HETEROTOPIA

To Verstraete's and Herman's plea to highlight moments of commonality in the past, I should add that it seems worthwhile also to investigate historical moments and places of cohabitation in which the distinctions of (dis)ability were not erased, but in which agency was diversified and other ways of being in the world became possible. As McKearney's work suggests, these moments can be seen in particular when people with cognitive disabilities have lived together with people without these disabilities. In historiography, and in disability research more generally, these moments are hardly ever addressed; the attention is often directed towards oppression and the resistance of people with disabilities. These histories are indeed very relevant and cover much of what has happened, but I want to go beyond this dichotomy in this chapter. In doing so, I follow McKearney in using insights from the anthropology of ethics and morality. As I shall show in the following paragraphs, this research tradition includes on the one hand the post-colonial plea to engage seriously with diverse ways of being in the world (Chakrabarty 2000, 21), and on the other hand enables us to apply the (Anglo-Saxon) social model of disability in a new way.

In the attempt to articulate alternative narratives for the global disability movement, I find Laidlaw's *The Subject of Virtue* particularly useful. In his reflection on ethics and morality, Laidlaw builds on Foucault's attempts to see freedom not 'as being in a zero-sum external relation to power, but as an aspect of the configuration of power relations' (Laidlaw 2014, 98). According to Laidlaw, anthropologists have applied this insight in particular because existing social and feminist theory often does not allow us to appreciate 'ethical forms of life' in a non-liberal context. In her research about women in the Egyptian piety movement, Saba Mahmood, for instance, goes beyond the idea of agency as resistance and argues for 'the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated' (Mahmood quoted by Laidlaw 2014, 140). As Laidlaw rightly points out, the 'liberal' understanding of freedom is far more complicated than is often suggested in the literature. Therefore it could be said that 'to portray idealization of autonomy, conceived as autarchy or external independence, as if it were a feature or failure specifically of

“liberalism” is not only a misleading perspective on European thought, but also parochial in relation to the ethnographic record more broadly’ (Laidlaw 2014, 161).

In his further reflections on agency, Laidlaw makes use of the analysis of responsibility by the philosopher Bernard Williams, who distinguishes the four elements of responsibility as—cause, intention, state, and response. With cause he refers to the idea that someone has brought about a state of affairs; intention asks if this state of affairs was intended; state is the condition in which someone was bringing the state of affairs about; and response concerns the question of who will do something about this state of affairs. These four elements ‘may be distributed among the entities involved in a network or a chain of events’ and ‘need not be located in one actor’ (Laidlaw 2014, 189–90). By stating that the ethical subject does not automatically coincide with the individual and the lifetime of the individual, Laidlaw can take seriously ‘notions of rebirth, circulation of souls between animals and humans, and karma,’ as Veena Das (2014, 491) has pointed out.

If we apply this approach, we create an openness to ‘what forms of agency are recognized, constructed and worked with in different ethnographic contexts’ (McKearney 2018, 56). In the context of disability history, we cannot limit ourselves to the moments when people with disabilities showed resistance or were unable to do so. As McKearney shows, there are cases that enable us to see other forms of agency, and in which we can learn from post-colonial and anthropological research traditions that have already been searching for different ways of being in the world (Chakrabarty 2010, 249–52). In these cases, working with sources that do not directly represent people with disabilities is often unavoidable—in McKearney’s research his main informants were people without disabilities. However, if we agree with Laidlaw’s decentering of the individual agent, we could also approach the agency of people with cognitive disabilities who have left few personal sources, embedding them in a broader network by using other sources. As I shall demonstrate with the help of the following case, this approach not only enables us to see other forms of agency, but also shows how this agency could result in change as intended by the social model of

disability—that is, not societal change in the first place, but the change of a person and/or a relationship between persons with the potential of having broader societal impact.

The case I want to discuss is that of Adam Arnett and Henri Nouwen. What I offer here is a short analysis of the book *Adam, God's Beloved* (1996, translated and published in Dutch in 1997) and not an extensive investigation of their relationship based on different sources. The book is mainly written by the theologian Henri Nouwen, but because of his sudden death in 1996, it was finished and edited by his friend Sue Mosteller. The reason for the book was the death of Adam Arnett, a man with severe disabilities who died a couple of months before Nouwen. Arnett and Nouwen got to know each other in the L'Arche Daybreak community in Toronto, Canada. Arnett had lived in this community since 1985, and Nouwen came there because of his sabbatical in 1995–96. Nouwen had planned to write a book about the credo—the confession of Christian faith. When Arnett died in February 1996, Nouwen started to write a book about him that turned out to be a book about faith. For Nouwen, Arnett was a friend, a teacher, and a mentor. According to him, Arnett was sent by God into the world to heal other people. Therefore, in his writing about Arnett's life he related it to elements of Jesus' life. Nouwen saw in Adam the image of God, just as Jesus is perceived in the Christian tradition as 'God with us' (Nouwen 1997, 11–14).

Although this book is profoundly religious, the relationship between these two men can also be understood without focussing on religion. Arnett and Nouwen developed a friendship because the latter was asked by the community to care in particular for the former. This makes clear that their relationship is not equal in every sense—there is a care and thus a power relationship in which Arnett's disabilities make him different from and dependent on Nouwen. In writing about Arnett, Nouwen balances difference and equality by saying that Arnett fulfilled his role as friend, teacher, and mentor in an uncommon way, because he could not communicate as people 'usually' do. At the same time, Nouwen stresses that Arnett was not extraordinary, not an angel, but a human being like everyone else. Interestingly, Nouwen challenges the view that he is the more powerful in

their relationship by calling Arnett not only a friend but also a teacher and mentor. As becomes clear in his book, this process was no less than a re-evaluation of values, as Nouwen wrote with an implicit reference to Nietzsche (Nouwen 1997, 12–14, 49, 54).

What Nouwen and others have experienced in their relationship with Arnett might therefore be seen as a variation on the social model—at the start they see people with disabilities as objects of care, but during the course of the relationship they learn to see their own view as disabled and to perceive people with disabilities as agents who inhabit the world partly in the same and partly in different ways. This re-evaluation is not without dangers: people with disabilities could be seen as ‘instrumental’ for able-bodied people to discover their own vulnerabilities, for instance. While being aware of this, it is nevertheless worthwhile to examine stories of this kind because they further diversify disability studies. If we address his responsibility for a changing state of affairs, we find that we cannot allocate it all to him, because we can say nothing for example about his intentions, and we know that the response is dominated by Nouwen’s view. Nevertheless, Arnett seems to have played a transforming role in the lives of several people, on account of his way of being in the world. Of course, we have to reflect critically on the fact that Adam is ‘used’ for religious narratives, but not more so than when reflecting on the more familiar resistance stories within the disability movement.

The case of Arnett and Nouwen not only reveals agency, but also points to the importance of space—which brings me back to utopias. In this case, as also in the research of McKearney, relationships were developed within a community in which people with and without disability lived closely together. It is striking that the agency of people with cognitive disabilities is respected and taken seriously, an attitude that cannot be taken for granted in society as a whole. Therefore, these communities could be seen as heterotopias, a Foucauldian conceptualisation of space applied by ethicist Herman Meiningner to the inclusion of disabled persons. Foucault considers heterotopias as ‘counter-sites’ that ‘have the curious property of being in relation to all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mir-

ror or reflect' (Foucault 1986, 24). On the one hand, heterotopias are a symptom of societies that exclude deviance, while on the other they can support the position of excluded people, because they occupy the space that society has abandoned as abnormal (Meininger 2013, 28). Meininger advocates heterotopias as spaces of encounter between people with and without intellectual disabilities because inclusion in public spaces 'often turns out to be a space of discrimination' (Meininger 2013, 24). According to Meininger, heterotopias offer a 'continuing dialogue between the "normal" and "abnormal" instead of adjusting "the abnormal" to the "normal", an adjustment that cannot always be avoided in the politics of inclusion.' Building on Kevin Hetherington's *Badlands of Modernity*, Meininger understands heterotopias as 'alternative modes of ordering' that are based nevertheless upon 'some idea of social improvement' (Meininger 2013, 32; cf. Hetherington 1997). In heterotopias, the meetings between 'we' and 'the others' result in experiments with 'new models of interaction, communication, connection, participation and power relations' and in 'laboratories of new meaning and of alternative modes of social ordering' (Meininger 2013, 33).

I agree with Meininger on the usefulness of Foucault's concept for disability politics, but tend to disagree with the following elements of his interpretation: in the first place, Meininger wants to see heterotopia as relational space and not as a specific geographical space. I think he underestimates the importance of living together in a concrete space. It is no accident that new ways of ordering and being in the world often originate in specific communities that live together. In her book *Unlearning Eugenics*, Dagmar Herzog points out 'a variety of literal and conceptual connections between avid present-day efforts to insist on full human subjecthood for the disabled, including especially the cognitively disabled, in all dimensions of existence, and an eclectic but vital handful of intentional disabled-abled life-sharing communities founded in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s in either direct or indirect reaction to the National Socialists' systematic mass murder project' (Herzog 2018, 11). The communities, as discussed by Herzog—the Camphill movement, L'Arche, the La Borde clinic of Félix Guattari, and the living experiments of Fernand Deligny and Duncan and Dan-

iela Mercieca—all have in common the fact that life-sharing takes shape in a specific material space and not in more abstract relational spaces (cf. McMorrow 2015).

Second, Meininger seems to lose the (Foucauldian) dimension of power when he characterises heterotopia in a way that tends to be idealistic and seems to be focused on challenging the participants without disabilities to accept the participants with disabilities (Meininger 2013, 37–38). In this way, heterotopias are likely to become one-sided tasks for people without disabilities. Foucault challenges us to make the distinction between disabled and non-disabled (among other differences) more complicated. The advantage of the concept of ‘heterotopos’ is that it refers to another or an alternative way of social ordering, which means that we stay critically aware of power relations. Foucault investigated the ethics of the Athenian elite, including (sexual) relationships between adults and young men, because that enabled him to address the question of ‘how to make oneself into a free subject among others in relations of power’ (Laidlaw 2014, 124). As Laidlaw writes, he ‘does tend to stress the agonistic aspect of the exercise of freedom, but what he describes is equally a matter of mutual recognition—the “game” is between players who acknowledge each other as such—of enabling (“empowering”) quality of relations that accommodate mutual recognition, where mutuality does not of course imply or require equality’ (Laidlaw 2014, 124). What Foucault did for the Athenian elite could be done from a historical point of view for communities like L’Arche. We know much already about how such places could be dystopias in which human rights are violated, but could we also articulate stories from heterotopias where people with and without disabilities live together in mutual recognition?

The history of people with cognitive disabilities seems in particular to contain such alternative narratives, although their history is rarely written from a more critical disability studies perspective. As already mentioned, the challenge of this history writing is that people with disabilities themselves have hardly ever produced historical sources of their own—the sources they have left are often reproduced by other people. However, we do not always have to focus on the perspective of the able-bodied actor

who dominates the sources, it also possible to go beyond the focus on the individual and to look at the relationship between people as part of a broader network (cf. Van Trigt and Legêne 2016). This enables us to articulate diverse ways of being in the world and to see how power relations could be shaped in order to make space for this diversity. Such investigations show how freedom might be exercised within relations with the other, and might therefore be useful additions to the dominant narratives within the global disability movement that so far focuses mostly on negative freedom.

CONCLUSION

In the first part of this chapter, I have discussed the politics of time in the global disability movement by first analysing Irving Kenneth Zola's book *Missing Pieces*. As became clear, the politics of time concerning disabled people, whether in a Western utopia or a non-Western dystopia, were critically evaluated by Zola. His ideal of the independent individual makes him critical of the interference of others and the imaginations of a common future—an ideal that is influential within the global disability movement today. In the second part of this chapter, I have addressed the increasing unease with the focus on the individual in the literature about disability, the Global South, and human rights: does the global disability movement not need alternative narratives that stimulate the imagination of a common future in addition to politics of time rooted in the independent individual? I proposed, therefore, in the last part of this chapter, to investigate heterotopias from a historical-anthropological perspective, as spaces where people with and without disabilities live together with mutual recognition. Heterotopias enable us to explore another politics of time, a social ordering that is open to different ways of being in the world and which enables people to exercise freedom in relation to others. The lack of such narratives about commonality may be one of the reasons why, for instance, the progress in making cities accessible to all is so slow. One may hope that disability history can uncover from the past more alternative narratives that will inspire people in the present to work on a common and inclusive future.

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UTOPIA IN PRACTICE: URBAN ACTION GROUPS AND THE FUTURE OF AMSTERDAM'S CITY CENTRE 1965–80

Tim Verlaan

INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1960s until the late-1970s, Amsterdam was engaged in a fierce battle over the future of its city centre. In this period, elected officials, municipal planners and property developers considered urban redevelopment as the only solution to accommodate the post-industrial economy in the central districts. Narrowly defined, in its contemporary context, urban redevelopment entailed large-scale physical interventions aimed at the formation or changing of urban functions in existing cityscapes (Rijksplanologische Dienst 1966, 96). Such plans would have amounted to the demise of much of Amsterdam's physical and social fabric, if not for the residents who rose up against the agenda of urban modernism. Instead of seeing the city centre as a focal point of business, consumerism and finance, they envisioned a sanctuary of social interaction, personal individuality and cultural diversity (Feddes 2012, 297). Their values were translated into design by a younger generation of architects, and eventually embraced by progressive politicians. In the timespan of less than two decades, Amsterdam's action groups managed to convince their representatives to exchange the practice of urban redevelopment for a policy in which the city's residents and the preservation of historical structures came first.

While it takes little imagination to see the future visions of urban action groups as utopias, historians have rarely examined them as such. More often, they associate the modernist plans of a few key figures in architecture and planning with the term, most notably Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier. In their excellent planning histories of the twentieth century, Peter Hall, Christopher Klemek and Rosemary Wakeman all examine architects and planners as members of an intellectual movement with utopian ideals (Hall 2002; Klemek 2011; Wakeman 2016). Stephen Ward is more inclined to focus on national agendas and policies instead of persona, but treats the responses of urban action groups to modernism merely as an afterthought (Ward 2002). In his comprehensive study of architecture and urban planning in post-war Britain, John Gold also associates utopianism with the work of modernist designers, leaving little room for the voices of the people in whose name they worked (Gold 2007). Overall, the historiography of post-war urbanism usually portrays utopias as strokes of genius produced by an elite of benevolent thinkers working for state agencies or well-known architectural firms and planning offices.

This chapter proposes to shift the focus away from modernist interventions towards the grassroots counterproposals of urban action groups, which in the post-war era arose out of a multitude of shouts in the streets instead of the patriarchal voice behind the drawing board. By doing so, I combine a study of utopianism with the ‘right to the city’ discourse, which was introduced by Henri Lefebvre in response to the redevelopment agendas of the 1960s. Key in his thinking is the idea that urban questions, state power and the overall economic structures of advanced capitalist societies are intrinsically linked (Zukin 1980, 578). Similar to the action groups of his time, Lefebvre believed the aging urban environment to have more emancipatory qualities than the freshly-erected housing estates in the suburban periphery. In his 1968 essay *Le Droit à la Ville* he formulated the right to the city as a battle cry for local residents and community activism: ‘The *right to the city* cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*’ (Kofman and Lebas 1996, 158). Following the work of Lefebvre, David Harvey stipulates that the right to the city

is not merely ‘a right of what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart’s desire’ (Harvey 2003, 939).

These observations are in line with the ways in which Amsterdam’s action groups of the 1960s and 1970s demanded equal say over their living environment. To further investigate their visions of a better future as utopias, a stricter definition of urban action groups is required. Justus Uitermark et al. comprehensively sum up why cities are constitutive of social movements: ‘Because cities are dense, they are likely to trigger conflicts over space. [...] Social movements crystallize when people organize to collectively claim urban space, organize constituents, and express demands’ (Uitermark, Nicholls and Loopmans 2012, 2546). Based on the work of Manuel Castells, Virginie Mamadouh discusses urban social movements as ‘networks of organisations, groups and individuals who for a prolonged period of time consciously (and extra-parliamentary) campaign for the realisation of spatial and societal changes based on alternative planning views’ (Mamadouh 1992, 22). Urban action groups can be distinguished from broader social movements by their localised demands and strategies. Castells defines them as collectives that achieve social change through the realisation of collective consumption demands such as social housing, the establishing and promoting of a particular (local) cultural identity, and territorially based self-management, adding that action groups strive to change urban meaning by envisioning ‘reactive’ utopias (Pruijt 2007, 5115–19). Indeed, what united Amsterdam’s motley crews of neighbourhood activists, architects, preservationists, squatters and bohemians was their aversion towards the physical and social consequences of growing prosperity (Kaal 2011, 537), of which urban redevelopment was a prime example.

Utopianism is more difficult to define than the right to the city. Again, Lefebvre provides us with a useful starting point by contrasting the urban visions of action groups with the technocratic utopianism of state planners: ‘Would not the worst be that utopianism which does not utter its name, covers itself with positivism and on this imposes the harshest constraints and the most derisory absence of technicity?’ (Kofman and Lebas 1996, 151). As observed by Lyman Tower Sargent, utopias have been proposed and imagined from every conceivable position (Tower Sargent 2009, 21).

Scholars usually employ the term to describe the impossible, a situation inconceivable in the real world. As this contribution will demonstrate, this definition neglects the serious intentions and sincere engagement of people envisioning a better world. Following Castells's aforementioned definition of urban movements, the utopias of Amsterdam's action groups were firmly grounded in everyday reality and responded to real-world conditions (Jameson 2005, xiii). They were not, as in traditional definitions, fictional ideal states or imaginative blueprints for a perfect future, nor were they as concerned with architectural form, geometric design and rigid spatial order as their modernist counterparts (Pinder 2005, 15; 21). The utopias of Amsterdam's action groups confronted urban conditions and problems by seeking to produce spaces suited to different ways of living, with their initiators stressing the feasibility and practicality of their ideas, linking desired changes in their personal lives with envisioned changes in the built environment. Indeed, their reactive utopias were as much about the physical transformation of urban spaces as the transformation of the urban consciousness (Coleman 2005, 2).

Working with these definitions of the right to the city and utopia, this chapter will open up new perspectives on the struggle over urban redevelopment in Amsterdam—from its original intentions to the transformation of its meaning by urban action groups. For the sake of completeness, three case studies with different proponents in different parts of Amsterdam have been selected. While contemporaries did not employ the term, this contribution will demonstrate how each case study was underpinned by a specifically local version of utopia: one in which long-time residents sealed themselves off from the outside world, one in which protesters reworked the results of urban redevelopment into a dystopian mirror image, and one in which an action group passionately embraced Amsterdam's sociocultural diversity. Together, these case studies will demonstrate how the business-minded plans of municipal planners and property developers discussed in the first paragraph were eventually replaced by an urban utopia in which people of all ages, classes and cultural backgrounds could thrive.

MAKING WAY FOR MODERNISM IN POST-WAR AMSTERDAM

Writing in 1971, renowned geographer Jacob Buit noted one common denominator in the character traits of Dutch city centres: ‘With its mixed and intensive use, the inner city is the focal point of societal tensions, conflicts and clashing interests’ (Buit 1971, 6–7). With this quote, Buit was referring to the rapid demographic and economic change Western European cities were going through at the time of writing. While central districts were experiencing an unprecedented loss of both residents and jobs, local governments were initiating redevelopment schemes meant to replace an outdated housing stock and industrial infrastructure with modern tower blocks, office buildings and shopping centres. In short, their CIAM-inspired vision of the functional city would reorder and tame the chaotic city of earlier epochs, rationalising traffic streams and separating urban functions until not much of the old fabric was left. This brave new world was envisioned and built by an expanding army of state bureaucrats and design professionals trained in the physical reshaping of town and countryside (Verlaan 2015, 540). Obviously, their interventions would result in the uprooting of local communities and would lead to the creation of a stark contrast with the remaining historical structures (Wagenaar 2011, 453).

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The modernist agenda had mostly been laid out during the 1920s, and rose to prominence due to a few boisterous voices in the field of architecture and urban planning. One of modernism's most fervent supporters was the architectural historian and CIAM spokesman Sigfried Giedion, who in 1941 announced the nearing death of the congested and organically grown city centre: ‘There is no longer any place for the city street with its heavy traffic running between rows of houses; it cannot possibly be permitted to persist. [...] after the necessary surgery has been performed, the artificially swollen city will be reduced to its normal size’ (Giedion 2008, 832). Giedion's words were prophetic. As the ashes of the Second World War were still smouldering, architects and planners set about to radically alter the face of the remaining Western European cityscapes. In the words of Spiro Kostof, their version of urban modernism was ‘history denying, fanatically against memory, and intolerant of traditional institutions and monumentality’ (Kostof 1995, 722). Thus, the modernist

movement and style became the perfect vehicle for a continent wishing to shed its troubled past, although in some localities more profound than in others. On the drawing board, modernism seemed the perfect solution for the ills of the Western European city. In the hands of property developers and cost-efficient bureaucrats, the dream quickly turned sour (Curtis 1996, 548). The landscape of concrete expressways and dull tower blocks rising from the ashes was a far cry from the lofty ideals of the 1920s, and quickly triggered criticism from dissatisfied residents and the press (Hall 2002, 261). These dissonant voices ultimately paved the way for the utopian alternatives that responded to the modernists' benevolent yet often misguided urban interventions.

In the early 1960s, however, criticism still seemed far away in Amsterdam. The Dutch capital had confidently embarked on the mission of comprehensive redevelopment, and appeared no different from other Western cities in its zeal for urban modernism. Although its officials and planners agreed that the city's famous canal belt and medieval core should be maintained, the surrounding nineteenth-century districts and mixed-used developments were vehemently denounced. More than 40 percent of Amsterdam's housing stock was considered to be obsolete and ripe for demolition, according to a 1962 planning brochure (Gemeente Amsterdam 1962). Even the local heritage movement proposed to redevelop large swaths of the nineteenth-century working-class districts encircling the historic city centre (Verlaan 2017, 137). Replacement housing was to be found in the modernist expansion areas to the west and southeast, while several inner-city neighbourhoods were designated as central business districts. Being the country's financial and commercial hub, Amsterdam was eager for central spaces accommodating the burgeoning services-based economy. To maintain and advance this economy, the city had to make painful sacrifices. From the mid-1960s onwards, plans for a new banking headquarters built in the modernist style unleashed a fierce debate over the future of Amsterdam's city centre. The plan, presented by the ABN banking group and located within a building block bordering historic canals, was met with criticism from preservationists, architecture critics and urban action groups (De Liagre Böhl 2010, 50–51). In the ensuing debate with elect-

ed officials, protesters raised the question of whether economic interests should prevail over the ideal image of Amsterdam as an architecturally, socially and culturally mixed city. The widely-published discussion led to an unholy alliance of counterforces; or, as a communist city councillor observed: 'Conservative and progressive elements have found each other: proponents of careful preservation, and those who could not care less about architectural heritage except for its contribution to the city's liveability and atmosphere' (Gemeente Amsterdam 1967, 1792). In disregard of the protests, the municipal executive eventually gave the ABN planning permission, which in the prophetic words of Roel de Wit, alderman of urban planning, turned out to be a 'pyrrhic victory' (Bosscher 2007, 466). In order to prevent further haphazard redevelopment, the municipal executive would henceforth focus on the specially designated 'reconstruction areas,' which constituted blighted areas to the northwest and southeast of the city centre. Here, modernity would be led into the right direction by plan with the help of property developers, who proposed spacious office blocks connected to the suburbs by a publicly funded metro network, for which older structures on top of the underground trajectories had to be demolished (Davids 2000, 157–82). Eventually, these reconstruction areas turned into hotbeds of social and political activism. Marshall Berman is highly appreciative of the vocabulary and repertoire by which urban action groups fought off urban redevelopment in the post-war period: '... their sheer plenitude, along with their intensity and liveliness of expression, generated a common language, a vibrant ambience, a shared horizon of experience and desire' (Berman 2010, 33). According to Berman, instead of opposing progress, these critics reinvented modernity by looking for it in the everyday life of the already-existing street. Here they would find the values and ideas vital for the social functioning of cities (Castells 1983, 70). As almost any other city in the Western world, Amsterdam was falling on hard times in the second half of the 1960s. Pollution, congestion and social misery led ever more middle-class families to opt for a better life in the suburbs, exacerbating the spiral of urban decay while jeopardising the implementation of redevelopment agendas. Around the year 1970, more than 10000 residents and 250 companies turned their backs on the city annually (Gemeente Amsterdam 1971, 6).

