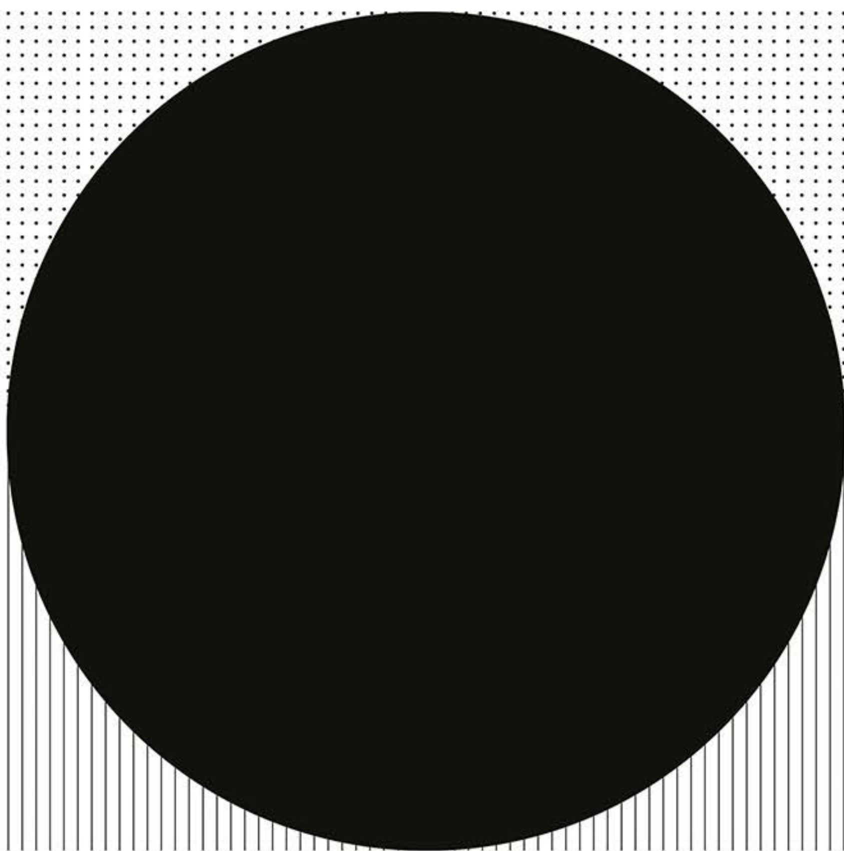
Architecture

Carolina Crijns

Architecture in Times of Multiple Crises

Embodied Utopianisms of Care and Radical Spatial Practice



[transcript]

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Architecture in Times of Multiple Crises

Architecture | Volume 73

to the dreamers and believers,
the doers and achievers

Carolina Crijns (Dipl.-Ing.) studied architecture at Technische Universität Wien and graduated on the meaning of contemporary architecture in times of multiple crises. She was involved in the International Building Exhibition in Vienna on the topic of New Social Housing. Since 2023 she has been working and researching on urban transformation processes in Berlin.

Carolina Crijns

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Preface by Sabine Knierbein

[transcript]

Printed with the kind support of the Austrian Research Association.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de

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First published in 2023 by transcript Verlag, Bielefeld
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Cover concept: Kordula Röckenhaus, Bielefeld
Cover illustration: © Carolina Crijns
Proofread: Elisabeth Dickman and Shay Griffin
Printed by Majuskel Medienproduktion GmbH, Wetzlar
Print-ISBN 978-3-8376-6746-2
PDF-ISBN 978-3-8394-6746-6
https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839467466
ISSN of series: 2702-8070
eISSN of series: 2702-8089

Printed on permanent acid-free text paper.

Utopia as Goddess

you were claimed to be pictured,
blamed to be wrong,
reigned as the solution,
introduced and undone

yet I crown you Goddess,
for when you come alive,
Utopia, Greek Goddess,
we'll collectively thrive

you were sworn to be doomed,
some called you insane,
yet a world without you,
would not be the same

so I crown you Goddess,
the day all seems lost,
Utopia, Greek Goddess,
in you I will trust

(poem by the author)

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Abstract

English Abstract: *Under the premise that architecture makes life 'better', architecture is often presented as the 'solution' to social problems, made 'green' when promising sustainable futures, or fetishised as a cultural object in the creation of urban identities. Yet what is it exactly that links architecture so closely to the pursuit of a good life? How is this link interrelated with crisis and crisis thinking? In what ways do world views and belief systems influence architecture's capacity to deal with today's complex and demanding challenges? To what extent is the discipline itself marked by crisis? In exploring these questions, this book points to a structural decline in imaginative capacity – even in a discipline which has made this its key trait. In scrutinising the extent to which utopianism and crisis interrelate with architecture, this book points to architecture's central contradictions, criticises the discipline's orthodox ways of thinking, and questions its underlying assumptions. It thereby not only reveals the limits of a discipline focused on problem-solving but also explores the transformative potential in radically rethinking architecture's focal concepts as well as its education. On the lookout for different forms of (re)producing and understanding architecture, the author introduces a method of utopian speculation for theory-led spatial practices ambitious for change in lived experiences; and not in the long-distant future but starting today.*

Deutsche Zusammenfassung: *Unter der Prämisse, dass Architektur das Leben „besser“ mache, wird Architektur oft als „Lösung“ eines sozialen Problems präsentiert, begrünt, wenn sie eine nachhaltige Zukunft verspricht, oder als kulturelles Objekt urbaner Identitäten zelebriert. Doch was genau bringt Architektur und das Streben nach dem besseren Leben in ein so enges Verhältnis? Wie äußert sich diese Verbindung im Kontext multipler Krisen? Inwiefern beeinflussen Krisendenken, Weltanschauungen und Glaubenssysteme die Architektur in ihrer Fähigkeit, mit Krisen umzugehen? Inwieweit ist die Disziplin selbst hingegen von Krisen geprägt? In Anbetracht dieser Fragen deutet dieses Buch auf einen strukturellen Verlust des Vorstellungsvermögens – selbst in einer Disziplin, die sich darauf zu beruhen scheint. In dem analysiert wird, wie sich Utopismus und Krise in der Architektur manifestieren, werden die Grenzen einer problem- und objektorientierten Architektur zum Vorschein gebracht. Dadurch wird auf die zentralen Widersprüche der Architektur verwiesen, orthodoxe Denkweisen kritisiert und Grundannahmen infrage gestellt. Einem neuen Verständnis von Architektur sowie alternativen (Re)Produktionsmöglichkeiten nachgehend, werden zentrale Konzepte der Architektur sowie die Architekturlehre radikal neu gedacht. Daran aufbauend schlägt die Autorin eine Methode der utopischen Spekulation für eine theoriegeleitete räumliche Praxis vor. Diese soll für diejenigen handlungsleitend wirken, die auf eine Veränderung der gelebten Alltagserfahrungen abzielen; und zwar nicht in einer fernen Zukunft, sondern beginnend im Hier und Jetzt.*

Preface

by Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Sabine Knierbein

Venia Internationale Urbanistik,
Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space
Faculty of Architecture and Planning | future.lab
TU Wien, Austria

What if you study planning, but think you lack fundamental ideas about society? What if someone else studied urban design and had not learned to radically reimagine our human world for the better? What if an architecture student set out to revisit what she studied and realised that something she thought of as essential to architectural education about cities and how they are built is entirely missing, absent, or at least in crisis? This book is driven by exactly these questions: What is it that we are seeking to learn from architecture these days when we think of the relation between how we build and how we live in cities and urban spaces?

This book is about the potential role(s) of architecture as a discipline, and of architects as urban professionals. Carolina Crijns centres her book on what architecture means to citizens when societies seek to achieve a good life, yet simultaneously experience a decade of crises. This question is essentially philosophical in nature and yet relevant to ask in these unsettled decades. From the perspective of a deeply curious young architect thirsty for knowledge in broad areas, Crijns initially delves into social theory and explores conceptions of social imaginaries as they become relevant to describe, analyse and interpret the normative and pathbreaking roles of utopia and architecture during a decade marked by multiple crises. Basic understandings of the works of Karl Marx, Karl

Mannheim, Paul Ricoeur and Cornelius Castoriadis are elaborated on, thereby making them accessible for future generations of architecture students and urban professionals alike. Crijns raises an alarm about the current ethos in architectural education and professional praxis which seemingly renders any type of utopianism as incommensurate:

> If utopia has …been sent to the back of our minds, it is either because other concepts have become more prominent in our imaginary (…) or because our ontological conception does not allow it (…) The current narrative of rendering every form of utopianism unreasonable is (…) especially troubling (…) as it is imagination itself that is being threatened. (Crijns, this volume, p. 43)

Imagining architecture without providing the capabilities and skills needed to radically envision the new, the other and the different (*Vorstellungskraft*), explores a profession in crisis. It reaches unerringly the sore points at the very heart of a discipline proud of its capacity to envision that which had never been seen before.

To spotlight in a different way how architecture is thought of and how it is taught, this book takes the reader out of the traditional ways of thinking about urban development as it invites us to wander off the beaten track. Crijns uses tactics of *estrangement* to first come to terms with key words that shape our contemporary urban experience, that is, transformation, crisis and crises, (post)modernity, (post)politics and de-politicisation. This section ends with a proposition to think of utopianism first, instead of utopia, and secondly, to think of transformative utopianisms that:

> have to be a *continuous movement* made of analytical as well as creative thinkers, lay people as well as professionals, from various and differentiating fields and parts of the world. They need to exchange, (un)learn from each other, build alliances, and envisage together, re-evaluating everyday anew. (Crijns, this volume, p. 64, original emphasis)

If urban transformation, particularly socio-ecological transformation, is thought of as a key vehicle to trigger architectural thought in times of repeated and agitated moments of crises (and as a way to avoid talking about the pros and cons of growth), then architecture has to philosophically explore its intrinsic connection to crisis as a mode of capitalist urban restructuring. While architecture has usually depicted itself in a position of the saviour, redeemer or rescuer from crisis, Crijns introduces the idea that "architecture, in some ways, *is* materialised crisis." (ibid., p. 66, original emphasis).

This is not just a single moment of provocation; this results in deep philosophical deconstruction of architecture's current educational ethos. Yet deconstruction is constructive in the sense that it allows to re-construct and co-construct what has been absent or missing in terms of values, beliefs, positions, and ideas. To do so, Crijns explores two routes to sustain her arguments when she proposes (1) to consider architecture in the crisis society; and (2) when she invites the reader to decipher crisis in architecture. It is in crisis-contexts in which architects hardly ever envision the unknown in utopian ways but seek to preclude the present or to repair it, which actually contributes to the emerging immanent speculatory crises in the field of architecture itself. This is framed and further explored by theorising space, and time, in and for urban utopianisms. This part resembles the socio-theoretical heart of this book as it interweaves the temporal and spatial, that is, relational focus, with a conception of social change while approaching a new utopianism pertinent to all types of contemporary learners and learnings in architecture.