At the same time, a rapid influx of guest workers and students resulted in a more diverse socio-cultural fabric. Already by the end of the 1960s, public officials noted how a countermovement of young ‘avant-gardists’ felt remarkably at home in the decaying inner-city neighbourhoods (Rijk-splanologische Dienst 1968, 10). The growing unrest caused by these demographic changes and impending redevelopment did not go unnoticed. Between 1969 and 1970 the number of pleas and official complaints by urban action groups grew by one-third (Bureau Bestuurscontacten 1971, 4). One social-democratic councillor described Amsterdam as experiencing ‘future shock,’ while the city’s mayor depicted local residents as ‘helpless chess pieces’ caught up in a maelstrom of ever-continuing change (Gemeente Amsterdam 1970, 6). By the beginning of the 1970s, local politics got into a stalemate over the future of Amsterdam’s city centre. The question was whether existing structures should be preserved and converted into social housing, as advocated by the New Left and a younger generation of architects and planners, or if Amsterdam should continue down the road of comprehensive redevelopment for the benefit of car drivers and business interests? Tired of political indecisiveness, local residents took their fate into their own hands by presenting utopian alternatives to the business-as-usual proposals of elected officials and urban planners.

THE UTOPIA OF URBAN PASTORALISM

When the first redevelopment scheme for the Bickerseiland was presented in 1953, the island to the northwest of the city centre was still a working-class district characterised by mixed uses and a relatively poor population. Due to the relocation of harbour activities, many shipping wharfs and warehouses had fallen into disrepair over the first half of the twentieth century, which encouraged the municipality to propose commercial rezoning and a rehousing of the remaining residents (De Liagre Böhl 2010, 179). With the construction of a large office block in 1961, the neighbourhood’s death warrant was seemingly signed. Fred Gaus, the property developer behind the office block, bragged about his future vision of a ‘Manhattan on the river IJ’ (Verlaan 2017, 155). In 1969, a few years after the topping out ceremony, he presented an additional office block. Both schemes con-

sisted of 7,000 to 8,000 square metres of office space, catering to approximately 500 office workers each, and were financed by the pension funds of Philips and Shell. Thus, the Bickerseiland was taken up in the maelstrom of modernisation sweeping through the streets of post-war Amsterdam. Local residents quickly expressed their discontent with yet another office behemoth in their neighbourhood. In 1970, a 55-year old concrete carpenter by the name of Joop Beaux founded an action committee protesting against the rehousing of locals in estates on the city's outskirts. The municipality was accused of deliberately neglecting their living environment, which, despite its shortcomings, was praised by the committee for its unique atmosphere, neighbourliness and affordable rents (Aktiekomité Westelijke Eilanden 1970). This focus on the neighbourhood's authenticity immediately caught on with the press. A national daily asked whether this was just sentimental whining and if Amsterdam should learn from Rotterdam to start building afresh. Its answer was revealing: 'Of course not, the scuffles about these neighbourhoods are part of a breakthrough of The New... Modern architecture and planning are faltering, with the turmoil discharging itself in this locality...' (*De Tijd* 1970).

Whereas the press was mostly on the hands of the locals, the municipal executive was divided over their claims. Han Lammers, a New Left activist turned planning alderman, was receptive to the physical and social preservation of neighbourhoods, but had to cope with a stubborn planning department. According to his planners, the arrangements with Gaus were irrevocable and the Bickerseiland would fall prey to the wrecking ball sooner or later anyhow (Aktiekomité Westelijke Eilanden 1970). In a compromise, Lammers proposed to renovate the remaining dwellings on the island while granting Gaus planning permission for a downsized version of his second office block, stating that Amsterdam had to kneel one last time to the old-fashioned thinking of the 1960s (De Liagre Böhl 2010, 172). Gaus, annoyed by the concessions he was forced to make, showed little respect for his opponents while presenting himself as a good Samaritan: 'I am a developer. I demand a certain standing. And now I have to discuss my plans with a concrete carpenter? He is no discussion partner. These people are screaming 'Stay out of our neighbourhood!' What is this,

our neighbourhood? Are they owners of the island? They should be happy we are such broad-minded modern people, who have improved their neighbourhood without one cent of public money' (*Het Parool* 1970). During a boisterous council meeting in the spring of 1971, councillors saw no other way than to accept the second office block and the municipal planners' defence of earlier arrangements. While progressive councillors and members of the press could not prevent Gaus from commencing construction, the Bickerseiland committee's pleas for a just city did attract the attention of architecture graduates Paul de Ley and Jouke van den Bout, who were inspired by the work of Aldo van Eyck. As one of the figureheads of structuralism, Van Eyck resisted the modernist dogma of *tabula rasa*, instead opting for buildings that respected human behaviour and the adaption of new structures to existing streetscapes (Van Heuvel 1992, 20–21). According to Van Eyck, the comprehensive redevelopment of neighbourhoods such as the Bickerseiland was nothing less than genocide (Van den Heuvel 2018, 28). In line with this worldview, De Ley and Van den Bout consulted the action committee about its needs and wishes, which resulted in an elaborate plan for the construction of affordable homes. With an efficient use of materials and compact building forms, they aimed for humble and cost-conscious dwellings fitted into the old street pattern (d'Ancona 1984, 50–56). In the autumn of 1973, their plan was finally turned into reality.

The work of De Ley and Van den Bout exemplifies the engagement of a younger generation of architects, who from the late-1960s onwards actively sided with community action groups. The architects were enraged by the isolated and one-dimensional economic thinking of municipal planners, stating that city centres demanded a holistic approach characterised by respect for the human scale, the existing urban tissue and historical continuity. Anonymous buildings such as the ones developed by Gaus would only distort the relationship between human beings and their living environment, according to the rebel architects (Claassen 2007, 12). If we further their thinking to utopianism, this was a rather inward-looking version of a better world meant to keep newcomers out while keeping old-timers in. On the Bickerseiland, we can see the same feelings towards modernity as

in the work of Jane Jacobs, in which Marshall Berman discerns ‘... a sort of undertow of nostalgia for a family and neighbourhood in which the self could be securely embedded, *ein feste Burg*, a solid refuge against all the dangerous currents of freedom and ambiguity in which all modern men and women are caught up’ (Berman 2010, 187). The Bickerseiland protests also demonstrate that utopian visions are not necessarily detached from reality, however infeasible they may seem in the eyes of the powers that be. Threatened in their very existence, the Bickerseiland residents were highly successful in giving credit to their strong neighbourhood attachment and by extent their right to the city. While they admitted their homes were in a dilapidated state, these were still preferable over the modernist substitute. The widespread and often admiring attention from the press, and cautious political support, signifies how a broader audience was coming to see the utopias of community action groups as an authentic striving for remaining true to oneself and a credible alternative to comprehensive redevelopment, similar to how Mamadouh understands the strong networks between urban social movements and media outlets. In this respect, the protesters had a good sense of momentum; or, as Sidney Tarrow explains the success of collective action: ‘People engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention’ (Tarrow 1994, 19). With De Ley and Van den Bout on their side, the people of the Bickerseiland could bring their homely vision of utopia into practice, withstanding the riptide of modernist redevelopment.

THE UTOPIA OF URBAN RADICALISM

On the eastern side of Amsterdam’s city centre, action groups were protesting against the erection of new office blocks as well, albeit with wholly different strategies. Here, the Jewish quarter crammed in between Nieuwmarkt and Waterlooplein was to be replaced by a four-lane expressway, and the eastern line of the city’s metro network. Similar to the Bickerseiland, municipal planners had been labelling the neighbourhood as ‘ugly’ and ‘gloomy’ ever since it was designated as a reconstruction area in 1953

(Gemeente Amsterdam 1953, 89). Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, haphazard demolition works triggered a spiral of decay and the abandonment of many tenement buildings. Plans for the relocation of the University of Amsterdam and the construction of a massive office slab along the neighbourhood's main traffic artery in 1968 did not bode well for the remaining residents. Yet in an unusual alliance with local preservationists and an invasion army of young squatters they brought the renewal machine to a standstill, using its trail of destruction as a battle cry against further redevelopment.

From the late 1960s onwards, young people increasingly resorted to squatting to obtain a roof over their head. Strict housing policies and a growing housing shortage, the latter partially the result of urban redevelopment, made it difficult to legally find a dwelling (Duivenvoorden 2000, 41). In addition, the wrongs of the local housing market were easier to politicise than distant events such as the ongoing war in Vietnam. As a practice, post-war squatting was more than (re)claiming property, it also encompassed a range of customary beliefs, makeshift practices and coping mechanisms geared towards a different way of living together. In the words of Alexander Vasudevan, squatters 'reimagined the city as a space of necessity and refuge, experimentation and resistance' (Vasudevan 2017, 9). A remarkable paradox in the practice of squatting is the preservation of existing structures while demanding a change in society's status quo, which leads some scholars to describe squatters as romantic or even conservative counterforces of modernity (Mamadouh 1992, 34–40; De Liagre Böhl 2010, 71; Rooijendijk 2005, 33). Veterans of the movement have rightfully objected against this caricature (Van Tijen 2010). The definition by Justus Uitermark is more accurate, who describes squatting as the achievement of 'revolutionary change through conservation' (Uitermark 2009, 351). This observation chimes with the work of Castells, who sees an intricate relationship between the rise of young action groups and the urban environment in which they operated: 'Only in the secrecy of their homes, in the complicity of neighborhoods, in the communication of taverns, in the joy of street gatherings may they find values, ideas, projects and, finally, demands that do not confirm to the dominant social interests' (Castells 1983, 70).

This affection for aging structures made the squatting movement a natural ally for Amsterdam's budding heritage movement. While the latter was able in 1968 to halt some of the demolition works in the Nieuwmarkt area, the former began occupying boarded-up buildings (De Liagre Böhl 2010, 241). In addition, community activists objected against the area's land-use plan by putting forward similar arguments as the Bickerseiland group. Municipal planners allegedly showed no respect for the emotional value local residents attached to their neighbourhood, no matter how blighted it was. Here, life was familiar and secure (Wijkcentrum d'Oude Stadt 1970). The residents' pleas fell on deaf ears within the municipal executive, which approved the binding land-use plan in the summer of 1970 and thus paved the way for further redevelopment. These affairs again attracted the interest of Van Eyck and his allies, who denounced the treatment of protesters in no uncertain terms: 'A city that neglects the creative potential and spontaneous initiatives of its citizens and only reflects what people do *inside* the city rather than what they *add* and *change* [my italics, TV], shuts itself off – and dies' (Van Eyck 1970, 20–27). The municipal executive went ahead with its redevelopment scheme, leading to soaring real estate prices and a growing interest of foreign investors. Between 1969 and 1974, the number of British planning applications in Amsterdam went from zero to forty, with a significant number of projects clustered within the Nieuwmarkt area. These developments triggered a pointed response from the protesters, who predicted a bleak future in which the British were visualised as robbers and rapists of a fragile urban landscape (Bijlsma 1974, 3–4). More importantly, in the summer of 1975 a group of squatters took decisive action by occupying a British-owned tenement house on the Jodenbreestraat, which was supposed to be torn down for yet another office block. In spite of a large rehousing fee and substitute housing in other parts of the city, the squatters refused to leave the premises, instead pleading for affordable homes on this prime location (Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt 1978). This confirms the utopian roots of the squatting movement as a collective that acted out of belief in the just city instead of self-interest. Red tape within the municipal planning offices and delays on the side of the British investor prevented a swift commencement of construction works, but in the

autumn of 1978 eviction finally loomed. Again, a young architect sided with the community activists. Dik Tuijnman proposed to build social housing on the site of the British scheme and to hide newly-constructed modernist buildings from sight (*De Volkskrant* 1977). The latter proposal was much in line with how the squatters presented a typical morning in the life of the concrete slab opposite their homes: ‘Deserted streets, a lonely cyclist, security spying on people, a first car breaks the silence and enters the parking garage, fluorescent tubes flick on, typists begin their work on the assembly line...’ (Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt 1979). Contrary to the situation at Bickerseiland, the municipal executive was less inclined to take the appeals of protesters in the Nieuwmarkt area into consideration. The metro was obviously a project too big to fail. Opinions changed after the municipal elections of 1978, which led to the instalment of the progressive alderman Jan Schaefer. His municipal executive decided to acquire properties with uncertain futures, as was the case with the Jodenbreestraat tenements, and gave the street and its surroundings a residential instead of commercial designation (Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt 1978). Consequentially, the squatters were allowed to stay put while the brownfields surrounding their premises were reserved for Tuijnman’s social housing complex. Their strategy of reimagining freshly-erected office blocks as dystopian eyesores proved effective, suggesting how utopias are often a response to an unsatisfying situation, or as Samuel Zipp has observed: ‘Urban renewal projects and other like-minded attempts at city remaking on a grand scale are first imagined, designed, planned, and built. But then they are represented and used, and thus reimagined, and so, in a symbolic sense, rebuilt’ (Zipp 2010, 6). This observation is in line with Castells’s assertion that urban action groups can change the urban meaning by envisioning reactive utopias.

THE UTOPIA OF URBAN INCLUSIVITY

For some urban action groups, it was wholly unnecessary to reimagine redevelopment schemes, simply because they were never realised. One example is the battle over the future of Amsterdam’s Leidseplein, a square located in the southwest corner of the city centre. Due to its central loca-

tion and speculations about future infrastructure investments, the square's environs had become an interesting investment option (Ploeger 2004, 65). The most viable plan was presented by Nicolaas Bouwes, a former exporter of Dutch cheese and owner of several nightclubs and other entertainment facilities (*Leidsch Dagblad* 1976). After tracing an increasing demand for tourist facilities in Amsterdam, Bouwes arranged designs and financial resources for a vast hotel development bordering the Leidseplein. Throughout the 1960s, public officials made several commitments to the plan and promised to help Bouwes acquire planning permission for the building plot, which was then still occupied by a church building and prison complex. In 1965, the municipality bought the church, while pressuring the national government to relocate its prison inmates (De Boer 2005, 75). As the mills of local and national governments were grinding, in 1967 sympathisers of the Provo action group laid claim to the soon-to-be vacated church. These anarchist youths transformed the house of God into a concert venue and gathering place for cultural experiments (Mutsaers 1993, 13–20). In the preceding years, Provo had launched multiple plans to combat Amsterdam's housing shortage and environmental issues, often with the intent to politicise urban issues and provoke city authorities into taking repressive measures (Pas 2003, 196). Despite its local agenda, Provo's founding members all hailed from outside of Amsterdam, demonstrating how the city was transforming into a breeding ground for counter-cultural movements (Bosscher 2011, 169–176). Inspired by the Situationist International and the utopias of Dutch artist Constant, Provo was out to radically transform urban society. Irrespective of the squatting action, Bouwes proceeded with his hotel development. After numerous planning delays and preliminary designs, in 1975 the developer could present his final proposal. Contrary to his expectations, it was slashed by the press for its gargantuan scale (*De Groene Amsterdammer* 1975; *Het Parool* 1975). In response to the Bouwes scheme an action group known by the abbreviation BEWA, which shared many of Provo's ideals, came to the fore. For this motley crew of preservationists, architects, artists, journalists and community activists, it was not so much form but function that mattered. Moreover, Bouwes' plan was allegedly proposed without consulting any residents and was catering for one group of people only: wealthy tourists

and foreign businessmen. Wanting to stir up discussion, BEWA pleaded for a democratic decision-making process mirroring the wishes and demands of local residents (Verlaan 2017, 171). Accusing Bouwes of sociocultural cleansing, BEWA cited a poem about Leidseplein's lively and mixed crowd: 'It entails the artists and their aficionados, the voyeurs and their exhibitionists, the punks and their sociologists, the scroungers and their patrons, the silent drinkers and the loud-voiced junkies, the beautiful loonies, the crazy queers, the dead-serious homosexuals and cinephiles, the night owls and the daydreamers' (*Het Vrije Volk*, 1965). Whereas Bouwes and some public officials accused BEWA of backwardness, it should be emphasised here that its pleas for preserving a social mix were unheard of before the 1960s. The pre-war utopias of great architectural thinkers, which had called for the annihilation of old cityscapes, had become common practice around this time. Furthermore, these visions of utopia were mainly serving business interests instead of the needy. In BEWA's utopia of inclusiveness and diversity, city life was coloured by irreconcilable differences, tensions and contradictions, which were either swept away or neglected if Bouwes was given his way.

BEWA's alternative plan maintained both the church building and the prison complex, with the latter providing affordable starter homes, housing for the elderly, small-scale shopping venues, workplaces and a cultural centre. Not only did the preservation of seemingly obsolete structures contradict common planning practices, it was also BEWA's plea for safeguarding the Leidseplein as a living room open to all that created a revolutionary ardour (Plangroep Bouw-es-wat-Anders). When asked about the future of Amsterdam, the action group's sounding board opted for more affordable housing and culture instead of business and tourist facilities. In the words of one newspaper, BEWA would deliver for 'the fancy as well as the shabby' (*De Volkskrant* 1977). Only after their ideas had been fully developed did the action group reach out to a number of architects. Their provisional sketches, presented in 1976, all shared the same departure point: the Leidseplein had to remain a hub in 'an accessible and amenable city centre full of continuous movement, where people could be found strolling, swarming around and touching down' (Planburo Bouw-es-wat-Anders 1976, 1).

Instead of choosing sides, this time the municipal executive tried to unite commercial and public interests. Yet, despite calls by public officials to reach a compromise over his building plot, Bouwes refused to take BEWA's plans seriously. He was disgusted by the idea of his distinguished guests being confronted with Paradiso's crowds and social housing tenants, or as he commented on the issue: 'Do we really have to provide social housing on such a prime location? I have no intention of being scornful, but then we will see people airing their laundry on Mondays!' (*Het Parool* 1977). While a majority of city councillors had always been in favour of real estate development for the sake of economic expansion and job growth, this time the ruling social-democrats were more critical, finding the developer's viewpoints of marginal groups intolerant. After the 1978 elections, it was clear to Bouwes that his plan was no longer feasible (*Het Parool* 1979; *Trouw* 1979). A year later he threw in the towel, leaving the redevelopment of his beloved plot to his opponents. As public officials were searching for social-minded developers to turn BEWA's plan into practice, in 1983 the national government decided Amsterdam should host a state-run casino. Eager for investments, the city presented the former Bouwes plot as a perfect location for the gambling hall, from which it stood to gain an indoor attraction for tourists, 300 new jobs and an alternative for illegal betting. The coming of the casino compensated for the preservation of the prison complex as well as the development of less-lucrative cultural functions and social housing (Van Beek and Vierling 1993, 12). Ten years later, after a long and tedious planning process, the so-called Max Euweplein opened to the public. With its affordable housing sitting next to a casino, its passage adorned by neoclassical ornaments and its mix of souvenir shops and offices, it represents a strikingly postmodern development. Much to the chagrin of BEWA, financial shortcomings and political bargaining had compromised their utopia into a semi-public space mainly catering to suburbanites and tourists looking for a fun day out. Still, this watered-down version of BEWA's original plans demonstrates how visions of utopias can serve as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the powers that be.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the lifestyle-oriented and subcultural utopias of Amsterdam's action groups seem short-lived. Over the last two decades the city centre has become thoroughly gentrified, with virtually no neighbourhood left untouched. Still, the battles were not in vain. While none of the utopias were realised as envisioned, they did generate new realities that changed the course of history. The affordable homes in the Bickerseiland and Jodenbreestraat areas are still rent-controlled and available to people with modest and low incomes, while the present-day surroundings of Max Euweplein are undoubtedly preferable over the hotel colossus Bouwes would have built. What is more, the action groups convinced a broader audience and by extent public officials that a different future was possible, one in which the needs and wishes of local people were prioritised over business interests. In the process, the media increasingly portrayed the protesters as members of a new avant-garde, a role they inadvertently snapped from modernist architects and planners. As this chapter has demonstrated, the meaning of urban space should be studied as something that is actively produced instead of given. Thus, we should investigate the ways in which grassroots collectives understand and represent their living environment instead of its physical layout, in particular as the city centre's mixed uses and historical rootedness leads residents to feel a sense of collective ownership and emotional attachment to it.

The utopias examined in this contribution proposed to change society's status quo, and by extension the human condition. In his analysis of Karl Mannheim's work, Nathaniel Coleman describes utopia as 'the mentality of groups with no hold on power. [...] utopias function as shepherding visions that guide opposing outsiders into power' (Coleman 2005, 33). In other words, without an existing order to challenge and without the context of spiralling urban decay and impending redevelopment, the post-war utopias of action groups would not have come into existence in the first place. Mannheim introduced a distinction between ideology as static and reactionary versus utopia as dynamic and progressive. Understanding urban utopias as the grassroots visions of engaged local residents born out of street-level observations and everyday realities is certainly a more

productive way to examine the built environment than buying into the self-proclaimed utopias of architects and planners. The typologies in this chapter were no conceptual arguments for the self-serving interests of a designing elite, but the sincere attempts of concerned locals to create a better world. Their utopias can serve as a source of inspiration for present-day action groups demanding their own right to the city, if only to learn how to dream of a just urban future.

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CORPOREAL WISHES AND TRANS- URBAN CINEMA IN PAKISTAN: WOMEN IN ACTION IN AN ISLAMISING STATE

Esha Niyogi De

This chapter examines a series of Urdu action heroine films directed and produced in the era of Pakistan's Islamisation (late 1970s through 1980s) by the illustrious female star of the Urdu screen, Shamim Ara. With titles such as *Miss Hong Kong* (1979), *Miss Colombo* (1984), and *Miss Singapore* (1985), and *Lady Smuggler* (1987), the films bear the imprint of a 'trans-urban' culture of production roving through fashionable cityscapes. The works indeed are trans-urban in both the aesthetic and the material practice. They depict traveling Pakistanis and agile women sporting trendy global styles; they were shot on location in cities such as Hong Kong and Manila; and they thrived on multi-sited collaborations between urban industries. In a nutshell, the films arose from a space of flows. Not only do we find here a mobile industry, head-quartered in Lahore, bringing together small-scale film and tourism entrepreneurs strewn across South and Southeast Asian cities (Colombo, Dhaka, Manila, Hong Kong), we also encounter a hybrid cinema cross-fertilised by global images of female action and public mobility flowing into Pakistani cities with video trade/piracy and satellite television (video and VCR having come to the country in the late 1970s).

The outlandish body images and landscapes combined have earned the

Shamim Ara action films the label of escapism (Gazdar 1997, 178). In that era, the Urdu industry as a whole was facing from film journalists the same allegation of abandoning the native soil/*apni dharti* and sociopolitical responsibility/*siyasi zimmadari* (in the polemical words of the Urdu magazine *Film Asia*, 1989). On her part, Shamim Ara had to fend off derisive queries from the middle-class press about the waywardness of the heroines she was creating—women roaming here and there and getting into fights and punches (*mardhar*)—as against the appropriate domestic roles she herself had embodied in the more nationalist genre of the 1960s, the Urdu Social (BBC Urdu Interview, c. 1993). Implicitly rebutting the allegation of escapism and waywardness against the action genre she was producing, Shamim Ara herself maintained that she made ‘family subject’ films for women of a new *daur*/epoch: women who wanted to fight for their *haq*/rights/ prerogatives rather than to suffer under patriarchal *zulm*/tyranny in the way configured by her own 1960s heroine roles (BBC Urdu Interview, c.1993). Working within the domain of commercial cinema, Shamim Ara was of course developing conventions for a fresh generation of Urdu cinema, configuring active new womanhood. She was not in a position to produce cinema from her own ‘authorial’ point of view, nor poised to make explicitly feminist films for select, politically aware audiences. As put by Lauren Berlant, however, popular cultures frequently are ‘juxtapolitical’ in orientation (2008, 2). Appealing widely to people’s aspirations and fears, they produce imaginative forms in parallel with new political inspirations. Shamim Ara’s arguments for the rights of Pakistani women in a new epoch were doubtless inflected by the groundswell of urban Pakistani feminist movements against the Islamising state in this period. The films she produced were processing the hopes and the tensions of an elite feminist discourse in complex and contradictory ways.