Against this newly established conceptual-theoretical pillar contemporary ideas from urban development praxis and architectural theory are categorised either as (1) *problem-solving-utopianisms* or as (2) *question-raising-utopianisms*: The former (1) relates to space-times of control and is portrayed by sharply analysing *Degenerate Utopias* which lean towards a disavowal of crisis; *Junkspace* triggering anti-utopianism and an idea of omni-crisis, as well as *Techno-Utopias* serving as the toothless utopianist attempt to solve a crisis. The latter (2) takes on a feminist twist and refers to triggers to revisit architectural agency's political dimension, re-

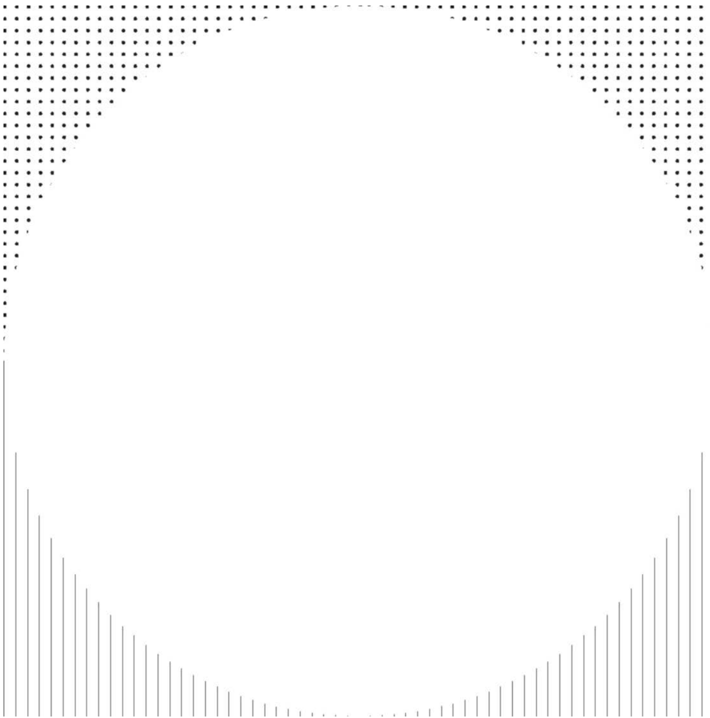
think architectural education and to constitute *embodied utopianisms of care*. This part convinces the reader by placing dynamic analytical dialectic between crises and utopia(nism) and by taking it to quite different and enlightening directions.

This book cares about utopia as method: Carolina Crijns has used this method herself to envision her own appropriation of *embodied utopianisms of care* (p. 120) as a dialectical method which is used to cater towards a radically changed architectural praxis. In that sense, utopia serves as a method that works with a complex conception of care that may orient action and might ground the emergence of any contingent social structure along different temporal and spatial aspects.

This book concerns architecture as a knowledge field situated in a societal realm which is, on the one hand, increasingly marked by crisis, yet on the other hand, utopia is every bit as relevant as it has been throughout times of modernist urban development. However, the nature of utopia itself has changed, which is why this book evolves around the idea of utopianisms. This is not just a new proposal to understand utopian thinking in architecture, planning, urban design, etc. differently, it is also an approach that directly opens this thought for re-construction and co-construction of utopia in these contemporary fields. This manuscript follows an oscillating movement between social theory, philosophy, and architectural sociology, sometimes letting go of direct learnings. It transfers between the social sciences and architecture, and then swings back to explore in detail the relevance of social theory for the spatial arts, and all professions involved in building cities. Some readers might be tempted to read this oscillating movement as inconsistency or rupture, while it truly follows the dialectical method of *estrangement* which is a basic feature for this hermeneutical text production: Only by taking some distance from professional debates in architecture and related fields, critical interspace is gained towards the discipline's inherent conceptual-theoretical mechanisms as regards utopia. These ruptures, or rather: this type of *estrangement*, are nothing but a point of return which allows for a constant interweaving of social theory and architectural sociology learnings. In that sense, thinking about utopia in architecture through an everyday-theory based

lens towards care allows one to situate utopianisms beyond unfulfilled promises for a better future, and beyond the ancient Greek idea of fixing one model of society in a certain bounded territory: Utopia is relevant for today as it is actualised by critiquing everyday life in the 21st century. Utopianism – understanding utopia as a method – is a seesaw in which one learns by going further both on the side of theorising how we build cities, and on the side of how we want to live them.

1 Introduction



"It is more about how utopia would feel rather than how it would be organized." (Ganjavie 2015, p. 96)

1.1 Why (Utopianism of) Care?

Research Diary Entry, 4th March 2022

Throughout my childhood and teenage years, I was given the impression that I was living in a world of unity and peace in which everything evil had been resolved and left in the past. Like most people growing up in Europe, I truly believed that the world had changed for the better and that I had the freedom and opportunity to achieve anything, if only I worked hard enough. Reinforced by my multinational background, unity, internationality, freedom, and peace were all I had ever known. It was only in my mid-twenties when I had realised that I had accepted much of it as given and started to critically reflect upon it. In fact, we[1] still lived in a hugely discriminatory world in which working hard alone was not a guarantee for a 'successful' life – whatever that meant. Nevertheless, or because of that, I felt myself determined to write a book about utopianism and hope. I still believed to the core, that human beings were intrinsically good and that a fulfilling and meaningful life meant a life shared. When the Coronavirus had hit at the beginning of 2020, I had only felt more encouraged in believing that we urgently needed more hope-filled visions, imagination, and creative ways of thinking. Even after almost two years of Covid-19 still being continuously and obtrusively present, with leading people getting notably exhausted, I had still not given up in believing so.

Then, on 24th February 2022, when Russia had started its military actions against Ukraine and the world of many people literally came tumbling down, so did an internal world inside me. I had now spent around

1 'We' in this book is an expression of a hopeful signifier that expectantly will one day be representative of an actual 'we': "If we become feminists because of the inequality and injustice in the world, because of what the world is not, then what kind of world are we building? […] we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing full well that this we is not a foundation but *what we are working toward*. By working out what we are for, we are working out that we, that hopeful signifier" (Ahmed 2017, p. 2, own emphasis).

one and a half years thinking and reading about topics related to utopianism, hope, and ideas to change the world for the better, but in that very moment all of it seemed instantly lost and shattered. While I had managed to stay hopeful in a world ruled by capitalism, patriarchy, and neocolonialism, I could not in a world where yearning for power now also meant killing for power. I had no means to comprehend it. Suddenly, it was as if the sum of all the world's injustices had simultaneously accumulated into one painful lump inside my body. While I had questioned the fulfilment of Western ideals of freedom, equality, and peace, even though they had been preached since the Enlightenment, a brutality of this kind seemed beyond reach. The pain inside my chest was then joined by a sense of guilt for having once believed that there had ever been a moment in time where the world had been one of unity, freedom, and harmony. Suddenly, I had to painfully come to terms with the fact, that in the 21st century, people were still killing each other for power and revenge.

What sense would hope make in such a brutal world? What good were dreams if they could be shattered instantaneously? What utopianism would be relevant if it was not shared by those in power? Within the one week that had passed since Russia first invaded, it had seemed as if any legitimisation for this book had been devastatingly crushed. In that week I struggled to see any value in it, since it and everything else, now seemed so utterly meaningless. Even if there was hope, what good was it in architecture anyway? At the end of the day, what can architecture do—really? I started to doubt any positive response to this million-dollar question I had optimistically been devoting myself to.

However, the moment someone told me it would be understandable and acceptable if I were to change the topic of my book, was the moment I realised that changing it would have meant giving in. Changing the topic would have meant that there is really nothing that can be done. That there was really no place for hope. Yes, I do have an architectural background rather than one in political sciences or law, but should not all areas in society equally do their best to contribute to a better world? Did not exactly this supposedly 'weak' attribute of architecture legitimise its withdrawal from wider socio-political responsibilities? While archi-

tecture cannot stop people from bombing the world, it might help in rebuilding it. Now, more than ever, thinking about new ways of communal life seemed necessary; ways that go beyond consensus, freedom, and equality. Now, more than ever, I had come to realise that pursuing utopia(nism) was not simply about spreading hope as a self-comforting coping mechanism but that it was as a way of life. Believing in its possibility would be the first necessary step for achieving its actuality. Yes, it had become much more difficult—but it had also become far more necessary.

"On the borderline between inside and outside, utopia is as much possessed of *Zeitgeist* as of *Weltschmerz*." (Santos 1995, p. 480, original emphasis)

1.2 Methodology and Book Structure

This book is a theoretical exploration of the meaning of contemporary architecture in and for the pursuit of a good life, especially with regards to society's inherent crisis-ridden structure. For this reason, the term utopianism is introduced to express humanity's unrelenting pursuit of human flourishing. Informed by "philosophy [which] is dedicated to a critical analysis of the basic assumptions of being and the self-evident aspects of everyday life" (Loh 2019, p. 1, own insertion), this book explores how the concepts of utopianism and crisis interrelate with architecture from a metaphysical perspective. While largely theoretical, this book reveals the extent to which philosophy plays a crucial role not only in rethinking architecture but in affecting the very ways people inhabit it.

Following this endeavour, the author has chosen the method of conceptual analysis, a common method in philosophical methodology to deconstruct complex entities or phenomena. While *philosophical methodology* can be understood as "the use of thought experiments to test conceptual analyses, or understanding us and our environments in a way conducive to human flourishing" (Dever 2016, p. 3, emphasis removed), *conceptual analysis* is defined as "a method of inquiry in which one seeks to assess complex systems of thought by 'analysing' them into simpler

elements whose relationships are thereby brought into focus" (Baldwin 1998). As a method grounded in philosophical methodology, conceptual analysis studies concepts in their relation (e.g. how they are linked to knowledge, power, identity, time, space, and so on) and thereby bears the possibility of deconstructing the narratives they are embedded in. Critical judgement therefore is a necessary precondition since concepts, human-made theoretical terms, are by no means fixed but tied to ideologies (Cappelen et al. 2016).

Conceptual analysis can be used as a tool to question *ontological assumptions* (the study of reality, e.g. what is crisis?), *epistemological assumptions* (refers to the nature of that knowledge, e.g. what are crisis claims being made upon?) and *axiological assumptions* (the study of values, e.g. what are the underlying values in the architectural field?). While *descriptive* conceptual analysis is of an explanatory nature, *normative* conceptual analysis offers propositions about how things *ought* to be. Normative approaches are therefore often linked to *conceptual engineering*, a method which aims at redefining concepts in fruitful ways. As such, this body of work applies both descriptive and normative methods of conceptual analysis.

Furthermore, "Philosophical Methodology is the study of philosophical method: how to do philosophy well. But at the end of the day there isn't much to say about how to do philosophy well." (Dever 2016, p. 20) Therefore, the format and structure of this book have been devised by the author in a way that would logically guide the reader through a coherent thread of argumentation.