My position in this chapter is that the woman director/producer’s conventional rebuttals to the charge of escapism, seen in line with the explicit female address of these films, make serious sense once we consider their utopian dialectics of gender. An intertextual reading of the female director’s voice in relation both to the aesthetic politics and to the material practice of filmmaking illuminates these utopian inflections. Focusing on *Miss*

Hong Kong, the chapter makes a twofold argument. First, far from being mindlessly escapist, the multi-urban action heroine aesthetic from Shamim Ara Productions dramatises the oblique utopian implications of the statement made by the female director. It situates both Pakistani female bodies and family structures on a dialectical terrain. On this conflicted terrain, invincibly agile heroines fight to reclaim dystopic urban spaces that are overrun by the phallic zulm of villains destroying families. The censorship of female mobility is both implied and dialectically negotiated through such images as these of female and feminised bodies falling prey and fighting back against phallic aggression. Coming hand in hand with this ideal of the invincible female body are euphoric images of urban opportunities for women's freedom of movement and deportment. Simultaneously, and antithetically, women's individualised freedom is dovetailed with commitment to the traditional family and patriarchal honour, except that all the honorable patriarchs are debilitated, imperiled, or slaughtered (by Pakistani villains). In these dystopic urban routes of drug dealers and smugglers, heteropatriarchy itself comes to be an unsustainable ideal. In its place another *utopian* ideal emerges: an ideal that displaces the dominant. This utopian vision is of the agency of women not only in saving families and patriarchs but also in nurturing family relations within spaces sustainable only by women.

My second and larger claim is that the women-centered utopian longings threading through the Shamim Ara action heroine series are best illuminated by considering in what way the aesthetic vision may have been entwined with a heterogeneous practice of production. This practice was led to a large extent by the female-star-director herself, her familial crew, as well as the female stars/producers who performed and animated the action heroine aesthetic on screen. As such, the 'usual struggle between capital (the backers) and labour (the performers) over the control of the product,' characterising corporatised structures of professional entertainment such as Hollywood (Dyer 2002, 20), was at the least malleable, and at the most unsettled, by these production relations. Before I get to the details of the utopian aesthetics and the material bases of the Shamim Ara practice, let me turn to the premise of my approach.

URBAN ENTERTAINMENT AND CORPOREAL WISH IMAGES

Susan Buck-Morss explains Walter Benjamin's formulation, in the unfinished manuscript on Paris titled *Passagen-werk*, of the politically 'redeemable' potentiality in industrially reproduced (and commodified) artwork such as film (Buck-Morss 1983, 214). Benjamin sees these endlessly reproducible and convention-bound visual commodities as typifying the 'artifice' of post/industrial urban cultures. In his view, such commodified artifacts comprise the 'dream-images of the collective' (Buck-Morss 1983, 213–14). The well-known essay titled 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' had already acknowledged that sense perception underwent a democratic shift with the rise of art forms that were mechanically reproducible by urban industries. These reproducible urban forms spoke to the 'desire of contemporary masses to bring [unique] things "closer" spatially and humanly . . . [and as such, constituted] a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception' (Benjamin 1968, 223). In *Passagen-werk*, according to Buck-Morss, Benjamin goes further to observe that once the 'social and cognitive function of art' as an authoritative 'original' had been 'undermined' by urban industrial reproduction, the 'traditional, bourgeois form' of art itself was decisively 'liquidated' (Buck-Morss 1983, 212). In the eyes of Walter Benjamin, overall, the transformation of bourgeois art work to commodities circulated by urban industries is complex and contradictory. The transformation certainly means that reproducible dream-like images such as found in mainstream cinema or tourism advertisements come to be commodified and delimited by capitalist interests (Benjamin 1968, 231). They could produce nightmarish 'fetishes, alienated from the dreamers' (Buck-Morss 1983, 223). However, the transformation enables also a 'liberation of creativity from [bourgeois] art' (Benjamin qtd. in Buck-Morss 1983, 213). The liberating process is democratic insofar as it fosters 'utopian wish images . . . [that give] corporeal form to the . . . desires' of the collective (Buck-Morss 1983, 213).

The point emphasised by Buck-Morss, then, is that Walter Benjamin did not embrace wholesale an 'uncritical enthusiasm' in industrially produced cinematic images (Buck-Morss 1983, 215). What he maintained, instead, was that such contradictory yet widely accessible happy imagery could

be transformed into utopian dialectics. The images could foster a 'desire for happiness [as] a protest against social reality in its given form' (Buck-Morss 1983, 222). Fragments of corporeal memory drawn from vanishing lifeworlds could well be dialectically 'telescoped' (Buck-Morss 1986, 215) by aesthetics produced and recirculated by urban commerce. These could then become tools available for protesting against contemporary urban conditions and wishing for possible or new worlds. Along these lines, Benjamin maintained that wishful affect itself stems from a sense of 'lost happiness.' This constitutes a politicised way of wishful thinking that revivifies the 'small gaieties' (Benjamin 1968, 118) from both the past and a quotidian present such that authoritarian or totalitarian structures are unsettled.

Richard Dyer extends this line of thinking to an insightful reading of the corporeal dialectics possible in mass-produced wishful cinema. Dyer's premise is that utopias in entertainment form should be distinguished from the classic understanding of utopia as a model world. Entertainment evokes 'what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized' (2002, 20). He goes on to point out that since sensibilities are shaped by history, entertaining feelings and forms acquire emotional significance, alike for audiences and for makers, in relation to 'the complex of meanings in the socio-cultural situation in which they are produced' (2002, 21). As such, mass-produced entertainment cinema could well work as a technology combining mimesis with imaginative politics. It could both imitate and respond to 'real needs created by real inadequacies' (2002, 26) by way of evoking possible other ways to feel and to live in the interstices of injustice.

Keeping an astute eye on the material processes of reception and production, Dyer goes on to consider utopia as affect to be a heuristic for studying leisure-time entertainment. In his view, entertainment is an enabling rather than a wasteful process. It is a process wherein socially meaningful emotions and alternatives could be co-created and reinterpreted not only outside 'the daily round characterized by . . . insistence' (1986, 3) but also in protest against the latter's direction. Thus, crucial to this heuristic is a reading of the social struggles woven into the material cultures fostering wishful entertainment. Considering the context of Hollywood Musicals,

Dyer notes that the conventional division between labour (the performers) and capital (the director in control of the narrative; the producers/financiers) grows blurry when professional entertainers from such historically 'subordinate groups. . . [as] women, blacks, or gays' (1986, 20) take prominent roles in shaping entertainment forms and utopian feelings.

Approaches such as Walter Benjamin's and Richard Dyer's illuminate the way in which wishful imaginations born of an urban film industry such as Shamim Ara's could become a gendered crucible for utopian dialectics: a crucible for generating protest against the daily urban lives lived under an authoritarian Islamising state powered, in turn, by the global authority of Cold War manoeuvres. The sociocultural energies behind the industry were conducive to such utopian protests in at least two ways. On the one hand, we find here a production process led largely by female performers who themselves were directors and producers. On the other, we have a film series promoted by the star-director herself (and other promotional materials, such as advertisement booklets) addressing the needs and dreams of Pakistani women of the time. A closer look at these sociocultural conditions respectively of production and of reception will help me to clarify the aesthetic politics in *Miss Hong Kong*.

TRANS-URBAN COLLABORATIONS AND WOMEN'S AGENCY: SHAMIM ARA PRODUCTIONS

Shamim Ara's production enterprise captures a transitional phase of the Pakistani Urdu industry. The 'golden era' of this industry—the 1960s period under Ayub Khan dominated by the nationalistic genre of the Urdu Social—had seen the influx of some bourgeois English-educated male directors and production teams. I must add that Pakistani cinema scholars such as Iftikhar Dadi demonstrate that the Urdu social film itself was prone to internalise the fissures in Pakistani bourgeois nation formation, by contrasting it to the more normative bent of its Indian linguistic counterpart, the nationalist Hindi social film (2016, 480–81). Nonetheless, the Shamim Ara production era was marked by a major departure in the Urdu film tradition. What we see is a transition along the lines conceptualised by Walter Benjamin and Richard Dyer. An industrial work of art such as

the Urdu film shifted from a more contained bourgeois family aesthetic, featuring women-centered homes and interior spaces, to a lowbrow action cinema depicting women out on city streets. Hand in hand, the Lahore industry as a whole allowed more creative agency to filmmakers and performers who are characterised to this day in elite Pakistani film parlance as the ill-educated and the 'illiterates' (Mian 2018).

Being from a community of professional women entertainers historically located outside the Pakistani sphere of respectability, star-director and film entrepreneur Shamim Ara was spearheading the mobility of an under-resourced Lahore film industry that struggled to survive the dual onslaught of Islamic censorship and economic competition. The primary source of competition was the powerful Hindi industry of India, with which the Urdu shares a common linguistic register. The Hindi industry itself had turned towards big-budget and megastar-value action cinema, the genre globally predominant in the 1980s. Amitabh-Bachchan-starrers ruled the day (Vitali 2008, 196–211). Competition from the Hong Kong, Hollywood, and Taiwanese industries comprised a close second. As noted earlier, films from all these countries were pouring into urban Pakistan due to a booming video trade and piracy. The trans-urban network forged by Shamim Ara Productions is exemplary of the way the industry negotiated these negative impacts through the border-crossing agency of structurally subordinate groups.

My attempt has been to contextualise the Shamim Ara films in a country where no official film archive exists and records are scattered (in private collections). To this end, I have been 'following' (Marcus 1995, 106–7) the mobility of the aesthetic through multiple sites of production and consumption. Interviews with Shamim Ara's family and crew members have constituted a valuable archive of practices and insights, alongside print and visual records (scattered as these are). Members of Shamim Ara's crew describe that their informal trans-urban network, spearheaded by small-scale entrepreneurs and artists sharing economic needs, was forged largely through bridgework based on familiarity and trust. Syed Hafeez Ahmed, Associate Director with Shamim Ara, noted to me that, although contracts were always signed 'for tax purposes,' they frequently came after a bridge

had been established via word of mouth (2017). These bridges invariably were trans-border, mobile, and contingent upon face-to-face community-building. In describing his experience of co-producing and facilitating the shoot of Shamim Ara's *Lady Smuggler* in the Philippines, Raja Riaz Khan illustrated both the informality and the heterogeneity characterising the economic connectivity. He noted that he (a Pakistani Muslim) and fellow tour operator in the Philippines, Mohan Singh Makkar (an Indian Sikh), had entered the business by jointly responding to hearsay that a Pakistani film company (Shamim Ara's) wanted to shoot in the Philippines. Photos of the production team also demonstrate that Shamim Ara's cross-border production process was largely women-led. Female artists and entertainment entrepreneurs such as star-producer Bobita from Bangladesh, star-producer Sabita from Sri Lanka, and tour-operator/film-producer Mary from the Philippines joined hands with Shamim Ara.

All in all, we find here an informal practice of trans-urban connectivity aptly described in the words of Brian Larkin as a 'soft infrastructure' (2008, 6) resting on shared languages, cultural habits, and sensorial affinities (foods, for example), as well as on material co-dependency. Mobilised by structurally subordinated Pakistani artists/entrepreneurs, this process had a resistive industry insider such as Shamim Ara at the helm. The utopian corporeal dialectics noted in the previous section should be situated at the intersection of this gendered production process, animated by co-dependency, and local/global aesthetic influences. As noted above, the female filmmaker promoted her action series as oriented primarily towards female Pakistani audiences in this era, even though like all other popular South Asian films these too had a general address (I return to this point in my reading of *Miss Hong Kong*). Keeping in view the gendered contexts of production and reception, the Shamim Ara action imagery combines a mimetic logic imitating the gendered energies on trans-urban grounds (of production and reception) with a semiotic politics drawn from the transnational action heroine cinema. To get to an analysis of the imagery, let me now turn to the gendered energies and nightmares emergent in the context of reception.

ACTION GENRES IN AN ISLAMISING STATE

The Shamim Ara action artistry arose from a local and global spate in this era of what Tom Gunning calls the spectacular new ‘cinema of effects,’ a film form whose primary appeal and meaning are ‘rooted in stimulus’ rather than in the narrative (qtd. in Tasker 2013, 7). Scholarship on action cinema in 1980s Pakistan situates this proliferation of confrontational stimuli on popular screens in relation to a culture of gun violence and brutal censorship that was going hand in hand with (state-supported) illegal traffic in arms and drugs under the US-backed Islamist military dictatorship of Zia Ul Haq. The regime was upheld by Cold War manoeuvres around the anti-Soviet conflict in Afghanistan and the deployment of Islamic guerilla fighters in the region. Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad delineate the rise of an influential Punjabi action hero genre, addressing the everyday oppressions of peasant and working-class men, which dramatised the purity of violent anger ‘against an oppressive state [embodied in a] monstrously impure society’ (2016, 124, 126). The Punjabi film tradition in its own way was internally trans-urban not only because the *Jatt* action hero crossed the peasant / urban working-class divide but also because the tradition included an urban female theatrical practice comprising irreverent dances and acts, namely, a carnivalesque *mahi munda* or tomboy theater. Mahi munda dance-theater typically combined (and still does) ‘macho-body language’ and defiant eye contact with acutely seductive moves of cleavages and crouches to enact a utopian ‘burlesque of normative gendered conventions’ (Pamment 2016, 207–8, 213). In an era of transforming urban entertainment cultures, mahi munda artists crisscrossed between the theater and film industries of Lahore.

The Punjabi film tradition, replete with aesthetics of violent and ludic protest against state and class oppressions, was gaining in the Pakistani film market of the time. However, its influence was mediated in the Shamim Ara repertoire by the latter’s own urban Urdu legacy—a cinema made in the national language and maintaining a closer relationship to the state and a middle-class market than the more insurgent Punjabi cinema. Images such as the *Charlie’s Angels* logo emblazoned on a *Lady Smuggler* poster or the Kung Fu artistry in *Miss Hong Kong* reveal that Shamim Ara’s cross-

dressed female fighters spoke also to the cosmopolitan tastes of urban Urdu audiences in this video and satellite age. These images were adapting urban femininities culled from transnational action heroine traditions to negotiate and to protest prevalent conditions of militarised violence and sexual censorship. Studying the earliest Hollywood action heroines Ben Singer discerns ‘eustress’ (2001, 114), a euphoric excitation that prepares the female body to keep pace with the ‘rapid stimuli’ of urban change (2001, 124). Across historical contexts, these spectacles of female action stage responses to urban women’s aspirations for independent agency and accompanying contestations over the female body born both of increased public mobility (women’s rising workforce participation in 1960s Hong Kong, for example) and of feminist movements (the US second wave movement of the 1970s, for example) (Hunt 2007, 153; Tasker 2013, 120–21). As such, transnational action heroine imagery holds potential for at least two types of utopian protest against gender hierarchy: on one side, ludic/happy inversions of gender structures and on another, revolutionary female aggression embodied in invincible fighting bodies.

Social changes of the time likewise made urban Pakistan a hospitable context for an action heroine imagery combining these utopian inclinations. Women’s workforce participation was fast expanding under what Saadia Toor describes as a Cold-War-fueled ‘macro-economic revival’ (2011, 154). Hand-in-hand arose a groundswell of Pakistani women’s movement against the brutally censorious Islamist dictatorship (Toor 2011, 138–49). In the utopic euphoria and the technological independence of the Shamim Ara heroines—driving cars, wielding Kalashnikovs, or prancing across glamorous cityscapes—we find, on the one hand, an eustressful celebration of women’s mobility and collective freedom under urban change. The combative cross-gender action, on the other hand, combines insurgent local imaginations (the mahi munda, among others) with global forms to produce a practice that is juxtapolitical: what Lalitha Gopalan describes, in the context of the Indian Rape Revenge heroine, to be a practice ‘throw[ing] up the aggressive strands of feminism’ (2002, 51).

Still in Pakistan, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, women’s mobility and feminist mobilisation alike must be located in a culture inextricable from

religion as well as the state's regulation thereof (Weiss 2012, 52). Moreover, vernacular entertainment cultures such as Shamim Ara's Urdu cinema appealed to tastes across urban class divides. In these vernacular domains of women's entertainment liberal representations of 'individualized agency,' argues Kamran Asdar Ali, could well be 'tempered with other visions of the self . . . [such as] the desire to be . . . modest' (140) and therewith, to fulfill familial obligations. At the core of feminine modesty, explains Hamid Naficy with reference to post-Revolution Iranian cinema, is a premodern supposition that the self is 'more collective, communal, familial and hierarchical [such that] . . . women are a constitutive part of the males to whom they are related' and hence to be shielded from other men (Naficy 2012, 8). Considering how modesty is encoded by the Islamicate gaze, both Naficy and Negar Mottahedeh emphasise a premodern supposition of interrelated physicality underlying non-individuated social relations. They note that Islamicate looking relations are tactile rather than voyeuristic (Mottahedeh 2008, 9) such that men are seen as prone to be 'masochistic' (Naficy 2012, 106–7) in looking and effectively engaging in illicit intercourse (*zina*) if non-family women expose themselves in public without a proper 'visual shield' (Mottahedeh 2008, 9). Distinguishing between Pakistani women's bodily practices of modest segregation prior to and during the Islamising regime, Shahnaz Rouse points out that such practices (of a sartorial nationalism shared by women across South Asia) had always been both voluntary and fluid (2004, 98). What came with Zia's state was a brutal proscription precisely of the fluidity of women's illiberal modern life-worlds, in the name of corrupting men. The sphere of obscene exposure necessarily included the cinema such that the revised Motion Picture Ordinance of 1979 banned no less than three hundred Pakistani films.

The utopian imagery of urban women in *Miss Hong Kong* reworks the gendered emotions and inclinations riddling this conflictual terrain, and it telescopes them in complex and contradictory ways. Antithetical images of urban chick mobility and invincible female aggression come together in the action of the vigilante heroine—the righteous woman who stands against a crime-ridden city overrun with masculinist violence in the absence of state protection. However, this heroine eschews individualised

agency and fights, instead, to reinstate the ideal patriarchal family. At the same time, the patriarchal ideal itself is dialectically portrayed. For men are feminised and rendered secondary to the dreamscape of the utopian family insofar as they are dependent on the mobile women to take the action against urban violence in hand. Furthermore, masculinist aggression is voided in other ways too. For performative vignettes such as fights, dances, and comedy/farce are choreographed on screen in ways such that phallic contact comes also to be deferred rather than suffered. The sensational dialectics of these performative vignettes draw together and telescope local and global filmic codes and art forms. Indigenous traditions such as the celluloid *mujra*/courtesan dance and the *bhand*/comedian routine are woven together with transnational action and comic cinema. Behind these vignettes of corporeal wish imagery—whose stimuli easily override the appeal of the thin patriarchal narrative—we must also see the creative/mimetic hands of the women-dominant entertainer practitioners. They include star/director/producer/dancer Shamim Ara herself; the renowned heroine/dance-virtuoso Babra Sharif; fight/dance master Qaisar Mastana, and other veteran crew members. Let me detail these conventions by turning to *Miss Hong Kong*.

AGILE WOMEN, INVINCIBLE FIGHTERS, AND THE UTOPIA OF UN/PATRIARCHAL FAMILY

The inaugural film of the Miss-and-Lady Series, *Miss Hong Kong* (1979) tells the story of a young Pakistani woman named Tina who has been raised by her father in Hong Kong and become the beauty queen of the country. What we soon find is that she is also an indomitable martial artist. The conventional plot (scripted by veteran Urdu screenwriter, Syed Noor) revolves around dutiful daughter Tina's mission to rescue her brutalised scientist father from the clutches of an international Pakistani gang of drug dealers headed by the self-anointed 'Black Business' magnate Black Jack. Black Jack has imprisoned the scientist at his den in Hong Kong and forced him to deviate from his ethical pursuit of science into manufacturing heroin.

As the opening credits roll, we see a montage of city lights by night, cross-cut with tight and medium close-ups of the heroine's face as she sits at the

wheel, cruising along with a girlfriend by her side. In the instance on hand, the frames are showcasing a chic beauty in western clothes: red-lipped, luminous-skinned, and sporting trendy bobbed hair. The soundtrack plays a euphoric self-tribute to Miss Hong Kong's individual self-propulsion, her *pankh bena* / wingless flights. Soon enough, her free-wheeling mobility is shown to make her vulnerable to male aggression on this crime-infested urban road. Medium shots track several drunken young men spotting 'Miss Hong Kong,' as she sits in her parked car awaiting her girlfriend's return, and leering forward to tease and attempt touching her face. But so only to be violently knocked back with an expert kung fu thrust of the elbow.

A series of rapid cuts at medium to long range capture the woman clad in plain white slacks and a short-sleeved shirt leaping out of her car and overpowering the harassers in a dexterous martial arts battle. Shot and edited in the style of 1970s Hong Kong martial arts cinema, the images make clear and legible the physical strength and agility of the action heroine. It is arguable that these martial arts sequences in *Miss Hong Kong* and subsequent films bear testimony to the flow into Pakistan of the 'Jane Bond' genre of martial heroine cinema that arose in Hong Kong in the 1960s, coming hand in hand with expanding urbanisation and women's increased workforce participation and public mobility (Government of Hong Kong 2007; Hunt 2007, 153). Pakistani magazines report a steady influx of kung fu films after the coming of video in the 1970s (SHE 1984, 8). Miss Hong Kong's encounter with the assailants stages a complex utopian dialectic, however. On the one hand, her individuated self-propulsion is laid open to masculine invasion on unprotected city streets, and thus, is effectively censored as well (in a way appropriate to escalating sexual censorship in Zia's Pakistan). On the other, the female 'fighting fantasies of Chinese cinema' (Tasker 2013, 24), encoding histories of women's mobility and mobilisation in Hong Kong and China, are telescoped onto the active body of the Pakistani heroine such that she turns aggressively cross-gender. She confronts and reverses the phallic intrusion into her space, reclaiming her body into her own, utopian, control. From this moment on, key male characters enter the heroine's private world to control and direct her energies

towards diverse heteropatriarchal spaces—only to further the play with and reversal of criminal masculinist dominance over urban freedom.

Yet another euphoric scene of female bonding, with the same girlfriend at a sunlit roadside café, is invaded by a gang of martial fighters led by the kung fu master himself. They have arrived to avenge the humiliation by Miss Hong Kong of the previous assailants, who turn out to be disciples of this vicious fight-master and muscle man Rocky (a combination of Bruce Lee and Rocky Balboa with Pakistani style villainy, as suggested by earlier spectacles of his muscular hard body). For the moment, Rocky stands back and directs the attack. A series of shots spectacularise self-defence by the heaving and kicking female fighter, now modestly desexualised through a costume of loose-fitting khaki shirt, jeans, and boots. Soon enough, the female fighter, envisioned in utopian terms as invincible while protesting masculine injustice, has again mauled her marauders. What we see is well-described in Carol Clover's words as a 'spectacular gender play' with 'bodily sensations' that invites 'cross-gender identification' (1987, 215–16) from both male and female audiences. Clover discerns this gender play in Hollywood slasher and action films. While *Miss Hong Kong* likewise invites cross-gender identification from spectators, it also explicates a utopian female address; for here the spectacular play of identifications is implicitly antithetical to the male eye. It inverts masculine aggression and reduces male bodies to passivity. Furthermore, this gender-reductive game spills into the ludic, telescoping onto the Pakistani screen a sensory commonality between female fight spectacles and gender-queer comedy found also in Hollywood cinema by Carol Clover (1987, 216).

The camera turns to reveal a young man in white merchant-navy attire sitting at another table of the roadside café and waving his fists in excitement. We see a performance entwining Hollywood-style urban slapstick—depicting a ludicrous entanglement of human forms with inanimate city architecture (roadside tables, signposts, and so forth) together with a South Asian bhand-style ridicule of normative masculinity. Soon enough, the man leaps forward in an attempt to defend the woman. To the contrary, he is hurled back by the heroine's blows (on the assumption that he is another attacker), arrives at villain Rocky's feet, and faces an equally hard hit that

knocks him out. Once the martial gang flees and the heroine has time to pull him back to his feet, however, the man flaunts his conduct, stating that as a true Pakistani man he knows it is his *farz*/duty to protect women from *goondas*/hooligans. A romantic narrative does follow as expatriate Pakistani Tina / Miss Hong Kong (Babra Sharif) develops feelings for the ship captain Aved Ali (Asif Raza Mir) from Pakistan; the sequence also features euphoric song-and-dance interludes set against Hong Kong cityscapes. The transnational coding of couple glamour itself was found from the Indian Hindi screen. Shamim Ara's transnational shoots were reproducing, on a smaller regional scale, a practice held by the Hindi industry 'since the coming of colour' (Dwyer and Patel 2002, 66)—that of deploying glamorous foreign (western) landscapes to commodify urban couple forms.

Thus, a second romance and similar spectacular interludes are soon added to the plot. Bina (Babra Sharif in double role) arrives from Pakistan in search of her long-lost sister (Tina) and father and finds her own would-be husband, another morally upright compatriot. It all concludes with a familiar South Asian filmic tableau of the male-centred family—common to the influential Amitabh-Bachchan-starrer Indian action cinema of the era, for example. In *Miss Hong Kong*, the tableau centres the father and places a coupled daughter on either side. Yet the distinctive feature of the Urdu family film form, as noted earlier, is that it internalises sociopolitical contradictions. Reading along these lines, we could describe the closing tableau in *Miss Hong Kong* in Iftikhar Dadi's words as a 'hollow' (2016, 487) antithesis of gender hierarchy, one that assumes men's displacement from the centre of power and preservation. For the father's rescue has been achieved through the prowess of action heroine Tina, with the romantic heroes tagging along as only secondary fighters. The suggestion seems to be that the reinstatement of the utopic family is dependent on the strength and alacrity of its women. This semiotic implication is strikingly at odds with the men-and hero-dominant tableau that concludes Indian films from the era, such as the Amitabh-Bachchan-starrer *Amar Akbar Anthony* (Manmohan Desai, 1977). The comparison is relevant since some narrative devices from that Indian film are mimicked in *Miss Hong Kong*. In this instance, however, the narrative devices from *Amar Akbar Anthony* are

both telescoped in and dialectically blocked. We see, instead, that in the Pakistani film heteronormativity is ironically upended through a hilarious feminising of romantic heroes. Beyond this, masculinist aggression itself comes to be relegated to the urban underworld of crime and depravity. On her part, action heroine Tina is equally adroit in matching the villains in aggressive combat and in also deferring brutal contact and momentarily voiding phallic *zulum*. Her utopic agility combines the zest of indomitable combat with an euphoria of escape.

Forsaking liberal individualist pleasures of single selfhood and couple-forming, action heroine Tina raids the center of urban villainy to rescue her upright bourgeois father. She arrives in the torture cell where her scientist father is being brutalised by Black Jack and his henchman, kung fu master Rocky. We see Tina's cross-dressed physicality gaining control of frames through a series of exhilarating moves that defer aggressive contact and mock (the men's) phallic aggression through a combination of kinesthetic and lyrical vocabularies drawn from different screen traditions. Heightened by fast edits, Tina's magical multiplanar agility (slides, jumps, scurries) draws on the dance-fight moves of a 'soft' Kung Fu style of avoiding brutal contact (Anderson 2005, 194). Her ludic acrobatics, being folded into a sarcastic song-and-dance number executed from a plane high above the immobile Rocky and gang, on the other hand, draw on the Pakistani celluloid *mujra*/courtesan dance tradition of untouchably titillating female bodily movements and eye contact. In the hands of director Shamim Ara and heroine Babra Sharif, both *mujra* virtuosos in their own right, the South Asian courtesan tradition of screen performance entwines with the fantastic screen style of the Hong Kong Kung Fu legacy in ways that undermine brutal contact. Even though phallic combat does appear—first Tina is caged, and then she slaughters Rocky in a relentless fight—the utopian exhilaration born of the combined motion arts endures as the primary appeal.

In totality, Action Heroine Tina's movements tend to both transcend and transform predatory male contact in more ways than one. For one, her magical agility helps her to dodge palpable contact with combative male bodies on screen. For another, the sheer implausibility of her movements,

in comparison to everyday motion, defies circumscription by the gaze of men offscreen insofar as the male gaze is assumed to be physical and tactile in Islamist belief (as noted above). The latter point is vindicated by an astute observation made by Pakistani sculptor and visual arts scholar, Durriya Kazi. Kazi maintains that one way in which popular Pakistani films bypass the Islamist censorship of immodest exposure is by portraying a 'supramundane space [in which] religious sermons' can be ignored (2012, 4). Noting that even the Islamic clerics do not consider popular Pakistani films to be 'a part of society' (2012, 9), Kazi goes on to emphasise the political relevance in this context of the non-illusionist cinematic arts. She maintains that these fantastic and stylised filmic arts enable a temporary suspension of the 'rules of politics and society' (2012, 4).

I have been making a similar argument in suggesting that the Shamim Ara multi-locational films create fantasies of female mobility that are antithetical to the everyday realities and disciplinary codes of a global Islamising state. I hesitate, however, to see these corporeal images as attempting a merely temporary suspension of the rules of society and politics such that transgressive bodies and behaviour could be put on display. Instead, I find in these action heroine films a dialectical engagement with a violent and censored sphere of public action spawned from local and global networks of oppression (i.e., Islamic state formation and the Cold War).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted an intertextual reading of the dialectically wishful momentum possible within urban cultures of entertainment. As demonstrated in the above pages, a depleted Urdu film industry that sought for new sources of economic collaboration and commodity culture, within and across the borders of Pakistan, spawned utopian energies that were trans-urban in more than one sense. At its core, the corporeal arts on the Shamim Ara screen were protesting the criminalistic conditions of a Pakistani urban economy overrun both by legal brutality (perpetrated by the militarised Islamic state) and by illegal traffic (in arms and drugs stemming from the Afghan War). As detailed in the foregoing section, *Miss Hong Kong* engaged dialectically with masculinist violence

so as to position female bodies and women-centered families in a happy state of invincible strength and security. The filmic engagement itself was quintessentially trans-urban insofar as it drew together and telescoped gendered images culled from diverse female-focused traditions of urban imagination, all of which bore traces of women's transformative struggles and mobilisation (whether in Pakistan, Hong Kong, or the US). Moreover, my intertextual approach moves beyond aesthetic history to emphasise the material conditions conducting this utopian and democratic artistry. As I have discussed at length, the Shamim Ara cinematic tradition illuminates how specific conditions of industrial mobility—in this instance, informal collaborations revolving around women directors/producers/stars—could yield wish images of urban relations exceeding masculinist control. Such images as these could simultaneously be conventionally familiar and intelligible to multiple audiences while also being dissident against gendered violence.

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TAKING BACK THE CITY: EXARCHEIA, UTOPIA, AND THE DEPROLETARIANISATION OF THE FUTURE¹

Solange Manche

With David Harvey having deAclared the death of the city (2012, xv–xvi), of the city that was representative of social diversity and solidarity, our trying to speak of the utopian in contemporary urban space seems to be a lost cause. We tend to be largely aware of how the unavoidable expansion of gentrification incessantly leads to the predictability of urban spaces, reducing them to the predictability of airport commerce. An opaquer process that eats away any possibility for solidarity and diversity to emerge is simultaneously haunting our cities: the growing numbers of eerie privately-owned public spaces (POPS) and the post-2008 boom of corporate buying of existing properties, which took off in conjunction with deregulation in the 1990s (Sassen 2017a). Privatisation is spreading like an invisible ink stain on the maps of major cities. Public spaces in London and New York have become the playground for capital investment and Istanbul appears to be competing in the same game with its project to transform a 1200-meter coastline into a cruise-ship port counting shopping malls and cinemas (Polo 2015). The area concerned, stretching from the historical district of Karaköy to Fındıklı, used to be home to street vendors who are gradually pushed further into little back streets, where

¹ The fieldwork for this study was supported by the Netherlands Institute at Athens (NIA) as part of their development grant scheme and was carried out in September 2016.

they are no longer able to sell to the flux of people getting off the city's public ferries. Although currently on halt, because its main stakeholders, the Doğuş Group and Bilgili Holding, did not live up to the agreement with the municipality to renovate the area's historical post office building but instead decided to demolish it, the privatisation of these spaces clearly excludes those who do not behave, and do not have the means to behave, like the economic elite.

Indeed, nothing seems amiss in London when you comply with the wishes of private investors, or when you naturally go about your life in an acceptable manner. It is only when rules are being transgressed that a flame is being held underneath the cities' invisible map and the stains start to reveal themselves. The problem is that these spaces, even if carrying the adjective public in them, are able to set their own agendas, which goes from banning skateboarding and lying down on the grass to prohibiting the expression of our rights to protest. Occupy Wall Street (OWS) brought the legal ambiguity of these spaces to the fore. Whereas the protesters occupying Zuccotti Park in New York City were able to occupy the POPS for two months, as camping had not officially been prohibited before the encampment, the protestors of Occupy London were prevented from setting up camp in the city's financial district, Canary Wharf (Kohn 2013, 99–110). The legal ruling that led to the eviction of the Zuccotti encampment is a lot more complicated than a simple opposition between public and private.² Many of the OWS occupations were evicted more rapidly from public spaces than was the case in New York (Kohn 2013, 99–110). What POPS are, however, allowed to do, unlike public authorities, is to regulate space, pre-emptively and fully undemocratically, ruling out any unwanted behaviour.

Although the latter developments might appear as new phenomena arising from the neoliberal horizon, Harvey shows how capitalism's problem of absorbing surplus capital and labour has consistently been solved by urbanisation and large-scale renovation projects, which, as is to be expected, fence off its own opponents. In this manner, the Haussmannisation of

2 In the end, it was the city of New York that ruled in favour of the eviction, agreeing with the New York Police Department that the occupation presented a safety and hygiene risk.

Paris did not only serve to find a Keynesian fix to the 1848 surplus capital and labour crisis,³ but the radical restructuring of the urban tissue also excluded the working classes and sought to make the streets easier to control for the military, hoping to counter an eventual emergence of revolutionary movements (Harvey 2012, 16). This, of course, proved not to be particularly successful once the Paris Commune was erected in 1871 (Ibid.). Even if, since the 19th century, the rebuilding of the city has thus been motivated by capital and the ideological and political purposes that derive from it, there's a fundamental addition to its contemporary manifestations. Whereas Haussmann's strategies were primarily physical and architectural, POPS add legal barriers to the existence of a diverse city.

Two centuries ago, these defensive designs could still be used as public spaces, despite actively preventing sensitive classes to engage with them. Opposition was still thinkable. It was thinkable in the minds of the ruling classes. Now, the possibility itself is being ridiculed by POPS criminalising these classes' presence, ways of being, and right to defend their interests. To put it shortly: capitals make people abide by capital, violently.

Saskia Sassen greatly disapproves of the homogenising consequences that the process of urban privatisation brings forth (2017, 151–61). She considers that we have arrived at a turning point in history: a point at which the cosmopolitan and diverse character of the city is lost and being replaced by the sole presence of a global corporate subject (160–61). Whereas previously, cities allowed for the powerless to make their own history within the cracks of control and the relative chaos that urban spaces were marked by, hyper-surveillance and exclusion now make it impossible for the vast majority of people to give shape to their own lives. As such, Sassen's objections largely correspond to what Henri Lefebvre describes in his essay 'The Right to the City' and which serves as a starting point for reflection in Harvey's *Rebel Cities*. In this 1967 piece, and the date is crucial as it predates the 68 events, Lefebvre considers the right to the city to be a cry and a demand for change, for an anti-capitalist, less alienating, and profoundly more playful alternative. The right to the city is a cry for self-determination:

3 Which, ironically, fails, and leads to the creation of a bubble.

[F]ar more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. (Harvey 2008, 23)

Certainly, what Harvey and Sassen observe, and which was already being sensed in the late 60s, is undeniably true. Urban spaces are increasingly being controlled by capital and it kills a certain freedom that the city was previously home to. It kills diversity, social inclusion, and room for creativity. The problem with this observation is that it is highly unlikely that those who manage these spaces, or POPS, care about the demise of cosmopolitanism and diversity, just as it would be naïve to assume that they are unaware of gentrification and the systematic exclusion of the poor. There is, however, ground to believe that there are more reasons to object to the privatisation of urban spaces, reasons that concern everyone, or that should concern everyone. These reasons are to be found in our interaction with the physical features of a city, and in the most profound ways in which cities that only serve capital affect our individual and collective beings. Moreover, it is perhaps not enough to just state that POPS and gentrification processes are taking place. An alternative must be found. Harvey determines who the new proletariat is and offers his own thought-out plan for global international resistance of the working classes (2012, 14). He pays little attention to how collective action might already have offered valuable forms of resistance, which is the object of this chapter.

Leaving aside the question of how an urban global anti-capitalist struggle might be best pursued, it will here be argued how the anarchist stronghold of Exarcheia has not only already reclaimed the city, but also counters the negative effects of the need for capital to be absorbed by urban expansion.⁴ This is achieved by virtue of Exarcheia being a utopian space, being both a secluded place escaping legislation that normally forces urban life to conform to corporate investment, and a place of solidarity, diversity,

4 Expansion here does not necessarily refer to a geographical expansion. It simply denotes the increase of capacity for capital absorption.

and mutual aid that engages in the daily praxis of hope. In order to show how this space is utopian, a definition primarily based upon the literary characteristics of the genre will firstly be developed. Building upon Bernard Stiegler's notion of *proletarianisation*, or *prolétarisation*, it will subsequently be shown how the temporal and spatial organisation of the neighbourhood, which are exactly those factors that make Exarcheia utopian, overcome the *short-circuiting* of memory retention. This does not only clean up the mess we have 'collectively made' of the possibility 'to shape the world according to our visions and desires' (Harvey 2000, 281), but it equally sets in motion a rebellion against the cognitive e(a)ffects of the current politico-economic organisation of life. By adopting this approach, and my decision to study the particular case of Exarcheia, I conjure up a heated debate about anti-capitalist struggle that divides the Marxist and the anti-authoritarian Left. Instead of defending the one or the other position, I will address the debate, but cannot, due to the limited scope of this chapter, fully engage in an extensive dialogue with it.

Stiegler's concept of *proletarianisation* is not an antagonistic notion opposing an exploiting and an exploited class. His refusal to take into account problems related to class inscribes itself within the post-68 anti-Marxist trend of French thought and therefore poses a more fundamental problem as to the politics of Stiegler's philosophy and practice.⁵ Certain aspects of the concept of *proletarianisation*, however, are still valuable to think about, especially, when it comes to our relation to the city, and in particular regarding the idea of the externalisation of memory. *Proletarianisation* denotes what Stiegler considers to be our contemporary state of existence, our current planetary crisis, or rather our gradually becoming stupid. For Stiegler, technology plays a crucial role in the noetic process. Going back to Plato's understanding of writing in the *Phaedrus*, which Derrida famously took up in *La dissémination* (1972), technology in Stiegler's thought should be understood as the process of exteriorisation and interiorisation of memory: a process that is *pharmacological*. The exteriorisation of memory can either allow for intergenerational transmission of knowledge which

5 For a critique of the notion of proletarianisation see Manche, Solange. 2019. 'Review: The Neganthropocene', *Junctions* 4 (2): 71–74.

leads to *la raison*, typified by *long-circuits*, or memory can be *short-circuited* by increased automation driven by economic rationalisation, which leads to stupidity. Although equally building upon the critique of modernity that can be traced back to Nietzsche, and is central to Heidegger's work, Stiegler more overtly rereads Marx's *Grundrisse* (1858), and more precisely the section of the Fragment on Machines, from which he derives his notion of *proletarianisation* (Stiegler 2012, 209). In the *Grundrisse*, machines incorporate human knowledge of how something needs to be produced, or automation. Subsequently, when workers operate a machine that carries out an initial skill that they never learned to master, workers remain skill-less and are dependent upon these technologies (215). They lose their know-how, or *savoir-faire* (Stiegler 2006, 51), which means that he does not exclusively understand knowledge to pertain to the intellect, but considers it to be psychosomatic.⁶ As such, for Stiegler, the proletariat is '*la classe des désœuvrés, c'est-à-dire des déclassés : ceux qui ne savent plus, mais servent des dispositifs d'extériorisation des savoirs*' (2012, 42; 210). ('is not the working class, but the non-working class [*la classe des désœuvrés*], that is, the downgraded, the class of those who are declassified. They are those who no longer know, but serve, systems that exteriorize knowledge') (2015, 128). Today this *proletarianisation*, typically, is being generalised by computerisation and extended to the domain of decision-making. We are not only being *proletarianised*, but we are continuously being *proletarianised*, without our knowledge, as consumers of digital technologies. We do not only exteriorise physical skills, but we now literally displace our cognitive abilities into machines on a daily basis, every minute, every second. Memory itself, hence, becomes redundant: our brains do not need to memorise anymore, and as such it loses this capacity. These e(a)ffects of increased digital *grammatisation* are, according to Stiegler, dehumanising as 'human consciousness [...] is always already technical, made possible by technics' (Howells 2013, 3). *Proletarianisation*, thus, is a form of losing our ability to create and shape ourselves via the way we organise our lives in relation to our material environment. It might sound strange to talk about losing a right to shape ourselves, but this is essentially what it implies. Just

6 This goes back to Aristotle's *νοῦς*. See Stiegler, Bernard. 2004. *Mécréance et discrédit 1. La décadence des démocraties industrielles*, 176–83. Paris: Galilée.

like we are losing our right to the city, we have already lost our right to our bodies, and now increasingly to our brains. Just like we have a right to reclaim the city, we have a right to reclaim our mastery over our own cognitive abilities and their development. Something, as shall be shown, is fundamentally connected.

Technics being *pharmaka*, simultaneously potentially curative or toxic, the externalisation of memory can be mobilised positively and should be, according to Stiegler (2009, 44), as the human and technology are co-constitutive of each other, a process in which technology is considered in very broad terms encompassing flint tools as well as the latest smartphone. That is, technics is the support of memory. The solution Stiegler offers to fight *proletarianisation*, or the toxicity of technology, is by reinventing and re-institutionalising our use of these objects. Stiegler tries to achieve this quite concretely, having, among other projects, founded *Ars Industrialis*, defining itself as ‘*une association internationale pour une politique industrielle des technologies de l’esprit*’ (Arsindustrialis 2013) (‘an international association for an industrial politics of technologies of the mind’)⁷ and which, rather than class relations,⁸ politicises ‘the relationship between technology and mental or spiritual, vitality’ (Howells 2013, 2). On a larger urban scale, Stiegler implements his philosophy, and typically that of his idea of a contributory economy, in the department of Seine Saint Denis, North of Paris, as part of the Plaine Commune project (Dawson 2019, 318). Opposing *reason* to the *calculability* of the market, Stiegler argues for a new economy, a new organisation of life that *disautomatises* knowledge, thus fighting *generalised proletarianisation*. Founded in 2000, the Plaine Commune project seeks to achieve this. What would need to be regained is a form of control, a planned reaction against the effects that *automation* bears upon processes of individuation. As Mark Dawson shows, Plaine Commune is

7 Translation my own.

8 It is interesting to note here that Stiegler’s work shares a lot of similarities with Italian post-operaismo that corresponds to this depoliticisation and compromise with capitalism. He indeed draws upon the work of Maurizio Lazzarato, Antonella Corsani, and thinkers influenced by post-workerism, such as André Gorz and Yann-Moulier Boutang. For a critique of the politics of this tradition that would also apply to Stiegler, see Garo, Isabelle. 2019. ‘Les théories du commun ou la transition permanente.’ In *Communisme et stratégie*, 110–58. Paris: Éditions Amsterdam.

an 'attempt to reinstall places and spaces to think, deliberate and decide upon that which much remain to a certain extent undecidable or incalculable' (321). As reflected in the Plaine Commune initiative, instead of fundamentally challenging our current economic system, Stiegler opts for a form of change that does not directly oppose our highly financialised economic system, but merely tries to give rise to a bifurcation as to its prime value, which should, according to Stiegler, become reason. As such, the focus of this chapter is profoundly at odds with the politics of Stiegler's thought and practice, not only by addressing the problem of capital, but also by suggesting that Stiegler's project can do without Stiegler, that it is already being carried out, because of the very reason that the neighbourhood here studied rejects collaborating with capital in its utopian spatial and temporal dynamics.

If we retain Stiegler's notion of *deproletarianisation*, of the *disautomisation* of knowledge production, as a process of regaining a certain degree of control we have over the development of our lives and selves, it is crucial not to side-line the expansion of capital absorption in the urban landscape and the authoritarian abuses that privatisation enables, as addressed by Harvey and Sassen. Having carried out research on parallel economy development in the Athenian neighbourhood of Exarcheia, an anarchist stronghold and a site of resistance since the 1930s, it struck me as to how the idea of the right to the city, or the freedom to rebuild the city, a remaking of the self, is already happening. As shall be seen, it is the spatial and temporal factors of Exarcheia, which I claim make it a utopian space, that allow the taking back of control on a psychosomatic level, as Stiegler addresses in his work.

It needs to be acknowledged that the larger political potentials of these forms of living have been criticised from a Marxist perspective. Indeed, Harvey himself is highly sceptical about the anti-authoritarian Left. Unable to provide 'viable [...] templates for more global anti-capitalist solutions, [...] all the hopeful *autonomista*, *autogestion* and anarchist rhetoric' would only bring about a bigger victory for neoliberalism (2012, 122–23). In France, this debate has intensified with the increasing support for the

Notre-Dame-des-Landes ZAD (*zone à defender*),⁹ a ten-year long occupation of farmland that sought to oppose the construction of an airport, by the radical Left.¹⁰ Frédéric Lordon notably criticises the ZAD as being the expression of a profound anti-politics, as a manifestation of escapism (2019, 127–47). Of course, the appeal of these forms of resistance should be understood within their own historically specific contexts, which in the French case could be explained as resulting from the decline of anti-capitalist alternatives offered by traditional political parties, such as the French Communist Party (Kouvelakis 2012, 21). In fact, some of the points of critique that Lordon raises, such as the demanding ethical norms that these spaces are governed by, are certainly things that my time spent in Exarcheia affirms. Nonetheless, this does not take away from the fact that these spaces are by far more permissive than the fully-commodified cityscapes of POPS and the economically inaccessible centres of the world's global cities (Sassen 2000, 21–22).

Indeed, given the political history of the term, calling Exarcheia a utopian space is somewhat controversial. Karl Marx's accusation in *Misère de la philosophie* (1847) of Joseph Proudhon's economic theories being unscientific, and therefore utopian, sparked a debate of mutual accusation that persists even today. Simon Springer—who engaged in a heated discussion with Harvey, which took the form of an article exchange on the question of why radical geography should be anarchist—still uses the adjective as a synonym for unrealistic, or at least the *never-to-be* realised (Springer 2014). Poulimenakos and Dalakoglou, who equally notice the utopian aspects of Exarcheia, want to avoid the term as they consider it to denote the 'fictitious,' or the *not-yet* and the *never-to-be* realised (Poulimenakos and Dalakoglou 2017). They, therefore, prefer reading K*VOX, a squat in Exarcheia that functions as a café, library, and an assembly space for horizontal and consensus-based decision-making, as a heterotopia. They privilege Michel Foucault's concept, because they consider it to distinguish itself from the utopian, as it would refer to actually existing places that

9 Zone to defend.

10 For a more extensive account see Mauvaise Troupe Collective. 2018. *Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence*. Translated and edited by Kristin Ross. London: Verso.

function like ‘counter-sites,’ within which the sites outside of it are contested and represented (Ibid., 182). Within this view, the utopian would in its temporality of the *not-yet* and *never-to-be* stand in contradiction to the *temporality* of the *here* and *now* of anarchist direct action.