As for the structure of this book, all chapters have been written in an essay format, assembled into seven chapters consisting of three subchapters each. The book starts by introducing several concepts from the social sciences into architecture in 2 *Imagined Worlds*, whereby the imaginary and the human imaginative capability are rendered as the opening theme. The subject matter is then contextualised within the socio-political framework and debates which substantially influence developments within contemporary architecture in 3 *Constructed Narratives*. In 4 *Linking Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture* the author consequently triangulates utopianism, crisis, and architecture by scrutinising the conceptual

commonalities between each. This chapter offers insight into their historical developments, their significant interrelation with time and space, and the many underlying assumptions affecting utopianism, crisis, and architecture. In chapter *5 Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianisms,* the previously elaborated dialectic of utopianism and crisis is analysed within specific contemporary forms of architecture. What will be explored in particular detail are the ways in which these concepts manifest in power-induced time-spaces. In *6 Space-Times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianisms*, the author offers possible normative concepts for rethinking architecture's definition, its education as well as its (re)production. The author closes with hopeful conceptual speculation and goes beyond theory alone by developing a method for radical spatial practices ambitious to change lived experiences. The final chapter, *7 Interpretation*, contains the summary and analysis of the book as well as its conclusion. Furthermore, two research diary entries, the introductory subchapter *1.1 Why (Utopianism of) Care?* and the final text *7.3 Revisited: Why Utopianism (of Care)?* conceptually open and close the book respectively by each connecting the philosophical subject to current socio-political realities, illustrating the book topic's relevance, as well as some personal reflections.

In addition, the author would like to stress that she is aware of the contested nature of some of these propositions. For some, the outspoken critique might seem too radical, the ideas too abstract, or the propositions too unpractical in a discipline which has become obsessed with 'realistic' and market-oriented tasks. However, precisely for these reasons, introducing philosophy into architecture has a lot to offer.[2] Therefore, situated in an "architecture academy [which] suffers from the 'poverty

2 Slavoj Žižek (2012b), for example, has contended that the need for philosophy today is more urgent than ever, especially for it to inform science and the basic assumptions on which it relies. While Marx famously observed that 'the philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it' (ibid.). According to Žižek the world in the 20th century has been changed too fast and therefore the time has come to reinterpret it again. Žižek (2012a) therefore stresses first and foremost 'to start thinking'.

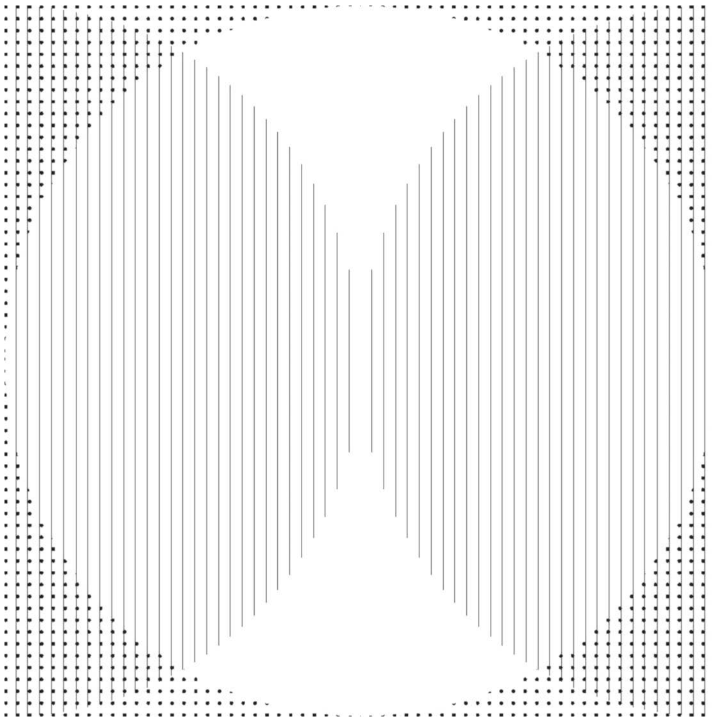
of philosophy'" (Lahiji 2021, p. 3, own insertion), this book serves as an invitation for creative, imaginative, and new ways of thinking which go beyond object-oriented accounts and an "obsessive matter-of-factness" (Coleman 2005, p. 6). In doing so, it positions architecture in a multidisciplinary field, challenges its autonomous position, questions existing knowledge-claims, assumptions, and methods. It should serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement for (re)thinking the tasks of architecture, (re)evaluating the basis for a good life, (re)visiting togetherness and (re)considering alternative ways of being, living, thinking, and designing. Most importantly, however, it should serve as an invitation to rethink ourselves as spatial practitioners.

1.3 Research Questions

1) What is the meaning of architecture in and for the pursuit(s) of the good life in a society inherently marked by crisis?

   a) How are utopianism, crisis, and architecture conceptually connected? What assumptions, values and (outdated) myths underpin these?
   b) What forms of utopianism and ways of dealing with crisis exist in architecture today? How do these influence human interpretation of space and time in the production and experience of architecture?
   c) What normative concepts and ways of thinking could create the basis for relational understandings of utopianism, crisis, and architecture?

2 Imagined Worlds



“The modern world presents itself, on the surface, as that which has pushed, and tends to push, rationalization to its limit [...]. Paradoxically, however, despite or rather due to this extreme ‘rationalization’, the life of the modern world is just as dependent on the imaginary as any archaic or historical culture.” (Castoriadis 2005 [1987], p. 156)

2.1 Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method

While the end of the 20th century has seen the concept of utopia sidelined as imaginary and unrealistic, societies nevertheless remain characterised by a pursuit of a good life – an unrelenting process of becoming informed by normative assumptions. As such, they remain deeply entangled with ideas on what it means to be human, what implies a good life, and by further extent what constitutes a good society. Consequently, they remain inextricably linked to *utopianism*, defined as the pursuit or thought of human flourishing. Nevertheless, while the pursuit of a good life is intrinsically human, the possibility of a transformation in a positive direction is met with great scepticism, not least due to a political realism insisting on the existing arrangements. As a result, utopia(nism) as a mode of conceptual thinking has been pushed to the side, most notably in the discipline which for centuries has been one of the primary loci for utopian thought. "Who doesn't have a drawer overflowing with designs for an ideal city?" said the first issue of *Éspace et Société* in the year 1970 (cited in Pinder 2013, p. 35). In fact, throughout history, the underlying assumption that architecture makes life 'better' has linked architecture and utopianism significantly closely. However, even back when the field was openly saturated with utopian thinking, utopia stood in as a synonym for the fixed contours of the ideal city and as such linked to totality, finality, and perfect-ability.[1] To this day, the fact that it is dismissed and mistrusted rests on precisely these assumptions and as such on an limited understanding of what utopia(nism) might be about.