This understanding of the utopian ignores the literary as a phenomenon and presupposes a strict boundary between the real and the fictive. Within this view, the utopian novel is only considered for its description of the lands visited by the narrator; the temporal effect of which is *the erasure of time and space*, or at least this is how Peter Wagner chooses to call it (2016, 220).

According to Wagner, these narratives would be damaging for emancipatory practices, as they give pause to our own situated and historical self-understanding. His argument does not differ a lot from that of Marx, or the Marxist claim to scientificity that is constructed in opposition to the social utopianism of anarchists. As for his claim that utopia represents an *erasure of time and space*, it should be admitted that Thomas More, indeed, describes an island cut off from the rest of the world. Solely to consider the description of the utopian society itself, however, is to overlook the bigger narrative in which these accounts are embedded, while simultaneously dismissing the dialectics between the presence of the book as a physical object in the *here* and *now* and the critique utopias always consistently verbalise of their own politically and historically situated presents. In fact, it is hard to imagine a utopian narrative that does not engage with its political and historical context: a utopia that would in that case really be outside of time. R. W. Chambers’ reading of More’s work that ‘[t]he virtues of Heathen Utopia show up by contrast the vices of Christian Europe’ (2011, 169), now appears almost self-evident. Similarly, it would only be highly unusual to disagree with Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) being a critique of gender roles prevalent at the time, and which certainly persist today. It is exactly the all-female society that she imagines that enables us to think about the constructedness of gendered norms in our own present. In the end, it simply seems wrong to think apolitical fiction is even a possibility. It is a contradiction in terms. Isn’t this exactly what Frederic Jameson teaches us when discussing romance? Or, even Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947)?

Approaches seeing the utopian as *the erasure of time and space*, like Wagner's, or merely as wishful thinking, equally forget its characteristic narrative structure of the voyage and it often being a framed narrative (Vieira 2010, 8), as is the case in More's *Utopia* (1516). The temporal and spatial break of the utopian world is only possible because a traveller comes back from distant lands to tell the larger world about his or her discovery, which is either directly described or implicit by the virtue of the story having been written down and published in book form. This is not only the case in utopias that follow the classical plot of its genre, like the satirical *Gulliver's Travels* (1726),¹¹ *Erewhon* (1872), or *News from Nowhere* (1890), but equally in more recent examples, which certainly often complexify the distinction between the dystopian and the utopian, such as Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007). The larger world within the confines of the story, thus, functions according to the habitual time continuum (the present of the story told),¹² whereas hidden communities operate outside of it or implement their own temporalities. Significantly, *Utopia's* closing lines describe its characters' future ruminations over possible alternative societies, which the reader, when having shut the book, is likely to mirror and already has mirrored during the reading process. Hence, the utopian society that is described, indeed, stands outside of space and time within the confines of the fictive, while simultaneously always already upholding a tension with the present by virtue of its existence. Utopias interact with a dual framework: the spatial and temporal framework of the narrative and that of the reading process. It is therefore important to always remember that stories have a medium, whether this be a book, a film, or any other form of artistic expression. Taking *Utopia* as an illustration, the spatial and temporal dynamics of utopias are illustrated in the following figure:

11 It needs to be acknowledged that the question of the genre of *Gulliver's Travels* is more complex. It is classified as an anti-utopian story by Nicole Pohl, but also more generally as a satire of utopia, as Kenneth M. Roemer does. Nonetheless, it imitates the genre's plot structure very accurately, exactly because it is a satirical narrative.

12 This differs from the narratological distinction made between *fabula* and *syuzhet*. Whereas the distinction between the *fabula* and the *syuzhet* is about a rearrangement of a present into a plot structure, the present of the story here referred to can denote both. It is a present *prior* to the distinction becoming relevant, or the present of the narrative.

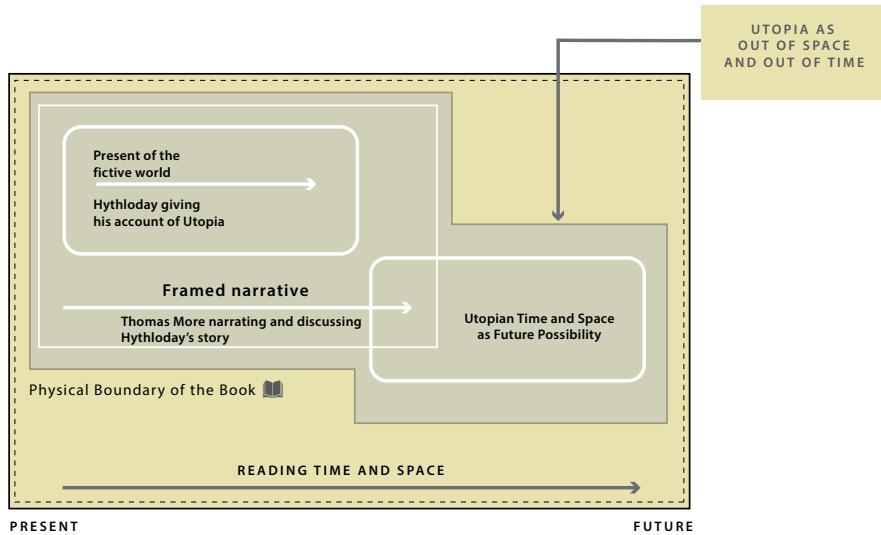


Fig. 1. The spatial and temporal dynamics of utopian literature inside and outside of the text.

The implications of this definition are numerous, as it puts into question most contemporary and past conceptualisations of the genre in relation to its political potential. A question, which, as Jameson also notes, continues to be unresolved (Jameson 2007, xi–xii). The reconsideration of the term here developed, however, precisely contradicts Jameson’s approach, who views the characteristics of the utopian to lie in its ‘radical difference [and] radical otherness’ (Ibid., xii), whereby it needs to form a ‘closure of a system of difference in time, [which would provoke a certain] experience of [a] total formal break and discontinuity’ (Ibid., 231). This would exactly be its political force: its ability to show that a radical break with the habitual order of things is possible (Ibid., 232). What follows from this, is that everything can potentially be utopian as long as it is counter-hegemonic. The reverse is also true. Once a utopia becomes mainstream it is not a utopia anymore, or at least, so claims Herbert Marcuse (Marcuse 1970, 62). This is also the main reason why, according to Jameson, xenophobic and racist groups can equally be motivated by a utopian impulse (Jameson 2007, 8). In the definition that I defend, this possibility is excluded, because their discourse annuls any imagination of the majority of the world’s popula-

tion being black, with white people being reduced to the insignificance of an unknown and unmapped island. Fascist regimes and Neo-Nazism arguably offer a radical break with the normal time continuum, but their images of the future are self-praising, totalising projects, are hardly discursive, and are not intended to form part of a discussion that might give rise to another alternative.

Whereas in the early 2000s, the popularity of utopia was still at a historical low (Levitas 2007, 297), there recently has been a clear resurgence of addressing the political potential of utopianism. Publications besides Jameson's, such as Erik Olin Wright's *Envisioning Real Utopias* (2010), the somewhat earlier work of Ruth Levitas, and the more accessible *Utopia or Bust* (2014) by Benjamin Kunkel have all contributed to diversify our vision of utopia, to recognise its societal importance, and to move beyond the negative shadow that was cast upon it by Karl Popper's notion of the closed society (1962). Rutger Bregman's *Utopia for Realists* (2017) and his journalistic output have equally allowed for more tolerance, or at least helped in making the utopian enter the public debate again. These recent developments, unfortunately, tend to view every manifestation of opposition as utopian, a preference given to those that actively critique neoliberalism or austerity policies. These very broad definitions equally run the danger of seeing the utopian as lying at the foundation of large, small-scale projects, and any social reality alike. Along the same lines, in *The Valences of the Dialectic* (2010), Jameson takes the case of Walmart as a way to envisage a new utopia. The conceptualisation of the utopian here defended resists this blurring of specificity, and rules out the possibility of claiming that neoliberalism was brought about by a utopian impulse or by initial utopian plans, as Hans Achterhuis claims (2015).

If the utopian is here considered in spatio-temporal terms, the definition here given being derived from the phenomenon of the utopian genre, taking into account its typical plot structure and its physical discursive qualities, it remains to be answered how it can be claimed that Exarcheia functions according to these modalities.

The revolutionary posters were everywhere, flaming from the walls
in clean

reds and blues that made the few remaining advertisements look like
daubs of
mud. Down the Ramblas, the wide central artery of the town where
crowds of
people streamed constantly to and from, the loudspeakers were
bellowing
revolutionary songs all day and far into the night. And it was the
aspect of the
crowds that was the queerest thing of all. In outward appearance it
was a town
in which the wealthy classes had practically ceased to exist. Except
for a small
number of women and foreigners there were no 'well-dressed' people
at all.

(Orwell 2000, 3)

Orwell's vibrant description of Barcelona, upon his arrival in December 1936, could very well be taken as an impression of today's Exarcheia. It is an exception on the map. It is an island where colourful posters show international support for militant groups such as the Zapatistas and pro-Kurdish formations, as well as calling upon popular participation in protests. Rather than reds and blues, the dominant colours are red and black: the borders of Exarcheia are visually delineated. The island, the secluded place, or the secret garden are the characteristic geographical features necessary to the utopian plotline. Without a threshold, there is no utopia. Albeit not starkly drawn, you know you have stepped across it, when approaching Exarcheia's centre. This line, however, is not permeable for all. When having a drink at Nosotros, a social centre at the heart of the neighbourhood, which organises lectures, film and documentary screenings, and offers guitar lessons, one of its members told me that the city's riot police is stationed right outside of its borders. Police does not set foot in Exarcheia, but their *modus vivendi* can rapidly take drastic turns. My interlocutor told me that a group of adolescents had recently thrown stones at some policemen right outside of Exarcheia, which provoked a series of riots. He highly disapproved of their behaviour and identified it as something that typically young boys would do. This somewhat unfortunate event, and gendered

interpretation of it,¹³ nonetheless, shows how the blurry delineations of the space can suddenly concretise.

Clearly, the line is political. In Exarcheia, people resist the larger world surrounding it. It does not try to build its own community outside of space and time, as Wagner would have it, but it actively engages with the present by fighting against neoliberal reforms and the austerity measures that have been imposed upon Greece by the so-called Troika.¹⁴ Exarcheia does not only criticise the hegemonic order, but offers alternatives based upon solidarity and which are organised truly democratically. Perhaps this is just what direct action looks like, something David Graeber defines as ‘acting as if one is already free’ which means that anarchists typically do not seek to pressure ‘the government to institute reform’ (2009, 203). Rather, when anarchists disagree with the way social life is organised, they take control themselves. Within this vein of direct action, the previously mentioned squat, K*VOX, for example, also hosts the clinic ADYE.¹⁵ It provides healthcare for those without insurance, or anyone seeking its services. It is run by both unemployed and employed doctors, dentists, and pharmacists. Dental equipment has been donated by retired dentists and drugs are sent from France by a union (*syndicat solidaire*) (Ledeganck 2017, 40). ADYE engages in a form of non-horizontal organisation of care, whereby the type of help offered is not prescribed. As such, patients can come and talk about more general problems they are facing, such as racism or trouble at work (Poulimenakos and Dalakoglou 2017, 181).

In Exarcheia, I also met Elena, a volunteer at Skórós:¹⁶ a shop that identifies as a non-shop, where people can take three items that they need or simply like, every two weeks. Elena, agreeing with Skórós’ general aims, sees the initiative as an alternative to consumerism and she hopes that it will be able to make

13 India Ledeganck’s thesis ‘Domination et autorités au sein d’un mouvement antiautoritaire’ shows how political militancy in Exarcheia is not exempted from gendered social dynamics and behaviours.

14 ECB, IMF, and the European Union Commission. On May 10, 2010, the Troika launched a 110 million bailout loan.

15 Self-organised Health Structure of Exarcheia.

16 Moth.

a transition towards a full non-monetary exchange system. Skórós, just like Nosotros, still pays for rent. Skórós solves this problem by means of donations: a large glass jar stands in the middle of the non-shop. Although its squats do not abide to the rules of property, Exarcheia does not, in its entirety, manage to escape from the time continuum of the world that surrounds it.

The utopian, as previously argued, is not merely typified by its complete separation from the larger world that it describes, or the present it criticises. Its visions of the future are reintroduced into the present by means of book circulation, or the circulation of any other physical medium. Not only does Exarcheia provoke a continuous questioning of everything surrounding it, by virtue of being located in central Athens, the ideas of initiatives like ADYE, K*VOX, and Skórós also travel, and not merely in the form of online obscure forum discussions. Exarcheia has grown in the anarchist imaginary as a possibility for future organisation, or at least as an example of a very desirable achievement. This is perhaps even characteristic of the anarchist movement in itself, or of the radical Left, as Rojava in Syria can be said to function in the same manner, an account of which can be found in the recent publication *Make Rojava Green Again* (2018). Yannis Youlountas' documentary *Ne vivons plus comme des esclaves* (2013), which covers Exarcheia's reaction to post-crisis austerity measures, is widely screened at a great variety of independent film festivals and anarchist bookstores. Exarcheia, thus, is both a lived critique and an example for possible futures that both travels as a story and is also being travelled to.

When talking about Greece and the development of solidarity networks and communities, it should always be remembered that the country is currently facing an economic disaster. An economic disaster, which has worsened over the years exactly because the government did not break with economic orthodoxy. Even if 61% of the Greek people voted against the bailout conditions set by the Troika, Syriza ignored the referendum's outcome and clung to a neoliberal predicament (Kouvélakis 2016, 65). Due to Greece's current state of affairs, which is deplorable to say the least, Exarcheia gained in relevance, seeing a growing number of inhabitants and increased support. Unemployment being on a phenomenal high (Kouvélakis 2018, 25), especially among young adults, employers can undisturbedly exploit their workers.

Exemplary of this case is Grigoris, whom I befriended. He decided that if he could only get four hours of sleep per night, he preferred putting that time and effort into something he believed in, rather than putting money into the pockets of his boss and investing in a company he does not care about. Together with a group of friends, he now runs a cooperative restaurant, at the edge of the neighbourhood, which serves food at an affordable price and regularly organises concerts and events. As such, Exarcheia, or its recent consolidation, can be said to act quite consciously against the specific outcomes of the 2008 crisis. The fact that its community builds an alternative, however, resists in and of itself something a lot more consequential. It resists against everything that underpinned the crash.

So yes, Exarcheia is a counter-hegemonic community, a place of radical otherness, but not a radical otherness that relies upon a closed system. Utopia is defined by a spatio-temporal dynamic of contestation. Exarcheia embodies these dynamics by escaping the rules that make capitals abide by capital, even though this is sometimes not fully realised. This, subsequently, makes it a geographical anchor point that triggers a questioning of the otherwise unquestioned space surrounding it, which is achieved by both visually distinguishing itself from the rest of the city and having become part of a transnational anarchist imagination for a more hopeful future to come.

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TAKING BACK THE CITY:
EXARCHEIA, UTOPIA, AND THE
DEPROLETARIANISATION OF THE
FUTURE

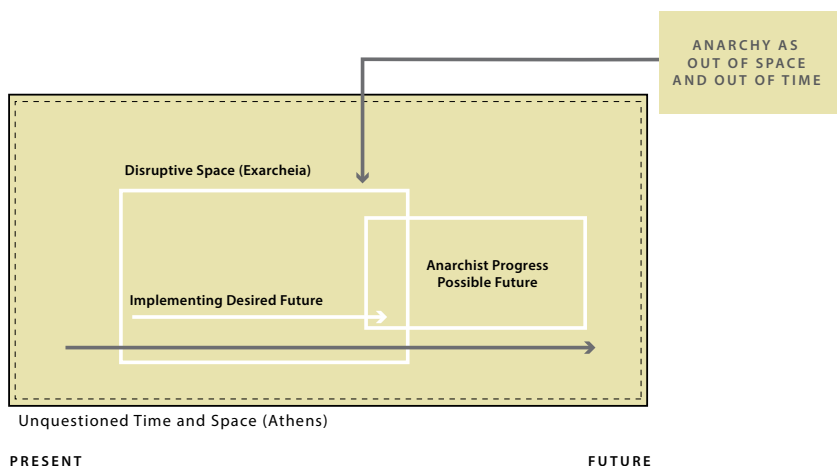


Fig. 2. The spatial and temporal dynamics of Exarcheia inside and outside of its confines.

Finding themselves to be part of the city, and simultaneously outside of it by means of lived resistance, the people of Exarcheia need to, and of course choose to, perpetually act upon anything that overcomes them as a community. What to do when a few boys throw stones at the police? How to react? Based upon the principles of direct democracy, these decisions are typically taken after long meetings with everyone concerned. K*VOX serves this purpose. These processes of horizontal and consensus-based decision-making, and the need for them to exist, downplays any form of possible automation to arise. Nothing is ever going to reproduce itself according to a predictable pattern. So how does the political extend to the material? Of course, most political decisions that are taken already directly related to very practical matters. When waiting for one of my interviewees, I witnessed an assembly that was being called for at Nosotros, after a group of fifty refugees had asked if they could host them for the night. This does not only demand an opinion to be expressed; it requires the reorganisation of the whole building and its cultural programme. It is exactly this consistent need for people to collectively participate in the material organisation of life that necessitates and perpetuates an intergenerational transmission of knowledge and *disautomatisation*. Challenging the spatio-temporal continuum of capital, everyone needs to put their finger in the pie and also know how to make it.

Exarcheia as a utopian space, thus, relies on the knowledge and skills of people to create a more desirable future in accordance with their own ideals. Of course, this does not only hold true for non-digital urban *pharmaka*. The digital is unthinkable as constituted by completely separate entities from other forms of technology. Traditionally, the anarchist movement primarily relies on their self-run printing studios for the dissemination of information, pamphlets, and books, which is still a transmitted know-how, but other media are also increasingly used: film, websites, forums and blogs. All these media are mastered without the intervention of professionals or professional service providers. The anarchist movement uses film in the manner of the amateur. This is something Stiegler is particularly interested in. Whereas the toxicity of *pharmaka* resides in their opacity, in their being black boxes, getting behind the camera would enable us to re-

discover not only the medium, to master the technology, but also to grasp contemporary ‘industrial mediation of experience’ (Crogan 2013, 118). Yannis Youlountas’ practice as a film maker, but also an artist, and writer, is a perfect example of this process. Not being schooled as a documentary maker, Youlountas has now produced two films and is currently finishing a third one. Taking back control in the city means taking back control of its material aspects, its *pharmaka*, whether they are digital or non-digital.

Just like utopias should not simply be understood as visions of perfect worlds, Exarcheia is certainly not an ideal place. Nonetheless, it functions as a utopia in its temporal and spatial relation to the urban fabric whereby it counters the possibility of *proletarianisation* to arise. Perhaps it would have been sufficient to say that a place like Exarcheia relies upon collectively shared skills and knowledge, or *savoir-faire*, which it actively needs to transmit, thus creating *long-circuits* of knowledge, to sustain itself. Otherwise, it would dissolve again into the capital driven by capital. If Exarcheia did not function as a utopian space, however, the *deproletarianisation* of urban life could not take place. The cartographic break it creates—both temporally and spatially—transforms the unquestionable into a subject of discussion outside of the neighbourhood’s confines making Exarcheia utopian, which has here been defined in terms of the literary phenomenon taking into account both an outside of the text, or its circulation as an object, and that very circulation as reflected within the literary text itself, as illustrated by the last book of *Utopia*, which undoubtedly influenced the genre’s highly-recognisable key features. It is the performative act of reading and discussion that brings about change within utopian narratives, a fictive process actualised by virtue of the physical existence of the book form as a technology, but a technology that always counters the negative effects of its pharmacological nature due to its mirroring-effect. This is exactly the dynamics that Exarcheia inhabits as a diversely mediated story within the anarchist community, demanding not only that its inhabitants actively recreate their communities and rely upon the sharing of knowledge so as to take back control over the material organisation of life, but equally enabling a further rethinking of our own engagement with our material environment, a rethinking that transgresses the boundaries of

the Athenian stronghold.

The utopian, as has here been argued, is defined by a dual existence of an inside and an outside world, between which the accounts of alternatives travel to and from in material form, and which relies upon a break in hegemonic spatio-temporal dynamics, a break that the inhabitants of Exarcheia practice in their engagement with their physical environment. Consequently, this would also mean that if we are to *deproletarianise* the future, we need to oppose the spatio-temporal dynamics of capital, or the temporality that governs our mediated selves, a problem that Stiegler's philosophy doesn't address as he places the locus of change on too individualistic a level and not on the collective,¹⁷ as is the case in Exarcheia. It is by virtue of actualising the utopian that Exarcheia *deproletarianises* communal existence and hereby demands that we reconsider the way Stiegler seeks to implement his philosophy. Without a break with the capital that abides by capital, there can be no *disautomation*.

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HOW DO THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE INTERACT IN POST-3.11 JAPAN? EXAMINING URBAN UTOPIA IN THE SF MANGA *COPPELION*

Maja Vodopivec

‘In a process of structural repetition, an event may at times also appear to be repeated. One should not be swayed by the similarity of historical events, however, for it is only the structure that recurs.’

(Karatani 2004, vii)

INTRODUCTION: IS THIS MEMORY’S PRIVILEGED TIME?

Over the last couple of decades, and particularly since the tragic events of March 11, 2011¹ and its aftermath, discourses of the future have loomed large in contemporary Japan. Concerns abound, whether in terms

1 On March 11, 2011, in the Pacific Ocean east from Tohoku region, the strongest-ever recorded earthquake in Japan, of 9.0 magnitude, caused a tsunami wave of up to 40 metres in height that hit the east coast of Japan. The earthquake triggered not only a tsunami wave but also a nuclear accident which caused a high death toll and incommensurable environmental damage. The number of victims reached almost 16,000 and there are still about 2500 missing. More than 200,000 residents from the Tohoku area were displaced. This was largely due to the meltdown at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant caused by the tsunami. The accident that crippled the nuclear power plant has been characterised as a level-7 nuclear accident, which is the same level as that of the Chernobyl (Ukraine) nuclear accident from 1986.

of demographic decline, perceptions of social breakdown, expanded economic inequalities, or nuclear/ecological destruction.² The triple earthquake-tsunami-nuclear disaster undoubtedly represents a turning point in Japan's modern history, comparable only to the country's defeat in the Second World War. While the nuclear disaster is still ongoing and poses a threat with unforeseeable consequences, it has accelerated a number of revisionist trends in Japanese politics and reopened debates about what the future of Japan may look like.

We live in a time when generational memories are waning due to the passage of time and a rapid speed of the technical modernisation (Huysen 1995, 3), and in which that same memory is in an 'in-between state in which the last light of the day may still play out its ultimate marvels' (Huysen 1995, 3). Huysen calls it 'memory's privileged time' (Huysen 1995, 3). The key concern of this chapter will be historical memory in postwar Japan and its representation in a mega-city once dreamt of as an urban utopia, such as Tokyo. The current era is characterised by a consolidation of the emergent world market (Jameson 2005, xii) and came after the globalisation era, which we might say was 'terminally ill with amnesia' (Huysen 1995, 1). Through reading a representation of the nuclear catastrophe in Tokyo in the sci-fi manga *Coppelion* (first published serially between 2008 and 2016), written and illustrated by Tomonori Inoue, this chapter will explore possibilities for new forms of political agency (Jameson 2005, xii) and grounds for alternative imagining of the future allowed after 3.11. This chapter will thus examine how politics have been constituted in Japan after 3.11 by re-reading a pre-3.11 SF comic that foreshadowed an irradiated future. *Coppelion*, a futuristic story about a 2016 nuclear catastrophe in Tokyo's Odaiba district triggered by an earthquake, surprisingly speaks to the post-3.11 condition in multiple ways.

The turn of the millennium saw an upsurge of futuristic imaginations in the US (e.g. *Blade Runner* [1982] or *Total Recall* [1990]) and in Japan (e.g.

2 I presented on this topic for the first time at the 14th International Conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies at the University of Ljubljana. The interdisciplinary panel 'No Future? Future and Subjectivity in Contemporary Japan' was conceived and organised by Mark Pendleton, University of Sheffield, to whom I am indebted for helping me to start working on this topic.

The Ghost in the Shell [1995]) that suggest more to us about the ways that these cultures 'imagine their future and deploy their memories than political projections about a new world order or a partnership for peace' (Huysen 1995, 2). While remembering is anthropologically given, it is always related to a specific temporality and to problems of its representation. It is in this context that I will utilise the SF genre and an urban utopian narrative such as that of *Coppelion* as a representational form of the collages of the pre-and-postwar experience of the Japanese people. The SF genre is typically and uniquely characterised by an explicit intertextuality (Jameson 2005, 2) and its narrative is essentially based on a reality principle and 'made up of bits and pieces of the here and now' (Jameson 2005, xiii). This principle means nothing else but that our imaginations are 'hostages to our own mode of production (and perhaps to whatever remnants of past ones it has preserved' (Jameson 2005, xiii). Suvin calls it a literature of cognitive estrangement where the 'differing strangers are a mirror to man just as the differing country is a mirror for his world' (Suvin 1979, 4). Suvin based his theorisation on the work of Brecht and his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* or the attitude of estrangement, expressed in his *Short Organon for the Theatre* as 'a representation which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar' (Suvin 1979, 6). It is through the study of this underlying attitude and formal framework of the SF genre that this chapter will attempt to answer a revolving question about a paradoxical situation in which the future may be imagined only if we deeply associate it with the past (Jameson 2005, 4).

Paula Iovene in *Tales of Futures Past* (2014) examines visions of the future in post-1949 Chinese literature, and distinguishes two different, though related, notions of the future. The first is understood as a destination and is conflated with the notions of progress and a strong nation, while the second is anticipation defined as the 'imaginative site for open-ended search for new forms of emancipation' (Iovene 2014, 3). Iovene insightfully claims that it is this second notion of anticipation that 'dislodges the common identification of futurity with hegemonic visions of progress' (Iovene 2014, 4). It is in complementing those two notions of destination and anticipation, Iovene writes, that we can enrich our understanding of the rela-

tionship between the literary texts and historical contexts (Iovene 2014, 4). The aim of reading Japanese history through a science-fiction comic that in a surprising way tells us what may come next is a part of a popular reconceptualisation of the past, present and futurity. It provides us with an opportunity to trace the overlooked continuities in Japanese modern, wartime, and postwar history, and also helps us scrutinise their complexities and the way they are being experienced (Iovene 2014, 5).

In this chapter I will explore an SF representation of a nuclear disaster in Tokyo, which became a forgotten ‘ghost city,’ and argue that it is deeply related to a contested postwar problematic that is increasingly discussed, owing to the nation’s recent experience of the 70th anniversary of its defeat in World War II. It is in the context of Japan’s open aspirations to become a full-fledged military contributor to a new world order that the manga draws parallels with World War II, and before that, with the inter-war period of 1920s and 1930s Japan, as also with a postwar urban utopia imagined by the famous *Metabolist Group* of architects represented by Kenzo Tange. Framed within the contexts of the nuclear, science, modernity, and urban utopianism, the manga represents a criticism of a commodification of lives in times when the notion of the progress of humanity is under the dark shadow of a resurrected past that threatens to repeat itself. At the end, the chapter will point to the existence of a vital and energising possibility and towards an alternative politics.

THE POSTWAR HISTORY OF JAPAN AND ITS URBAN UTOPIA

Seventy years after Japan’s defeat, the given history of the postwar period in Japan is anything but a uniform understanding of the nation’s past. ‘Severed history, radical discontinuity, a new beginning’ (of the ‘modernity that went awry’) were the ‘fictions of the postwar period that emerged from cataclysmic war,’ writes Gluck (Gluck 1993, 70). Overnight, the nation ‘couched itself in terms of democracy and peace’ (Gluck 1993, 69). Sociologist Masanori Nakamura writes about an unfinished history or a lack of historical closure as Japan never properly addressed the issue of war responsibility (Nakamura 1994, 19). Furthermore, the postwar history of Japan has been complicated by the high rate of economic growth,

renewal of the Japan-US Security Treaty and the oil-shock in 1973. Nakamura offers a periodisation of Japanese postwar history as follows: ‘the age of its formation (*seiritsu*)’ (1945–60), ‘the age of its fixation (*teichaku*)’ (1960–73), ‘the age of fluctuation (*yuragi*)’ (1973–90) and ‘the age of demise (*shūen*)’ (1990–2000). Mita Munesuke (1995) sees similar phases of the postwar history rotating around the axis of a confrontation with the reality, and names the first phase (1945–60) as ‘the age of ideals (*risō no jidai*).’ The following two phases Mita sees as ‘the age of dreams (*yume no jidai*)’ (1960–mid ‘70s) and ‘the age of fiction/fabrication (*kyokō no jidai*)’ (mid ‘70s–1990) respectively. Ōsawa Masachi (2008) revises this classification, and while considering postwar Japanese history to rotate on the axes of occupations and high economic growth, distinguishes three periods: the period of ideals (*risō no jidai*) (1945–70), the period of fiction/fabrication (*kyokō no jidai*) (1970–95) and the period of impossibility (*fukanōsei no jidai*) in which Japan still resides (1995 onwards).

With the defeat in 1945, Japan’s urban landscape was devastated not only through the two atomic destructions but also through extensive long-term air raids throughout 1944–5. In times following, the initial goals of the Allied Powers’ occupation forces to democratise and demilitarise Japan were replaced with those of transforming Japan into a successful showcase of capitalism in Asia and of preventing the rise of revolutionary forces. As Koschmann puts it: ‘...SCAP’s ‘reverse-course’ democracy became no more than a principle used to legitimize the established political order, a dogma employed to protect Japan’s already “democratized” legal and political systems from progressive forces and revolutionary movements’ (1996, 242). Within these changed circumstances, the Japanese urban landscape had also been drastically and rapidly changing. In 1958, a new architectural movement, called Metabolism, appeared in Tokyo and was mostly organised around the architectural studio of Kenzo Tange. The Metabolists had a specific vision of a mega-city, which was to reconcile the rapid economic growth of a country with the preservation of a natural landscape (Pernice 2007). Developing self-contained megacities was seen by these architects as an alternative to modern urban planning from the 1920s and 30s. Tokyo Bay, the place where the nuclear power plant is lo-

cated in the comic analysed here, had been a ‘laboratory for development of new ideas since 1958’ (Pernice 2007, 259). The late 1950s was already a period when Japan was clearly managing to reconstruct its economy and industry, which had received its first impetus for providing procurements for the US military during the Korean War (1950–53). Already in 1955, Japan’s GNP had a 9% annual growth. This was also a period when the Japanese government promoted the development of industrial complexes along the reclaimed land and landfills of the Pacific Belt and in tidal bays throughout the Tokaidō region, in order to connect them more efficiently through newly-built infrastructure. Therefore, the newly-built factories could expand at a low cost (Pernice 2007, 260). The capital city of Tokyo was a specific case. Having no comprehensive city policy before the war, Tokyo Metropolis got its first development plan in 1958. The issue of reclaimed land in Tokyo Bay became an especially contested one (Pernice 2007, 261). Although the bay land was attractive for exploitation since the Meiji (1868–1912) modernisation, only in the later 1950s did it become the central spot for the construction of facilities characteristic of accelerated economic growth: large factories, gas and power plants, sewerage facilities, central markets, etc. (Pernice 2007, 261). The proximity of the coast was important in terms of not only providing a space for the discharge of waste, but also for the import of raw materials and export of finished products. A number of architectural solutions, especially for residential buildings, had been proposed at the time by the Metabolism group. These included structures such as floating platforms, tower-type housing, ‘tree-type’ and ‘bamboo-type’ buildings, which would all contribute towards creating marine coastal cities. The solutions by Metabolist architects rejected in their entirety any traditional materials or designs, instead imagining cities which would have nothing in common with previous urban environments and be completely based on new technologies (Pernice 2007, 263). In April 1959, two architects published a plan for Tokyo Bay (where Odaiba—a site of the science fiction manga *Coppelion*, to be discussed in this chapter—is also located) where they envisaged a ‘frantic hyper-concentration of industrial and residential functions typified by kombinatos’ (Pernice 2007, 263). This concrete plan, just like another one put forward by a private lobby group created in July 1959 by the Electric Power Central Research Insti-

tute, called the 'Neo-Tokyo Plan,' was never implemented. However, it created the ground for many large-scale projects to renew Tokyo, especially in time for the 1964 Summer Olympic Games, which the city was supposed to host—a fact already revealed in 1959. At the time, Tokyo had a number of urban problems that needed to be solved in order to demonstrate to the world that it had overcome its devastated and devastating past and was able to compete equally with the most advanced nations. For many, the 1964 Olympics were one of the turning points in Japan's postwar history in terms of forgetting its inconvenient past and 'turning towards the future' (Igarashi 2000). Nevertheless, according to Igarashi, the 'attempts in the 1960s to construct a more modern, rational space in Tokyo could not be materialized without completing unfinished projects of the prewar regime' (Igarashi 2000, 153). The project of de-criminalisation and sanitisation of Tokyo was thoroughly conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police's strict measures (Igarashi 2000, 153). Tokyo and other Japanese cities were rapidly transformed into modern, clean cities, without the 'smells of the past' or signs of not reaching standards of the 'civilized world.' Even when its inhabitants were reminded of past destruction (as in the case of the movie *Godzilla/ Gojira* [1954], where Godzilla was a metaphor for the nuclear destruction that emerged after the Bikini Atoll nuclear weapons testing by the US and the March 1954 accident with the irradiated fishermen of the Lucky Dragon No. 5 boat, also contaminated by the Bikini Atoll nuclear testing), the symbols of the past destruction 'were reduced to a benign cultural sign in the prosperity of 1960s Japan' (Igarashi 2000, 154). A striking example of the unfinished architectural war projects has been described by Lisa Yoneyama (1999) in relation to the architectural design for Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park by the famous Japanese architect Kenzō Tange. The design was a resurrected, never realised, war-time winning design by Tange for the grandiose Shintoist memorial zone to be built at the foot of Mt. Fuji (Yoneyama 1999, 1).

COPPELION'S GENERATION

What makes analysing *Coppelion* justified and insightful in the above mentioned socio-historical context is the fact that it creates a reflective

space for historicising the experience of the postwar period in the broader context of modernity, its ‘engine of the future – technological development’ (Huyssen 1995, 9) and the urban space as a topos of the former two. *Coppelion* narrates the story of three girls studying in high school, who were genetically engineered so that they would not be damaged by radioactivity, and who were sent to Tokyo after the city was contaminated by a nuclear disaster. The place of the action in the comic is Odaiba, an artificial hi-tech entertainment island in Tokyo Bay. The postwar history problem in this context appears primarily as a problem of the identity of the millennial generation, which not only did not experience the war but was born during the first years of the post-Cold War era that used to be (in)famous for its belief in Francis Fukuyama’s ‘end of history,’ characterised by a neo-liberal dream of the universal spread of democracy and economic progress.

Nevertheless, the millennial or *Y (gama)* generation have increasingly become aware of the ‘perpetual theorizing of the defeat debate (*eizoku haisen ron*)’ (Narita 2015), especially under ‘Abeism’ which saw its consolidation after the triple March 11 catastrophe. The current government led by Abe is aggressively trying to escape from the ‘postwar regime’ to get to its closure, and in the process of that transmutation (*henshitsu*) inevitably degenerating into new undemocratic forms of oppression, with such events as the adoption of the right to collective self-defence and the restarting of the nuclear power plants. The social, cultural and historic circumstances in which this generation has had to grasp what’s going on around them are highly complex and cannot be fully understood without resorting to mass-culture expressions developed during the long postwar (and the broader Shōwa) era.³ Although this paper will focus only on *Coppelion*, in which the discourse is radically different from rightist propaganda and manga without much nuance, it is appropriate to make a digression with rightist manga in terms of its impact on younger generations. The fact that

3 The Shōwa era is named after the Shōwa Emperor Hirohito, whose reign was the longest in Japan’s history: from 1926–89. During this period, which by no means can be understood as a unified one, Japan underwent tremendous changes, and in its postwar period has largely forgotten the first thirty (inconvenient) years of Shōwa. For this, see Gluck, Carol. 1990. ‘The Idea of Showa.’ *Daedalus* 119, no.3: 1–26.

such readings are often ‘their first reading experience, means simply that it will produce future consequences that cannot be easily ignored’ (Iwasaki and Richter 2008, 528).

It is important to critically think about the problems of postwar history as those of a ‘rising generation,’ because it is this generation that will have to deal with the serious consequences of Japan’s postwar history. The disaster in the Fukushima dai ichi nuclear power plant is only the most extreme example within a myriad of issues in Japan’s postwar history. It therefore becomes of vital importance to understand how the millennial generation (already the second or third ‘heiwa-boke’ generation that takes peace for granted)⁴ experiences the mentioned social demise that started at the beginning of the 1990s, and why and how this generation reflects on the War, on defeat and on postwar Japan. Will this generation be able to break away from the continuous ‘system of irresponsibility’ (Sakai 2011) of Japan’s government(s) in the inter-war, war and postwar era, as also its ‘successes,’ and to conceptualise the future? (Ōguma 2011) According to Eiji Ōguma (2011), if they do not, ‘neither Tōhoku regeneration nor Japan’s future can be secured.’

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In *Coppelion*, this generation is represented by the young members of the special unit of JGSDF, girls and boys who are technological experiments and clones immune to radiation. After a mysterious and sudden rise in radiation levels and the detection of distress signals from a handful of survivors, the unit is dispatched to the abandoned Tokyo. Twenty years after the Odaiba nuclear power plant’s disaster had caused a complete evacuation of the metropolis, the unit dispatched to rescue the survivors faces unexpected problems—inside the city but also with the government now located in Kyoto.

THE TEMPORALITIES OF COPPELION

Undoubtedly, the end of the Cold War and the post-Cold War era did not leave too much space for the imagination of the future in Japan or else-

4 In Japanese, it is popularly called ‘heiwa-boke,’ which literally translates as ‘peace induced cluelessness.’

where. The diachronic structure of the temporality of modernity and the postwar era has ended and given way to a more synchronic and cyclical time. The phenomenon of an atrophy of historical consciousness (historical amnesia) became a symptom of this change in temporality, rather than its cause (Huysen 1995, 6). The modern notion of the future within an asynchronous structure of past-present-future⁵ had collapsed in a dramatic fashion similar to that of the hotel called 'Utopia' at the beginning of the *Coppelion* series. The discussions of temporality, as Jameson points out and as this chapter will demonstrate, always 'bifurcate into the two paths of existential experience (in which questions of memory seem to predominate) and of historical time with its urgent interrogations of the future' (Jameson 2005, 7).

We live in times when technological development 'continues at its accelerated pace ushering us into a world of information networks that function entirely according to principles of synchronicity while providing us with multiple images and narratives of the non-synchronous' (Huysen 1995, 9). The fact that *Coppelion* foreshadowed a range of issues such as nuclear disaster, ghostly towns, nuclear waste, forgotten people in irradiated zones or the government's intent to dispatch the JSDF overseas, can be explained vis-a-vis the meaningful coincidences and synchronicity of events that are only seemingly in a non-causal relationship or are 'un-anticipated' (*sôteigai*); this is similar to the way in which the Japanese government and TEPCO described the situation in the aftermath of the 3.11. *Coppelion* in its plot evokes representations of a number of different historical periods, (Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa, Heisei) including Japanese mythology and its national body (*kokutai*) ideology. I will argue along Huysen's line (1995, 9) that these multiple images, narratives and a synchronous memory boom could potentially be a 'healthy sign of contestation: a contestation of the informational hyperspace and an expression of the basic human need to live in extended structures of temporality, however they may be organized.'

5 For more on the change of temporality, see Koselleck, Reinhart. 2004. *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press; Hartog, François. 2016. *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.

THE SCIENTIFIC IN THE MANGA

Although arguably manga or Japanese comics have origins in much older forms of graphic art than Hokusai's series of woodblock sketches published in 1819, the first manga boom happened in the early Shōwa era (1926–89) which was also the time when the terms *manga* and *manga-ka* came into everyday use (Kinsella 2000, 20). Besides some rare early literary critiques of manga (Rosenbaum 2013, 15), the manga phenomenon did not attract much scholarly attention until the second boom experienced by the manga publishing industry in the late 1950s, when the industry saw a steady increase to reach its peak in the 1990s. Clearly, the origins of the growth of the mass print industry coincided with the inter-war and postwar modernisations of Japan. An analysis of the importance of manga as a medium would venture into wholly different ground and will therefore not be discussed in depth on this occasion. What seems more relevant here is the science-fiction genre classification of this particular manga and its obvious connection to the science discourse. The genre itself as a highly intertextual form contributes to the specific content of this manga, which is essentially related to historical discourses of science and modernisation in Japan (Yamanouchi et al. 2010).

Back in the early 1920s, the genre of popular science magazines emerged as a part of both the promotion of science and technology after World War I and a part of Japanese inter-war mass consumer culture (popular science culture or *tsūzoku kagaku bunka*). The publication of popular science magazines, such as *Kagaku gahō* (Science Illustrated), *Kodomo no kagaku* (Children's Science), *Shōnen kurabu* (Boys' Club) and *Kingū* (King) was part of the Taishō liberal education movement (Mizuno 2008, 143). Harada Mitsuo (1890–1977), a scientist with a background in agriculture, botany, genetics and embryology, was involved in all three magazines. He believed that Japanese elementary and middle schools neglected a 'sense of wonder' that is essential to learning science. This sense of wonder, according to Harada, is to be promoted through the utilisation of simpler language with readings of kanji and through many illustrations and pictures. Takahashi Gentarō, who organised many science exhibitions in that period, paid special attention to visual entertainment (Mizuno 2008, 147).

The science was ‘wrapped in a colourful cover and made available for mass consumption’ (Mizuno 2008, 145). The 1923 great Kantō earthquake only increased the sales of these magazines that appeared ‘at the intersection of *misemono* entertainment, capitalism and imperialism’ (Mizuno 2008, 148). These magazines made almost no reference to the socio-economic circumstances of the time and that is why cultural critic Yoshimi Shunya calls it the *misemono* spectacle (Mizuno 2008, 220). Rare exceptions were articles such as Maedagawa Kōichirō’s ‘Puroreteriaato to kagaku – bungakutekini mite’ (Kagaku gahō) in June 1930, which argued that the most important task for ‘today’s human beings is to promote the development of social sciences so that the fruits of natural sciences could be used by the humans in a most rational manner’ (Mizuno 2008, 221). Such criticism is the leitmotiv of *Coppelion*—what becomes of the highest importance for the high-school students who were cloned to be resistant to radiation is to think and act in a human way and to resist the state that requests them not to do so in the name of the ‘nation’s interest.’

Mizuno terms the belief that science and technology are the most important for the future of a nation ‘scientific nationalism’ (Mizuno 2008, 181). In *Coppelion*, both the chief secretary of cabinet Ōgai and the Prime Minister Natsume repeatedly emphasise that the technology of creating Coppelion clones is in the utmost security interest of the nation and that its survival (among other imperialistic powers) depends on acquiring it. We can also see that scientific nationalism is by no means unique to Japan. This belief is what firmly established the postwar ‘military-industrial-academic complex’ against which the generation of 1968 in Japan had unsuccessfully protested.

THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRATIC SUBJECTIVITY

Coppelion is an allegorical narrative that attempts to grasp the ‘aporias’ of modern Japanese history. The narrative is replete with names of characters such as Prime Minister Natsume (obvious allegory of Natsume Sōseki, the famous Japanese Modernist writer), the backbone of his government Chief Cabinet Secretary Ōgai, or Mishima, the commander of the JGSDF’s 3rd division, who will eventually decide to support his unit’s

rebellion in Tokyo and de facto undertake a coup d'état in order to save the survivors in Tokyo. It goes without saying that these characters are allegories of the discursive space of Japan's modernity that are 'now left behind to live as anachronisms' (Karatani 2004, 75) in the twenty-first cyber century. A theoretical parallel in the typology of these characters can be drawn with the typology of characters in some novels of Ōe Kenzaburō and Haruki Murakami, of whose characters Karatani writes that they are *nameless* since they are names of certain *types* rather than of individualities (Karatani 2004, 88). While the question of names is related to Sartre's distinction of *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself*, Karatani writes that the question of proper names points to something else and something more serious (Karatani 2004, 88). The *nameless* indicate an eliminated individuality of the icons of Japanese modernity in literature (Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai). It goes without saying that thus eliminating the individuality of the figures created to epitomise the most distinguishing feature of 'modern literature'—'appearance of characters with ordinary names'—is a highly problematic move (Karatani, 2004, 89). It is an allegory of Japan's modernity as a whole and more specifically the question of the modern Japanese subject. However, the epistemological status of the names, in the words of Hobbes, suggests that 'proper names bring to mind one thing only; universals recall any one of many' (Karatani 2004, 89). The vice-principal of the Coppelions (which are special unit of the JSDF), Mishima, is an obvious allegorical play on another famous Japanese writer, Yukio Mishima, and this allegory is much more complex and difficult to interpret.

THE SPATIAL DIMENSION IN THE COPPELION

Coppelion refers to a number of spaces such as the 'Utopia Hotel' in the Fuchu district of Tokyo, the underground '109 Shelter', Fuchu's racecourse, Tokyo University, the Diet, Yasukuni street, Tokyo Bay, Odaiba, Haneda, the replica of a utopian village from Taishō era (1912–26), a submarine, etc. All these discursive places indicate a number of experiences that have been repressed in the Shōwa period's history of Japan (1926–89).

While it is pretty obvious that the name of the shelter for the survivors in Tokyo evokes the '109' popular tower department store for youth in

Shibuya and represents an existing irony of present consumerism, it is also an ironical take on the problems of shelters and residences that became so transparent after the Hanshin-Awaji quake of 1995. This earthquake, which was of about the same magnitude as the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, has also been seen as a ‘wake-up call highlighting the disjuncture between the disaster countermeasures and realities of disaster,’ because many argue that Japan for several decades has not been struck with a destructive natural catastrophe only by pure coincidence—there was no such strong earthquake since 1923.

In modern Japan, the communal body of the village has changed to the company in a capitalist society and its other institutional formations. In *Coppelion*, the artificial Taishō era-style village/shelter that the survivors had created coincides spatially with Shibuya’s ‘109’ department store. The temporalities also coincide—the unhappy (and inconvenient) past is subdued to let bygones be (‘mizu ni nagasu’) and the possibility of future disaster is not considered, having the attention focused on daily affairs and enjoyment (Katō 2007, 263). The same logic is well illustrated with the saying—tomorrow’s wind will blow (‘asu wa asu no kaze ga fuku’). Maybe, Katō writes, there will be an earthquake or an economic ‘bubble’ will burst. If the building is built with standards to survive the earthquake, we will think about it when the earthquake happens. In such a case, the person in charge will deeply bow his/her head and apologise from the bottom of his/her heart (Katō 2007, 235). Furthermore, Katō distinguishes two types of escape from the ‘now’ and ‘here.’ Escape from the ‘now’ can be an escape to the past or to the future. An escape to the future is a kind of utopia since it means transcending the social structure and culture and imagining a future based on ideas (of humanity, for example, and not of profit) (Katō 2007, 244). As for the escape from space, Katō distinguishes travel and exile—travel was banned in pre-modern Japan for almost three centuries, while exile was rare in both pre-modern and modern times. Mori Ōgai, according to Katō, missed his ‘chance from dreams’ to stay in Germany with the woman he loved. Instead, he chose to fulfill his duties towards the military.