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1 It was especially the introduction of systemic architectural education in the 18th century which shifted the centre of architecture from the material object to the *ideal* object. This emphasised the idea of architecture as the product of the mind and therefore privileged the process of thought (and therefore the knowledge of the architect) (Kaminer 2011). See also subchapter *6.2 Rethinking Architectural Education*, p. 130.

Originating in neo-Marxist as well as feminist thought, from the past 50 years, intellectual debates from various disciplinary fields have not only made many attempts at redefining the concept into more open-ended, processual, knowingly incomplete, and less idealised accounts, but criticised the very idea of materialised utopias, if not suggested its material impossibility (Coleman 2013b, 2014b, 2015; Grosz 2002; Harvey 2000; Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005).[2] "At no point can there be a final shape for a city" (Madanipour 2010, p. 13) and at no point will it ever be ideal. Nevertheless, such redefinitions to this day remain largely absent in architectural education, where the understanding of utopia as a spatial object endures. This is quite surprising given the multifarious and substantial ways in which architecture is linked to utopianism. Most times, architecture attempts to contribute to human flourishing and, as such, makes suggestions about what implies a good life and what it means to be human.[3] While utopianism therefore mostly tends to be *implicitly* embedded in architecture (wishing to 'improve' life), it can also be *explicitly* so (wishing to guide or transform society in a particular direction). Nevertheless, philosophical conversations about architecture's position, expectations, and tasks within the pursuit of human flourishing remain largely absent, even in democratically oriented societies.

Over the past few years, however, *explicit* utopianisms have started to partially re-emerge in wider societal debates (for example in the forms of Universal Basic Income, the 4-Day-Week, De-Growth Models, or the Doughnut-Economy). As such, there exists a possibility for architecture to take part in these conversations, not only for architecture to socially re-engage, but to make architecture part of an urgently needed larger societal conversation. Such a moment was briefly achieved at the beginning of the Covid pandemic in 2020, for example, when the question 'how will we live in future cities?' became ubiquitously and globally

2 See *4.2 Architecture and Utopianism: Space and Projectivity* for further discussion on its material impossibility.

3 Not so in crisis architecture, where utopianism remains largely absent. See subchapter *4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society.*

shared.[4] On the other side of the spectrum however, architecture is often entangled in exclusionary and sometimes even dystopian future scenarios.[5] Here, the future of architecture seems to rest on its technological ability to compensate for planetary ills. As such, a close examination of varying visions will reveal how thoroughly contested and power-induced distinct forms of utopianism can be. Thus, while the ways architecture is meant to contribute to a better life might vary, the positive ascription of this link nevertheless inherently connects architecture to utopianism.

However, this points to a decisive discrepancy between thought and pursuit of the good society in architectural practice and education. As Nathaniel Coleman has observed, "the complex relation between architecture and Utopia remains peculiarly undertheorized." (Coleman 2014b) While utopianism remains deeply embedded in architecture (the outspoken mistrust towards utopias notwithstanding), there is little to no room either for theoretical explorations on utopia(nism) beyond its historical context and traditional understanding, nor for scrutinising the underlying assumptions of such pursuits. Grounded in the broad absence of utopianism as a mode of critical inquiry for conceptual thinking about human flourishing on the metalevel, this subchapter therefore offers an examination of the updated philosophical and theoretical reconceptualisation of utopia as *philosophy, concept,* or *method*, or the *philoso-*

4 The ARCH+ issue '*Vienna – The End of Housing (as Typology)*', for example, took up the discussion of redefining housing in the light of recent societal changes by addressing it through the social question (Obrist et al. 2021). Another good example is the IBA_Vienna, Austria's first International Building Exhibition, that took place in 2022 on the topic of *New Social Housing*. It decisively refrained from constructing a lighthouse project typical for previous International Building Exhibitions and instead aimed at improving the processes needed to provide and create social housing. It thereby focused on the mediation of stakeholders, the creation of new synergies and networks, on communication, and on knowledge exchange (IBA_Wien 2022).

5 More on this in chapter 5 *Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianisms*, especially 5.3 *Techno-Utopias: Utopianism 'Solving' Crisis.* For an elaboration of dystopian narratives of the future see 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation.*

phy of utopianism. It will be argued that the introduction of the theory of utopianism into architecture might be "a possibility for architects to engage in a kind of social and political thoughtfulness about their works" (Coleman 2014a, p. 53).

Utopianism is thus the general concept for thinking about or pursuing the idea of a better society on the metaphilosophical as well as metaphysical level. While thinking (theory) and pursuing (praxis) are related (Schmid 2005), they each entail different aspects. Whereas utopian thought involves different modes of thinking (see below), its pursuit is guided by the underlying context-dependent assumptions of society. As such, not only the *content* but also the *form* and *function* of utopianism might differ depending on the cultural and historical contexts. For example, striving towards the better society might take the form of incremental betterment versus bigger or faster achievements; guided by values or the pursuit of specific goals, paths, or visions. As mentioned, utopianism therefore might be more implicit or explicit. Decisive aspects for how the better society should come into being are a society's relation to *time* (e.g. How does society relate the past to the present? Is the future perceived as empty or promising? How fast should change come into being?); its relation to *space* (e.g. How does space account for the betterment of society? How is it (re)produced? What are the underlying assumptions of space?); society's relation to *the cosmos* (e.g. Does it believe in a higher power, fate and/or a purpose for humanity?); and society's *(self-)judgement* (e.g. Does society perceive itself as having the power or agency to influence wider circumstances?). Since these aspects will be reflected upon in more detail later in this book, this subchapter intends to shed light on the four modes of utopian thinking, namely *normative, critical, creative*, and *epistemological thinking*.[6]

(Re)considering what it means to live a good life constitutes the very core of utopianism. "To measure the life 'as it is' by a life as it should be

6 As defined by the author. Fátima Vieira has similarly defined utopian thinking into four categories, namely prospective, critical, holistic and creative thinking (Vieira 2017).

[or perhaps, as it *could* be] […] is a defining, constitutive feature of humanity. Human being-in-the-world means being-ahead-of-the-world" (Bauman 2003, p. 15, original emphasis, own insertion). Normative assumptions are therefore embedded in the human way of life. For Ernst Bloch (2016 [1959]), for example, the notion of human incompleteness is the driving force for the development of societies. As sentient beings, human existence is marked by transcendence, an ongoing process of contingent becoming, which Bloch describes as a sense of *not-yet*. Since this becoming is driven by a normative function, it is simultaneously marked by the notion of *more-than*. "We seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves" (C.S. Lewis cited in Levitas 2013b, p. 180). Normative thinking is therefore always a *temporal* and *anticipatory* operation, suspended between *is* and *ought*. It is a forward-looking process of making the future present (not to be mistaken with creating present futures, which would be the extrapolation of the present into the future). For Henri Lefebvre (2014 [1972]), for example, making the future present meant exploring *the possible* as a theoretical instrument for informing *the actual*. Reflecting on the possible would thereby be a means for stimulating change in present reality, which for Lefebvre reflected the basis for a critical spatial praxis (see also Vogelpohl 2012, pp. 77–79). "By articulating 'the not yet' it helps us to act in the actual world, defining objectives, giving direction to struggle and resistance, setting a political agenda and opening the door to creative dialogue" (Markus 2002, p. 15).[7] For Bloch, this unfulfilled disposition is furthermore imbued with hope, the longing for an optimistic transition towards the future.

Normative thinking therefore strongly relies on imagination. It does so, however, in a particular way – not simply to imagine a world, but to imagine it *otherwise. Creative thinking* is therefore a prerequisite for expanding imagination of what might be socially possible or rendering the impossible possible (with reference to Lefebvre, Chatterton 2010 and

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7 The notion of the *not-yet* is well-reflected in the German word *Entwurf*, which means not simply *to design, plan,* or *create* – but *to design the **not-yet***.

Pinder 2013).[8] Creative imagination can give new insights, for example, through combining multiple and perhaps yet unconnected perspectives and therefore has the capacity to prevent foreclosure and keep possibilities open. Society in which creative imagination remains absent, in contrast, remains similar to its existing form. "Fighting for what is possible, known or easily achieved will only ever give us limited purchase on social change. Social justice and equality, and the dreams we have of a better world, lie in exploring and making real what currently seems impossible, unknown or out of our reach" (Chatterton 2010, p. 235).[9] What society has achieved thus far is after all indebted to people who have fought for what seemed once impossible. As such, creative thinking stands against the strictly rational and bureaucratic and works through spontaneity, play, the unexpected, and perhaps even the unconventional.

To be able to apply creative thinking in fruitful ways, however, implies a deep analytical understanding of social reality and stands in coherence with *critical thinking*. Defined by a sense of judgement and reflexivity, critical thinking allows the questioning of present assumptions. Therefore, "what makes a utopia utopian is dissidence: the divergence it outlines from, or the argument it makes against, the existing situation" (Coleman 2014a, p. 56). Linked with the anticipatory function of human becoming, critical thinking furthermore highlights the constant need for debate and dialogue. Insisting on the provisionality of what constitutes a good life, utopianism is therefore necessarily constitutive of many 're's': (re)thinking, (re)evaluating, (re)visiting,

8 It should be noted, that the tension between the possible/impossible gets differently attributed to utopia(nism) by varying intellectuals. For example, while Erik Olin Wright's idea of 'real' utopia's relates to turning the possible into an actuality, for Slavoj Žižek utopia is "not the art of the possible, but that of the impossible, and creates interventions and spaces that cannot be understood in terms of established symbolic framings" (Žižek cited in Chatterton 2010, p. 237). See also Wilson 2018 for a discussion on the difference between Olin Wright's *real* and Žižek's *Real* utopia. (For more on the Real see subchapter *4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society*).

9 See Knierbein and Viderman 2018a for more on urban emancipation debates.

(re)imagining, (re)debating, (re)considering, (re)introducing, (re)prioritising, (re)contextualising … As such, the critical mode of utopianism can be described as 'accepting little and questioning much' (Unger and West 1998, p. 32).[10] The creative and critical features of utopianism furthermore offer powerful tools for the method of *estrangement*: defamiliarizing the familiar, making the invisible visible, providing a distance from the existing. To many utopists, this aspect is *the* proper role of utopia(nism), rather than construing plans for the future (Levitas 2013b). As such, *estrangement* invites utopianism into the present, reminding us of the unrelenting possibility of an 'other' way of being at all times (Hage 2011, 2015). In such a conception, reality would merely be 'dominant reality', with minor realities existing simultaneously and in which we are always equally enmeshed. This depicts reality as a multi-reality instead, from which a myriad of futures could develop from.[11]

The fourth mode of thinking refers to "a 'utopian epistemology', which is arguably one of the most valuable functions of the critical utopian mentality" (Gardiner 2012, p. 16). Through reconsidering our ways of knowing (epistemologies), utopianism has the capacity to change the very nature of that knowledge (ontology). In this sense, utopianism has the capacity not only to question 'certain' and 'legitimate' truth-claims but to alter present assumptions about reality, including ourselves. Therefore, the very attempt of thinking about or pursuing

10 However, it will later be outlined, that 'accepting little and questioning much' alone no longer suffices, especially with regards to recent protest movements against Covid restrictions in which this form of 'critical' thinking has become co-opted and isolated. This subchapter is meant to give an introductory working definition of *transformative utopianisms* and will be explored in depth in *6.3 Embodied Utopianisms of Care*.