It is not hard to guess that in the futuristic story of *Coppelion*, once another earthquake happened, and once water started entering the shelter, the

survivors could not believe this was happening but were convinced by the Coppelions that they had no choice but to leave their seemingly idyllic retro-futuristic village. Exit from the shelter for the survivors meant deathly exposure to the radiation, so the Coppelion rescue team, in agreement with the vice-principal Mishima, decided to do everything possible to get the survivors out of the shelter and out of Tokyo. Mishima decided to conduct an actual coup by abducting Prime Minister Natsume in Kyoto and turning the direction of the submarine towards Haneda in Tokyo on the same day that a number of Japanese aircraft and soldiers were supposed to depart for Kazakhstan to intervene militarily in order to bring peace to the region.

The ‘Taishōesque’ discourse is a representation of a transitional period of promises and their failures in modern Japanese history, often compared by cultural anthropologists and historians to the period of the 1970s (Karatani 2004, 70). The Taishō era, 1912-1926, was a relatively calm period externally and internally and the period when the discourse of community (kyōdōtai-ron) took precedence over the discourse of the state (and Emperor) (Karatani 2004, 69). The short era saw the creation of several utopian villages such as Mushanokōji Saneatsu’s Atarashiki-mura, Arishima Takeo’s communal farm and Miyazawa Kenji’s Rasuchijin Association. Both Mushanokōji and Arishima came from wealthy families but were inspired with the ideas of Tolstoy but also by the anarchist ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin to create utopian farm villages. Both were also members of the Shirakaba-ha (‘White Birch’) literary circle, which published a journal, *Shirakaba*, active from 1910-1923. In 1923, after The Great Kantō Earthquake, the journal was discontinued and the liberalism and idealism of the Taishō era were increasingly severely curtailed by the state. This social experimentation during the Taishō era was possible, as Karatani argues, only because Japan in that period was temporarily released from external political pressures. The destiny of the ‘109 Shelter’ in *Coppelion* resembles the destiny of Mushanokōji Saneatsu’s Atarashiki-mura (‘New Village’) which was flooded due to a dam construction project.

The villages of the era were elite intellectual projects with social, political and economic visions. Coppelion’s story is an expansion of this vision to

offer solutions to the old problems of mass consumption, social inequality and exploitation but also some contemporary phenomena, such as the problem of an ageing society and villages that lost their meaning during Japan's economic boom of the 1960s (Ōguma 2013).

GENDER AND BEYOND (THE 'UNCANNY POSTWAR')

The Taishō era was also an era that saw the rise of mass-movements and a movement for women's suffrage. A similar movement would occur at the end of the 1960s. *Zenkyōto* students protested from a sense of deep anxiety caused by Japan's unprecedented economic growth against the universities poisoned by industrial society and 'sites of soulless mass-production' (Ōguma 2015, 12). The students desperately sought for a valid political subject. Those students were the first generation that did not experience the war (most of the protesters during the Anpo struggle against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960 *had* first-hand memories of the war) and they felt an existentialist crisis of identity and a sense of hopelessness about their future amidst the rapid industrial growth (Ōguma 2015). In his 1968 study, Takahashi Akira observed that students condemned the universities as 'a subcontracted mechanism in service to the forces contributing to the manpower policies of imperialistic monopoly-capitalists,' or even 'finishing schools for human robots' (quoted in Ōguma 2015, 12). The activists, according to Ōguma (2015) were even violently protesting and fighting the police in order to prove their existence (*jitsuzon*) and the quality of being human. The activists who battled police at Haneda Airport in 1967 proclaimed: 'We are showing the police we exist. We are showing them that we are human' (Ōguma 2015, 11).

At around the same time, the women's liberation movement (*ūman ribu*) sought to affirm a new self and a new kind of feminine subjectivity. *Coppelion* is about three main female characters, all with different abilities and personalities. The story raises some questions that have to do with the problems of female subjectivity and the use of violence—prominent topics within the *ūman ribu*. Although the *ribu* in general was not against the use of violence, it was largely rejected by its activists (Shigematsu 2012, 55). It is this tradition of thought that *Coppelion* is building through the character of

Ibara Naruse, the leader of the rescue team. She rejects violence even if there seems to be no other resort. The masculinist and militaristic tendencies in the manga are explicitly juxtaposed with feminine and non-violent attitudes.

1970 is another watershed year, not only because of Mishima's spectacular death but also because of the end of *Zenkyōtō*'s existence (Karatani 2004, 82). In 1969, Mishima addressed the students of *Zenkyōtō* at the University of Tokyo and criticised them for not being ready to die for their ideals (Shigematsu 2012, 53). A motif of sacrifice for ideals will be prominent in one of the most dramatic moments of *Coppelion*—when someone needs to sacrifice themselves in order to save all the other survivors in the shelter. The figure of Mishima, Shigematsu writes, will haunt some men of the New Left and demonstrate how political identifications cross over from the Left to the Right (Shigematsu 2012, 53). Tanaka Mitsu, the leader of the *ribu*, writes that the men of the Left 'responded to the incident with a kind of envy, because Mishima had outdone them by committing an act they wished they could do' (Shigematsu 2012, 53).

The generation Y of *Coppelion* asks very similar existentialist questions throughout the series: are we humans or robots? Should we eat *onigiri* and other delicious human food or should we inject the synthetically produced nutrients that we need? How come the robots cry and feel for others? Should we let the survivors affected by radiation die or should we offer them a limited drug? And finally, should we listen to the authorities or should we act as our *human* consciousness obliges us? The circumstances in which these dilemmas are posed are further complicated with the gender dimension of *Coppelion*'s narrative, in which rejection, the feeling of being perceived as a doll (an element that the *Coppelia*⁶ is also alluding to) emerges as one of the most prominent themes. According to Norihiro Katō (2010), this 'kawaii' or the phenomenon of cuteness, miniatures and doll-like features in Japanese

6 Coppelion is a life-sized doll made by Dr. Coppelius from A.T.F. Hofmann's stories 'Sandman' and 'The Doll' (comes from the Greek: κοπελιά = *girl, young lady*). It is also mentioned in the 'Coppelia no hitsugi' コッペリアの柩, the opening theme song from the anime *Noir* (2001). A part of the lyrics goes like this: 'People are dolls, tired of dancing (人は踊り疲れた人形) The lamb on the altar (祭壇の羊) Where does the dream of mechanical devices go... (機会仕掛けの夢はどこに向かってゆく).'

culture can be put into the context of the postwar democratisation, which he sees as a ‘spectacular betrayal of the dead in an opportunistic shallow simulacrum of democracy.’ According to him, a proliferation of the ‘cute, little, imaginary products of twisted postwar Japan’ made bearable the unbearable absence of the democratic subjectivity (Katō 2010). Acceptance of the postwar democratic transformation ‘played havoc with the nation’s moral fiber’ that overnight embraced the new ideals of democracy, peace and international cooperation (Katō 2010). The ‘cutification’ of Japan’s social space served as a means to avoid ‘direct confrontation with hard realities’ and the ‘abundance of memories Japan did not wish to confront’—such as the ‘Emperor’s shameless betrayal of 3.1 millions of those who died in his name;’ or, the democratisation run by the occupation forces that so effectively stripped the citizens of their ‘faith in fundamental concepts that lie at the very core of politics, morality, justice and the very idea of having political convictions’ (Katō 2010). This is very well illustrated by the Coppelion rescue team’s encounter with the first danger: the ghosts of JSDF’s Division 1, abandoned in irradiated Tokyo by the PM Natsume’s government. The ghosts, who now cooperate with the Yellow Cake company, which disposes the nuclear waste from the whole of the world under the Tokyo Bay (which triggered the whole story, since it started with distress signals due to a mysterious rise in radiation after twenty years of a relative calm), appear for the government as a deadly threat and fear from the past. The Coppelion’s rescue team very quickly enters the space of the numerous contradictions epitomised in the leitmotif of the story—what should be a priority: ideals of humanity or profit? These contradictions count for the suppressed contradictions of the Japanese postwar history, of which the Y generation was not even aware. Nevertheless, since the suppressed does not mean non-existing, the postwar problems of Japan appeared in this period on several occasions. The Coppelion rescue team’s encounter with a monster coming out of Tokyo Bay (working for the Yellow Cake company) or with eight ‘dangerous monsters from all over the world’ (sold by the Yellow Cake to G9 countries leaders) at *Yasukuni* street are representations of the repressed past. The dangerous monsters are all types of ‘fossiloids,’ where the name once again alludes to *types* of dangers stemming out from the past rather than individual and corporeal present dangers. The monsters are all in a race for the genome data of Aoi—the only girl

from the *Coppelion*'s rescue team, who, it soon becomes clear, does not have a defect which causes sudden death. The genome data would ensure to those who possess it the greatest power, invincibility and profit.

The *Coppelion*'s 'uncanny Godzilla' re-appeared in an 'un-anticipated moment' but its resurrection certainly was not an event that was impossible to anticipate, having in mind the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and 'nuclear-isation' of Japan within Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' policy from 1953. The campaign to overrun in Japan a widespread 'nuclear allergy' (*kaku arerugi*) had officially been started by the *Yomiuri Shinbun*'s director Shoriki Matsutaro on January 1, 1955. In November 1955, the Prime Minister Hatoyama appointed Matsutaro as the Minister in charge of Nuclear Energy (Tanaka and Kuznick 2011, 2). The *Coppelion*'s fictional monsters exist in the real contradictions of capitalist modernity in Japan and see the light of day in uncontrollable moments (the most extreme moments are the hydrogen bomb accident on the Bikini Atoll in 1954 when the Lucky Dragon ship crew were exposed to radiation, or the 3.11 disaster, but there were numerous other nuclear and non-nuclear incidents in between). These moments, according to Jameson, provide the 'visibility of such contradictions from stage to historical stage, or the capacity of each to be thematized and to be represented, not only in epistemological ways, in terms of social or economic analyses, but also in dramatic or aesthetic forms which, along with the political platforms and slogans so closely related to them, are able to grip the imagination and speak to larger social groups' (2005, 13). In the time of post-globalisation (and for Japan in particular since 2003, when the JSDF sent its, albeit unarmed, troops to the Iraq war), these contradictions 'reached a level of shaped complexity that seems to foreground some fundamental ill' where a 'social totality' (which is 'always unrepresentable') 'can sometimes be mapped and allow a small-scale model to be constructed on which the fundamental tendencies and the lines of flight can more clearly be read' (Jameson 2005, 14).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate through a study of the SF manga *Coppelion* how the 'postwar' problematic in Japan constructed a politics

of the ‘uncanny’ past looming over the future. The SF genre is understood as a mode of narrative and a form of knowledge (Jameson 2005, 288). The genre, in the same way as the high rate of economic growth of postwar Japan, is deeply related to the scientific moment and as such has been seen as a symptom of Japan’s problematic modernity, in which the idea of progress is questioned within the peculiar historical conjuncture of post-globalisation. It is in this context that 3.11 became a ‘convulsive moment,’ which allowed a substance for alternative politics to be created. The SF genre’s profound historicity, tied to its anticipatory nature, is what creates this manga’s complex temporal structure. Furthermore, *Coppelion*’s narrative is placed in a ‘radically different space’—the ghost city of Tokyo, twenty years after the accident in a nuclear power plant. This radical other of *Coppelion* is a ‘space beyond the law and an ontological Chernobyl’ (Jameson 2005, 73), symbolically represented by the first episode, in which a family of prisoners escape from the prison in Fuchu after the accident. After twenty years of irradiated history, the story begins with a complete destruction of the pre-disaster landscape (represented by the collapse of the hotel ‘Utopia’) around which we can see placards announcing the Tokyo Olympics that obviously never happened. As the action progresses, this radically different space creates another utopian possibility for achieving a democratic subjectivity.

As much as 3.11 has accelerated and allowed for revisionist trends to be pursued further (through an aggressive patriotism for the nation that needs to stand up and ‘do its best’—while regaining its international status—without the performance of which people are labelled as traitors), it has also prompted a significant section of the nation to rise in protest against the restarting of the nuclear power plants, the rise of nationalism and hate speech, the controversial State Secrecy Law, the revision of the Constitution and the adopted security bills (*‘sensō hōan’*) that allow Japan to send its military overseas under the ‘right to collective defence.’ This chapter, together with its reading of *Coppelion*, identified the second generation that did not experience the War as a generation that will have to deal with past legacies in order to grasp the full meaning of their future. Japan has witnessed the actions of the Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs), which has regularly organised protests in

front of the Diet in Tokyo under the slogan ‘This is what democracy looks like’ or ‘Take back the democracy.’ These actions are changing the image of Japanese youth as being apolitical and ‘not wanting to go too deep into difficult topics, of which there are numerous reiterations in the manga. A similar problem has been noticed within the *hanganpatsu* (anti-nuclear) movement that emerged in the aftermath of 3.11—many participants who had strong anti-nuclear stances refuse to be overtly ‘political’ or to politicise the issue. It is apparent that the young people of Japan are forced to think radically differently about their political engagement than the first *heiwa-boke* generation. However, are they radical enough to facilitate a complete transformation of society itself?

Although we live in an age of massive historical amnesia, the 3.11 catastrophe is a reminder that the past is never so forgotten that we cannot understand the connections leading to a revival of the politics that once informed it. According to Adorno, ‘even if one succeeds in making this clear, the danger persists. We will not have come to terms with the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Only because these causes live on does the spell of the past remain, to this very day, unbroken’ (Hartman 1986, 129).

The SF story of *Coppelion* is but one way in which the future has been represented in Japanese visual culture. Through the trope of the total destruction of the urban utopia that had emerged in postwar Japan as a way of concealing the inconvenient past and turning to a brighter future, the comic reveals a tension between two meanings of the future, defined earlier as anticipation—the first having to do with the horizons and (utopian) expectations that shape everyday life, and the second indicating a ‘future past’ viewed pretty much through dystopian eyes. These two dimensions are in a permanent tension in contemporary Japan, and remind us of the fact that there can be no imagining of the future unless we rethink the past. It is only through a reflection on the past that the present and future can be truly transformed.

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VISION QUEST OR FOOL'S GOLD: LOOKING FOR UTOPIA IN HOLLYWOOD SCIENCE FICTION

Dan Hassler-Forest

‘Places of Hope’: the phrase sounds endearing, old-fashioned, and maybe even a little desperate. The title of an ambitious Dutch exhibition, *Places of Hope*, was designed by its curators Maarten Hajer and Michiel van Eersel to present an alternative to the prevailing cultural tide of cynicism and lethargy. In the Frisian capital of Leeuwarden, an appropriately dilapidated museum would house a collection of future-oriented visions, ideas, and practical policies for sustainable urban design. Its intended spirit was expressed most energetically during the ceremonial opening, where the usual speechifying and hobnobbing among the cultural elite and local government was supplemented by a protest march through the inner city of Leeuwarden. The hundred-odd invitees were instructed to pick up an assortment of signs and banners, and follow a slow-moving wagon full of drummers and noise-makers to draw attention to the event.

As one might imagine, the result was both stirring and slightly awkward. Finding myself shouldering an arbitrarily-chosen sign that said ‘Moed, Kreativiteit en Ferbylding’ (Frisian for ‘Courage, Creativity and Imagination’), our merry band of cheerful but decidedly sheepish protesters obediently made its way from the city center’s outer rim to the museum, holding up signs in support of a better future while distractedly making chitchat about their usual day-to-day affairs. Passersby and onlookers passed us bemused stares, while a handful of circling press agents snapped photos

and video footage of this strikingly calm and orderly protest march. Part of the oddity was of course that the participants in this particular rally had been more or less shanghaied by the event organisers, and were thereby (perhaps reluctantly) introduced to some of the excitement and unpredictability of group interventions in public space.

But another key factor was the explanation of the march's ideological objective, and its determination to express hope and even excitement about our future. Clearly, the general perception of public protests has been defined by negativity: large groups of outraged citizens have so often taken to the streets to speak out *against* racism, *against* sexual abuse, *against* nuclear weapons, *against* the war in Iraq, *against* fascism, *against* the nomination of a Supreme Court judge. But the *Places of Hope* opening march was intended to articulate a different sensibility, speaking out publicly *for* renewable energy, *for* equitable and diverse cities, *for* progressive social and economic policies—in short, *for* a better future.

Apart from the basic fact that anger and outrage are more effective mobilising tools than positive hopes or ideals, the otherwise charming idea of this 'March of Hope' faced a more substantial hurdle, which the exhibition itself was also attempting to counter: neither our political sphere nor our economic models currently offer any credible basis for a better, more sustainable future. In the era of global capitalism, Fredric Jameson's oft-repeated quip that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism is such a commonplace that it has become a simple statement of fact rather than the challenge to our collective imagination that it was clearly meant to be (Jameson 1996, xiii).

From Mark Fisher's 'capitalist realism' (2008) to Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee's 'necrocapitalism' (2008), neoliberalism's stifling effect on our ability to imagine alternatives has been widely—one might even say exhaustively—diagnosed. Neoliberalism's global trends of industrial deregulation, post-Fordist 'just-in-time' delivery systems, and wave after wave of primitive accumulation in the global South are all aspects of twenty-first-century life that have clearly impeded our ability to articulate any meaningful kind of 'utopian imaginary' (Jameson 2005, 10–21). And in a world that is

not only increasingly globalised, but which is also rapidly urbanising, the city has become the fulcrum of our collective failure of imagination.

The *Places of Hope* exhibition, the March of Hope that opened it, and my own contribution to the program, the video essay ‘Imaginary Cities’, each in its own way attempted to resurrect a form of utopian theory and practice that has come to feel tragically but increasingly anachronistic. As someone who was both a contributor to the project and an observer trying to align the exhibition’s objectives with my own scholarly perspective on the cultural logic of global capitalism (see Hassler-Forest 2016a), this chapter draws on the exhibition’s grand ideals as a way to reflect on the larger problem of late-capitalist futurelessness. More specifically, I use the intersection between scholarly and creative work to map out the tension between the kind of optimism that informs much of the field of sustainability studies, and the productive but also potentially immobilising negativity of critical and cultural theory. Both in my theoretical perspective on the socio-cultural logic of global capitalism and in the video compilation I produced, the city (as both a physical and a conceptual space) is what brings these many strands of thought together.

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I approach this firstly by sketching out the interlocking set of social, political, economic, and environmental crises that underlie our current *culture of futurelessness*. This section brings together some of the work in critical and cultural theory that has given us the conceptual tools to describe this set of problems.¹ The second section then documents my own work on the video essay ‘Imaginary Cities’, a piece that was originally commissioned as an educational installation on progressive and utopian urban environments in science fiction (hereafter sf) cinema. Connecting the theoretical material from the earlier section to the research I performed alongside my creative work on the video essay, I conclude by reflecting on the limitations and opportunities inherent in using Hollywood sf as the raw material for a utopian project.

1 This section draws in part on material that was originally written for an article. See Hassler-Forest, Dan. 2019. ‘Postcapitalism in Space: Kim Stanley Robinson’s Utopian Science Fiction.’ In *Neoliberalism and Contemporary American Literature*. Edited by Stephen Shapiro and Liam Kennedy. UPNE: Dartmouth College Press.

A FUTURELESS WORLD: UTOPIANISM VS. NEOLIBERALISM'S 'INDEBTED MAN'

As slippery and ambivalent a concept as it may be, utopianism is of vital importance to a culture of political resistance. Not only because it holds out the promise of a brighter, better world, but because it insists on imagining alternatives. Or, as China Miéville has put it in his introduction to a new edition of Thomas More's *Utopia*:

Utopianism isn't hope, still less optimism: it is need, and it is desire. For recognition, like all desire, and/but for the specifics of its reveries and programmes, too; and above all for betterness *tout court*. For alterity, something other than the exhausting social lie. For rest. And when the cracks in history open wide enough, the impulse may even jimmy them a little wider. (Miéville 2016, 6)

The cultural articulation of utopian sf is so important in the neoliberal age because we seem to lack the tools to force the cracks of history wider on those rare moments when they do seem to open. For even as our cultural, political, and economic realms seem bereft of long-term programs, there has been no shortage of impulses towards organised resistance. The question, then, is how to make these momentary bursts sustainable in the long term.

The traditional Left's decades-long abandonment of political resistance, exemplified by the Clinton/Blair pivot towards the technocratic and business-friendly 'Third Way' that typifies neoliberal governmentality, has been accompanied in the cultural realm by a related turn towards texts that reflect and in many ways normalise a pervasive atmosphere of dystopian inevitability. In this sense at least, sf seems to have lost some of the political potential for which philosophers, critical theorists, and literary critics have so often celebrated the genre (see Suvin 1979; Freedman 2000; Jameson 2005; Bould and Miéville 2009). Without making overly precise claims about a notoriously 'fuzzy' genre, sf emerged as a popular genre in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, and provided a cultural vocabulary of imagery and narratives that resonated above all as American capitalism

became the defining force in postwar geopolitics. The slick spaceships, intergalactic odysseys, and daring astronauts embodied thoroughly utopian perspectives on a future of uninterrupted growth and technological progress, as interplanetary exploration came to form a dazzling ‘final frontier’ for literally endless colonial expansion (see Rieder 2008).

When the end of the Cold War inspired Francis Fukuyama to celebrate the passing of Really Existing Socialism as the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama 1989), the term still had a utopian resonance that would become notably absent in the actual historical era that followed. In the 1990s, the brief illusion of a global capitalism that would allow for limitless growth and accumulation was soon punctured by a tsunami of crises that revealed the historical reality of globalisation—a landscape of radically uneven development, growing socio-economic inequality, and a thoroughly unstable and crisis-prone economic system. In the neoliberal era of looming ecological disaster, unchecked economic crisis, and the swift erosion of a commonly shared public sphere, sf’s utopian imaginary was largely eclipsed and displaced by an *apocalyptic imaginary*. Even when a utopian future is glimpsed, it can only be conceived as something that must be preceded by an apocalyptic nightmare: ‘This is not quite a dystopia: it’s a third form—apocatopia, utopalypse—and it’s all around us. We’re surrounded by a culture of ruination, dreams of falling cities, a peopleless world where animals explore’ (Miéville 2016, 21).

But at the same time, this post-historical perspective continues to ring true in neoliberalism’s fundamentally futureless sensibility. The combination of an increasingly imperial political and economic structure of ‘flexible accumulation’ (Harvey 1990, 147) and the ongoing imposition of austerity policies has resulted in an intensification of capitalism’s fundamental unsustainability:

The real problems with democratic life today stem from the fact that technological innovations exploited by financial capitalism have replaced yesterday’s myths in the definition of happiness for all, and are promoting an ideology of the present, and ideology of the future *now*, which in

turn paralyses all thought about the future. (Augé 2014, 3)

In the context of global capitalism, this paralysis clearly impedes our ability to relate to the future as a horizon for change, hope, or improvement. Augé connects this post-historical structure of feeling to neoliberalism as a system of social relations that isolates the individual from any kind of meaningful sense of collectivity. It is the direct result of the clear-cut ways in which neoliberalism reduces individuals to the level of competitors who are forced to act as ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ (Lazzarato 2014, 52): constantly having to reinvent, re-educate, and rebrand themselves within a flexible and thoroughly precarious environment, where the future has no promise to offer but that of endlessly diminishing returns.

This evaporating horizon of neoliberalism’s cultural, political, and economic logic lies at the heart of Maurizio Lazzarato’s figure of ‘the indebted man’ as global capitalism’s ‘existential condition’ (2012, 9). The neoliberal economy is structured entirely upon this debtor/debtee relationship, as the financialisation of post-industrial capitalism has created a system in which the vast majority of profits are the product of speculation rather than labour, and in which debt creation ‘has been conceived and programmed as the strategic heart of neoliberal politics’ (2012, 25). Examples abound of the many ways in which the debtor relationship has been used as a powerful tool to discipline individuals, communities, and even entire nations—from the European Union’s abject humiliation of Greece to the ways in which hedge fund owners profited from subprime mortgage forfeitures in the 2008 financial crisis.

This figure of the indebted man—or, to put it less phallogcentrically, the indebted person—is crucial to understanding neoliberalism’s futureless world, because our perpetual present is in a very real and quite literal sense already living in a time that is thoroughly out of joint: the increasingly precarious wealth and privilege of the Western world is created not on the basis of labour, but on capital that has been ‘borrowed’ from an increasingly dire-looking future. Little wonder, then, that our ability to conceive of any kind of future outside of an ever-more-stifling form of capitalist realism and universal indebtedness has become so thoroughly compro-

mised. Therefore, in this world without alternatives, we not only have great need of speculative narratives that articulate a utopian future, but we have also developed a suddenly-urgent interest in thought experiments that are emphatically *postcapitalist*.

More than any other genre, sf has a long and varied tradition of expressing utopian motifs in a variety of constellations. While utopian fiction isn't necessarily science-fictional, the political potential of sf as a genre makes it particularly productive as a vessel for utopian speculation. For even if some claims about sf's privileged relationship to critical theory are perhaps a little exaggerated (Freedman 2000, 30), one can nevertheless clearly recognise in its non-fantastic forms of cognitive estrangement an irreducibly political platform for speculating about the future. Moreover, the very genre traditions that have long disqualified sf as a legitimate literary form for the vast majority of scholars and critics paradoxically enhance this political potential: sf literature has tended to favour descriptions of complex political, social, and technological systems over psychologically 'realistic' representations of individual characters, thereby untethering its fictional world-building from capitalism's relentless focus on the individual.

Key works in this register can be located in American sf from the 1930s 'Guernsback Age' of pulp fiction through to the 1960s 'Second Wave' of the genre. Authors from Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert A. Heinlein to Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke drew heavily on industrial capitalism's utopian imaginary of progress through technology and limitless expansion.² It is surely no accident that the most iconic embodiment of this particular variety of sf was the TV series (and transmedia franchise) *Star Trek*, which was deeply grounded in the spirit of industrial capitalism and its 'faith in rationality and long-term planning . . . and, above all, by the very gigantism of organizations' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007, 18). *Star Trek's* sleek, shiny surfaces and post-scarcity melting-pot society expressed a utopian vision that was firmly interlocked with a triumphalist post-war capitalism (see Hassler-Forest 2016b), its widely appealing vision of the future based on what Raymond Williams described as sf's 'civilizing

2 For a more elaborate discussion of the sf genre, see Andrew Milner's excellent historical and theoretical survey *Locating Science Fiction* (2012).

transformation, beyond the terms of a restless, struggling society of classes' (Williams 2005, 201).

In the context of neoliberalism, labour's perennial 'struggle against machinery' (Marx 1973, 704) has taken on new forms of expression that are fundamental to capitalism's never-ending process of accumulation in its global stage. In current debates about the necessity to break away from this unsustainable and exploitative cycle, the term *accelerationism* has come to occupy a central position. As Benjamin Noys has explained it, accelerationism has attracted so many theorists of postcapitalism because it suggests a radical embrace of technology rather than the traditional hostility towards mechanisation that typifies classical Marxism. And for those of us who worry about the effects of mechanisation on wages, unemployment, and global proletarianisation, one can certainly understand the attraction of a theoretical framework in which the central premise seems to propose that 'the only way out of capitalism is to take it further, to follow its lines of flight or deterritorialization to the absolute end, to speed-up beyond the limits of production and so to rupture the limit of capital itself' (Noys 2013, x).

Following the basic logic of what we might call a kind of 'banal accelerationism,' we can easily identify the obvious correspondence with Kurzweil's techno-fetishism, seeing in technological innovation the easy answers to a post-scarcity future that can come about without sacrificing our ongoing love affair with smartphones, tablets, and corporate-controlled social media. In this sense, *Star Trek* falls well within a liberal humanist tradition, offering a tempting utopian vision that encourages us to double down on our use of technology without reflecting on technology as an active agent within capitalism as a set of social relations. In other words, the key tension within the accelerationist debate is the true impasse of neoliberalism, leaving us 'neither able to go forward into the "streamlined" future, nor return to the "stability" of the Fordist past' (Noys 2013, 98).

In spite of the seemingly obvious colonialist implications and uncomfortable militaristic tendencies of *Star Trek's* particular brand of sf, the franchise did also help popularise the genre in a way that foregrounded a progressive ideological agenda and liberal set of politics, especially within

the lively and diverse fan communities that fostered it and kept it alive for many years (see Jenkins 1992). Beyond the rather limited ideological reach of the series, or, indeed, beyond that of the most popular literary sf of the twentieth century, the genre in this period helped sustain a vision of futurity that was progressive, if only in a somewhat limited and mechanical sense—even the most politically reactionary sf authors (of which there have been many) still based their work on a concept of the future in which humanity had miraculously survived the long twentieth century, emerging into a wide variety of futures that routinely extended beyond the constraints of capitalist exploitation, colonialist oppression, petty geopolitical conflicts, and material scarcity. And in a great many of the now-canonical works in the sf tradition, this utopian future was indeed expressly connected to politically progressive social and cultural values.

Therefore, whatever ideological objections one might justifiably raise against any individual work of sf, or even to how the genre's utopian imaginary has also maintained and reinforced many social, cultural, and economic hierarchies, sf has struggled to express utopian alternatives to global capitalism from the 1990s onward. The post-Cold War order in which any system but capitalism was declared irrelevant has stymied the genre and the important cultural work it has always performed. Even as speculative fiction has been increasingly gentrified, readers and critics have frequently complained about the 'dystopian trend' that has so clearly afflicted sf in the twenty-first century (see Hassler-Forest 2015). In literary fiction, as in other media, fantastic fiction has not only been made more fashionable, but also—critically—more 'realistic.'

The problem, then, in terms of the social and political meaning-making that goes on around a genre like sf is that 'realism' has become virtually synonymous with 'capitalist'—and therefore if not dystopian, at the very least thoroughly anti-utopian. The neoliberal epidemic that has roughly coincided with the age of global capitalism has instilled in us what Mark Fisher has called a 'business ontology' (Fisher 2008, 17), in which it is simply taken for granted that nothing makes sense unless it is part of a market and organised for profit. I have described this increasingly ubiquitous embrace of 'post-ideological' capitalist realism elsewhere as a kind

of *fantastical capitalism*: “fantastical” because—superficially at least—they present us with storyworlds totally unlike our own, and “capitalism” because they incorporate and strengthen capitalism’s most basic social and cultural logic, while alternatives are systematically rejected as “unrealistic” (Hassler-Forest 2016a, 70).

Therefore, the supreme challenge for speculative genres like sf in the neoliberal era is to articulate meaningful alternatives that are neither nostalgic pastiches of Space Age techno-futurism, nor the despairing extensions of neoliberal thinking that typify most current varieties of fantastical capitalism. Or, to put it differently: in order for sf to regain at least some of its utopian power, it must find ways to counter neoliberalism’s futureless mindset with speculative visions that acknowledge capitalist realism’s cul-de-sac without at the same time falling prey to its omnivorous spirit.

SEARCHING FOR PLACES OF HOPE IN SF CINEMA

As our political, economic, and environmental context has become increasingly futureless, a growing number of scholars, theorists, and curators have turned to sf for inspiration. As a genre that has saturated mass media with images of futuristic technologies, cities, and entire societies for more than a century, sf certainly does make up a rich archive of thought experiments that could be a valuable resource for policy makers faced with questions of social, material, and environmental sustainability. And while prominent literary theorists have foregrounded the genre’s critical potential for over two decades, scholars from disciplines outside the humanities have more recently begun to explore the ways in which sf could be helpful when thinking through possible solutions to more practical kinds of problems.

For instance, sf scholar and speculative theorist Paul Graham Raven published an article in the journal *Energy Research & Social Science* about using sf as an ‘energy futures research tool,’ making the case for ‘the utility of prose science fiction both as a methodological tool of representation and portrayal for energy futures research ... and as a storehouse of tools and strategies for the critique of energy futures’ (Raven 2017, 164). Sim-

ilarly, *Places of Hope* co-curator and director of Utrecht University's Urban Futures Studio Maarten Hajer co-authored an article on applying sf as a 'technique of futuring' that can help shift our ways of thinking from the inevitability of 'expected futures' to the utopian tradition of 'desirable futures' (Hajer and Pelzer 2017, 222). And along similar lines, the Amsterdam-based research and consultancy group Monnik develops master classes for scholars, policy-makers, and businesses using sf world-building and 'immersive storytelling' as their primary methodology.

Given this blossoming intersection between sf and sustainability studies, it seemed to make sense to include some form of engagement with the genre at the *Place of Hope* exhibition, which was mostly dedicated to reinvigorating a sense of optimism by presenting practical ideas for sustainable development in the Netherlands. As a humanities scholar who approaches sf from the vantage point of critical theory, I was commissioned by the exhibition's curators to produce a video installation that would illustrate the connection between utopian urbanism and sf cinema. Or, as I understood the initial assignment, to assemble a curated collection of video footage from the sf film genre that expressed the spirit of hope and resilience evident throughout the rest of the exhibition: unearthing various kinds of film footage in which desirable ideals of a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable urban future are visualised.

The first and most obvious challenge was the general paucity of utopian cities in sf cinema. As Simon Spiegel has observed, the sf film genre has a noted preponderance for dystopian fictions (Spiegel 2017, 58–59), constantly immersing us in visions of futurity that depict a wide variety of global ecological, economic, technological, social, and political catastrophes. When seemingly attractive and utopian urban environments are featured in sf films, they are all too often either revealed to camouflage a totalitarian and dystopian regime of brutal oppression and exploitation (from *Metropolis* to *Demolition Man*), or else they blindly reproduce an early-modernist articulation of top-down urban design that can no longer be credibly considered sustainable, utopian, or even desirable.

A second challenge derived from the limitations inherent in the video es-

say: a form that has blossomed in the digital age, videographic criticism has in recent years gained status and credibility as a legitimate scholarly framework (Witt 2017). Besides the fact that the video essay is itself made up of audiovisual material rather than merely analysis and/or critique of it, videographic criticism also aligns reflective and critical work more closely with creative media production, thereby potentially generating new insights and research methods. But apart from some notable exceptions, the video essay has mostly been limited in duration, making its key points by suturing together disparate bits of media footage to establish meaningful patterns and connections, often accompanied by voice-over explanations and/or subtitles. For this particular piece, having a moderate length of ten minutes or less seemed a precondition both for the exhibition context and for further online distribution via video sharing platforms. And as the only part of the exhibition to reflect on sf cinema traditions, there was at the same time the ambition to include footage from as many relevant sources as possible, as a broad historical survey seemed preferable to a more in-depth analysis of a handful of films.

As part of my research process, I first put together a list of sf films that featured depictions of urban environments (both positive and negative), drawing on my own expertise on sf film history, reference work, online references, and recommendations from fellow sf scholars and friends. Since the objective was to create a general overview rather than a complete archive, the assembly of primary material was neither systematic nor exhaustive—the general intention was to bring together images from films that were well-known and familiar alongside more obscure works, as one of the project's main concerns was to show how popular culture both shapes and reflects concrete and historically specific notions about the shape of the future. This part of the research yielded a list of just under 100 sf feature films, the overwhelming majority of which were American mainstream films produced by Hollywood studios.³

3 An obvious obstacle for films produced outside the high-end Hollywood system of commercial film production is that the cost required for visual effects, the construction of massive sets, and hiring hundreds of extras is often prohibitive for other production frameworks.

The next step was to isolate shots that featured specific visualisations of future cities. In a very concrete sense, this meant going through all the films scene by scene, identifying and isolating individual shots or sequences that depicted particular facets of urban space, social life, and architecture. Because the creation of film footage of this kind is relatively expensive (even in the age of advanced digital cinema), shots like this remain somewhat rare, even in big-budget sf movies. The vast majority of shots in any given sf film are close-up or medium shots focused strongly on individual actors, while more expensive establishing shots featuring larger urban landscapes appear far less frequently. Nevertheless, the total amount of footage at the end of this primary selection process amounted to over eight hours from over 90 different sf features.⁴

The third step then was one of categorisation: sifting through the selected shots and grouping them together based on thematic similarities. The first and most obvious category was *urban skylines*—wide shots of imaginary cities, shown from a distance and commonly emphasising their height, scale, and visual splendour. While shots such as these could be either utopian (like the sparkling, sun-drenched urban vistas in *Thor*, *Monsters Inc.*, and *Zootopia*) or dystopian (from the modernist bustle of *Metropolis* to the postmodern claustrophobia of *Blade Runner* and its sequel), they consistently shared a virtually identical aesthetic, most often using low-angle shots of tall skyscrapers from a vantage point just outside a clearly demarcated city center. Other themes that quickly emerged simply from cataloguing and categorising the available material were *public transportation*, *flying vehicles*, *protests and demonstrations*, *parties and celebrations*, *street markets*, *urban destruction*, *the post-apocalyptic city*, and one particular recurring motif that I mockingly categorised as *the Sad White Man*.

Then, by organising the material and grouping it together based on these thematic similarities, a first idea of structure for the overall video emerged—rather than seeing the video as an explicit film history lesson

4 While a selection of footage from sf television series was included in the first rough assemblage, they were soon discarded due to their relative scarcity—again, because of the aforementioned budget constraints—and because of the practical time limitations of the project.

that narrates a chronological walkthrough of future cities in sf cinema, the essay would combine sequences of thematically and aesthetically similar shots from films irrespective of historical period, subgenre,⁵ or film-industrial context. This would show the key ways in which specific patterns and assumptions about urban life were obviously represented in strikingly similar ways across the larger cultural archive of sf cinema. The idea therefore followed on from this to present the assemblage as a journey through a single future city, made up of a large number of fragments from recognisable individual sf films.

Having already concluded that the amount of varied visual footage together with the high pace with which it was to be edited ruled out the addition of subtitled commentary, the final decision to accompany the footage with music also flowed naturally from the idea of the 'city journey,' while also referencing and building upon early cinema's 'city symphony' tradition (Graf 2007). Looking around for instrumental music that was rhythmic but not mechanical, structured but with plenty of room for improvisation, modern-sounding but not electronic, I landed upon the Belgian quartet Die Anarchistische Abendunterhaltung. The eight-minute semi-improvisational pieces on their eponymous debut album (1995) made a good match for the developing assemblage of video footage, as they were made up primarily of variations on a single repeated theme, with occasional descents into chaos, and abrupt transitions to other moods, registers, and tempi. This combination of repetitive melodic and rhythmic patterns on the one hand, and a highly dynamic variety of genres, patterns, and energies on the other seemed the perfect accompaniment for a thematically structured video piece on these visual patterns of sf cities.

The final, and most labour-intensive, part of the process then became the actual editing. Using the rhythm of the instrumental music as a basic guide, the rough assemblage of thematic collections of footage was whittled down to a succession of brief shots, only a few of which were longer than two or three seconds in length. It soon became clear that editing the shots togeth-

5 The broadest possible definition of 'sf cinema' was embraced for the project, thereby including other fantastical subgenres such as fantasy (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy), superhero films (e.g. *Thor*), and zombie movies (e.g. *28 Days Later...*).

er to the rhythm of the music brought a sense of coherence to shots that were obviously culled from a diversity of sources. While editing, a number of other barriers and limitations became obvious—for example, close-up or medium shots of characters speaking proved unusable, as this kind of footage draws the viewer's attention to plot and dialogue and away from the visual representation of urban space. Within the sequences dedicated to infrastructure and architecture, it even proved to be too distracting to have recognisable individual faces featured within the shot, and they often had to be trimmed to maintain the sequence's focus on urban space. By the same token, cuts that disrupted the most basic rules of classical continuity editing, like following a left-to-right pan with a panning shot in a different direction, had to be modified or deleted as they, too, mostly proved to be too distracting. And finally, a large part of the process was intuitive and creative rather than systematic or rational—often a particular shot simply seemed to 'work' perfectly when placed in sequence with another, or in combination with a specific musical passage. These 'happy accidents' were ultimately as important to the process and its outcome as the more deliberate work of cataloguing and collating the footage.

After a few weeks of editorial work, the final version was 10 minutes and 18 seconds long, made up of footage from 79 credited films.⁶ Following the structural pattern of a voyage through an amalgam of the city of the future, the video begins with a sequence of shots that show urban skylines from a distance, before moving into the metropolis to show the bustle of futuristic traffic and public transportation; then, we see the city shutting down and 'going to sleep,' to be woken up again by a sequence of human bodies moving, flying, and falling amidst the vertiginous skyscrapers of urban centers. This brings us to the city's ground level, where we witness various kinds of street markets before the following sequence of shots follows a musical crescendo to bring together images of disasters striking those cities.

A slower-paced, elegiac musical sequence then accompanies a variety of images of post-apocalyptic cities emptied of human life, until a single close-up of a plant sprouting among the wreckage ushers in a series of

6 The finished video essay can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Tl11nRQoqRE>.

shots of 'green ruins'—cities being reclaimed by nature. Picking up from this 'green' motif, footage of urban agriculture, parks, and more pastoral urban imagery visualises the necessary balance between human life, urban infrastructure, and plant life. While this kind of footage was quite rare amongst the available material, its inclusion was also central to the project's ideal of representing urban environments that are environmentally balanced and sustainable, as the rest of the exhibition also foregrounds. This footage then leads into the final sequence, which focuses on human life in the city: from collective moments of joy in celebratory dance, to public protests and political demonstrations, to shared moments of hope and despair, and finally to individual moments of (romantic) connection within the futuristic fabric of the imaginary metropolis.

CONCLUSION

While both the process and its outcome (the video piece getting its own dedicated screening theater within the *Places of Hope* exhibition space) were hugely rewarding, the project's original goal of drawing on sf cinema to unearth productive and meaningful images of utopian futures remained ambiguous at best. Throughout the many hours of sf film footage I examined in the initial stages of the project, the *absence* of significant variety in the visualisation of imaginary cityscapes was particularly striking. The long shadow of modernist architecture and urban planning, as expressed so memorably in the 1927 film *Metropolis*, continues to determine the vast majority of urban environments in sf cinema to this very day.

As in Lang's film, sf films consistently represent the city of the future as a visually and physically overwhelming environment, where human beings are overshadowed—both literally and figuratively—by the towering architecture, the never-ending flows of bustling (and often flying) traffic, and the absence of spaces of refuge. The primary varieties on display fit neatly within three main categories:

1. *the utopian modernist metropolis*: the city as the seat of wealth and power, where the inescapable forms of social and economic injustice are conveniently erased;

2. *the dystopian (post-)modernist metropolis*: either a return to the Gothic clutter of pre-modernist cities (as in Tim Burton's *Batman* movies) or the unchecked growth of consumerism in the shadow of modernist high-rises (as in the *Blade Runner* movies), these dystopian metropolitan environments can present either the *before* or the *after* of modernist thinking,⁷ but never a meaningful alternative;
3. *the post-apocalyptic metropolis*: Hollywood sf has clearly thrived on the depiction of spectacular urban destruction, and many films strongly foreground either this inevitable cataclysm of late-capitalist society or its post-apocalyptic aftermath. The cultural fascination for both large-scale urban destruction and for urban ruins in which man-made structures are 'returned to nature' proliferates wildly throughout the genre (and beyond!), but again offers neither a meaningful alternative nor, obviously, a desirable future.

In summary, then, my search for meaningful 'places of hope' in Hollywood sf yielded a sadly limited range of urban environments. While truly imaginative and varied forms of urban organisation and culture exist throughout the far more expansive field of sf literature (see Abbott 2015), Western sf cinema has an overwhelming tendency to present the city either as the utopian fulfillment of grand modernist ambitions of top-down mastery and control, or as the seemingly inevitable downfall and despair that follows the dissolution of the twentieth century's 'grand narratives' (see Lyotard 1984).

But rather than depicting progressive ideals of sustainable urban environments, sf films that are primarily dystopian and/or post-apocalyptic revert to the Romantic conceit of a return to the 'pure and authentic' pastoral country life, beating a full retreat from the corrupted and unsalvageable landscape of urban modernity. This depiction of cities follows the cultural logic Raymond Williams describes in his foundational study *The Country and The City*, in which 'the transition from a rural to an industrial society

7 One may also argue that these late-capitalist bricolages dialectically unite the pre-modern with the post-modern, simultaneously articulating the before and after of high modernism without offering a way forward.

is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder' (Williams 2011, 96). Rather than moving beyond the longstanding cultural binary that distinguishes the country from the city, Hollywood sf movies have a strong tendency to reproduce it, thereby failing to offer productive visions of a resilient and hopeful urban future.

Crafting a video essay that still seemed to fit the 'Places of Hope' moniker therefore required selecting and editing the available material in a way that didn't truly represent the dominant tendencies within the vast majority of the primary material. For instance, the noticeable scarcity of people of colour in sf movies' urban environments led me to include many shots from the all-black musical *The Wiz* (Lumet 1978), in an attempt to ward off the impression that the video was both reproducing and endorsing sf cinema's longstanding problem with ethnic diversity. By the same token, the relatively rare shots of public protests on city streets were cut together to strengthen the sense that collective resistance and participatory politics constitute vital parts of urban life, in spite of the fact that they are somewhat hard to find in Hollywood's sf canon.

But even with these deliberate interventions, the end result remains ambiguous in a way that I find troubling given the context in which it was exhibited. The video essay's opening sequence of dazzling skylines, for instance, can be read as a celebration of the modernist utopias it represents. The combination of rapid editing, visually spectacular staging and design, pulsating musical rhythms, and the inevitable game of cinematic train-spotting easily coalesce into an uncritical consumption of images that were selected to illustrate the lack of variety in such sequences. Similarly, the final images of individuals connecting romantically within the vertiginous urban geography translates far too easily to an endorsement of the heteronormativity that remains the *de facto* representational position for these films, where even the mechanical beings of a movie like *WALL•E* (2014) are ostentatiously gendered.

Therefore, while the exercise of using videographic criticism for this particular video piece felt exciting and liberating as an effort that was both scholarly and creative, I remain ambivalent about the final work's effec-

tiveness as a tool for public pedagogy. Since the title (both of the video essay and of the exhibition of which it was a part) so strongly emphasised the concept of hope, it would make sense for viewers to interpret the more utopian depictions of cities uncritically, and to take the romantic shots of white heterosexual couples at face value. From this more critical perspective, the relative seamlessness with which the shots have been sutured both to each other and to the accompanying music may simply reproduce the most basic logic of classical Hollywood continuity editing, encouraging audiences to sit back and enjoy the ride without interrogating the choices critically.

At the same time, one mustn't dismiss the potential of the kind of intervention too easily, nor should we underestimate the viewer's critical abilities. For many, the connection between popular Hollywood sf films and urban theory is far from obvious, and a video essay that connects these two seemingly disparate strands of culture, theory, and practice can prompt viewers to look upon fantastic entertainment with a different eye. In this sense, perhaps I too would do well to keep my critical impulse in check, and make room for new ways of thinking, new ways of combining research with creative work, and new ways of contributing towards pedagogic methods. For if we sincerely wish to move against the prevailing cultural tide of futurelessness, we must also dare to make room for change, for experimentation, and for new critical tools that might constitute actual places of hope.

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2020. 'Wither 68: The Gilets Jaunes movement and the return of the intellectual.' *French Studies Bulletin* 41, no.154: 41–45; and,

2019. 'Rethinking Ecology and Community: The Case of Humanist Anarchism.' In *#NousSommes: Collectivity and the Digital in French Thought and Culture*, edited by Jean Khalifa, 28–38. Vol. 17 of *Modern French Identities*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang UK.

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Immler, Nicole and Hans Sakkers. 2014. '(Re)Programming Europe: European Capitals of Culture: Rethinking the role of culture.' *Journal of European Studies* 44, no.1: 3–29; and, Sakkers, Hans and Nadia vom Scheidt. 2017. 'Stuttgart and Utrecht, Localising sustainable development goals by fostering international cooperation.' *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, no.3: 74–82.

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