11 This conception is similar to Lefebvre's 'moments' which relate to "moments of presence within everyday life [through which] glimpses of a transformed world could open up" (Pinder 2013, p. 36, own insertion) as well as Walter Benjamin's 'full' conception of time (see subchapter *4.3 Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*).

change has a changing feature: "Through changing our world, we change ourselves" (Harvey 2000, p. 234).[12]

Another crucial aspect of epistemological thinking is that it enables humans to imagine how utopia might *feel*. As such, utopianism (in the form of feelings, affect, desire, hope and imagination) can be considered as embodied knowledge. It is therefore through the human body that hope, desire, and imagination appear in materialised form. Subsequently, this directly connects theory to praxis since this knowledge is to be enacted upon in the here and now. The body therefore works as a hinge between utopian thinking and its pursuit.[13] This consequently places utopianism on the level of the personal and everyday. Such conceptualisations of utopia(nism) are heavily indebted to theorists such as Ernst Bloch (2016 [1959]) and Henri Lefebvre (2014 [1972]) who have attempted to bring theory and praxis into closer alignment, locating utopianism within material conditions, and attributing it to fleeting, contingent, and incomplete conceptions, "in the full knowledge that perfection or completion is deferred endlessly, and thankfully so" (Gardiner 2012, p. 10). What Bloch and Lefebvre referred to as 'concrete utopia' (see Gardiner 2012, Pinder 2013), or as 'everyday utopianism' (with reference to Lefebvre, Gardiner 2012), and others as 'embodied utopianism' (Bingaman et al. 2002b), all entail understandings of utopia(nism) which operate under the assumption that it is both a social activity and thought process, located in the here-and-now, and with the capacity to influence spatial practices. As mentioned, such understandings of utopia(nism) therefore politicise the present, reminding us that "[w]e have in us what we could become" (Bloch cited in Levitas 2013b, p. 185). This form of utopian thought therefore is often reflected in neo-Marxist

12 Or, in more philosophical terms, and perhaps the source for Harvey's line of thought: "If what (…) [human beings make] comes from … [them, they] in turn [come] from what [they make]; it is made by … [them], but it is in these works and by these works that (…) [they have made themselves]" (Lefebvre as cited in Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 46).

13 See *4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society* for more on the corporeal aspect and overcoming the duality between the realistic-material and constructivist-cultural.

theories with the intention to influence the contemporary production of the urban landscape in its material as well as (post-)political condition (such as Jameson 2004, 2005 [1997]; Swyngedouw 2009; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015b; Wilson 2018; Žižek 2012c) and to inform critical and emancipatory spatial practices (Chatterton 2010; Coleman 2012, 2015; Harvey 2000; Karim 2018; Knierbein and Viderman 2018a; Lefebvre 2014 [1972]; Pinder 2002, 2013).

As such, Henri Lefebvre (2014 [1977]) was a pioneer for theorising the everyday not only as a crucial arena of modern culture and society, but for stressing its potential as a site of creative resistance and liberatory power. Since the city is made and remade each day through everyday experiences, it is "the landscape of the everyday out of which change can arise" (with reference to Lefebvre, Coleman 2015, p. 10). It is in the everyday that "imagination is becoming a lived experience, something experimental" (citing Lefebvre in Gardiner 2012, p. 11). Therefore, "[a]mbiguous like all in-between spaces, the everyday represents a zone of social transition and possibility with the potential for new social arrangements and forms of imagination" (Crawford 1999, p. 9). According to David Harvey (2020), similar thought has already been shared by Marx who has insisted that thinking about an anti-capitalist transition would mean changing the very nature of human beings, which for Marx meant how we organise and rationalise our daily choices. "If we are going to change human nature, we have to change daily life" (ibid.).

It is, however, important to stress that while such understandings of utopia(nism) locate utopian thought in the present rather than construing blueprints for the future, it still remains important to create hope-filled visions which can be collectively shared, affecting[14] and informing society in a dialectic fashion, especially in times when crisis thinking

14 Referring to *affect theory*. Other than emotions, affects are generated through specific material conditions and sensed in dynamically relational ways. For more on *affect* see subchapters *4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society* as well as *6.1 Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension*.

has diminished imagination.[15] Furthermore, these conceptualisations reveal that "the future of utopianism lies, not with the pursuit of an overarching 'consensus' [...] or the belief that social cohesion must be premised on a uniformity of belief and thought [...] but in the realization that diverse utopian visions should not only coexist, but enter into dialogue and contest, on a continual basis, each other's core assumptions and values" (Gardiner 2012, p. 9).

A redefinition of utopia(nism) along these lines therefore opposes the static, abstract, total, and perfect visions of utopia in which reality is fixed for all time. They question the assumption of a world resistant to further change and stand against the self-evident. Furthermore, they locate utopia(nism) in the innovative forces of everyday life rather than carefully planned or abstract master plans. Integrating utopianism as a (feminist) methodology in architecture would therefore imply a shift in focus from creating buildings as objects to buildings entangled in social processes and their contextual embeddedness. As such, its introduction could bear the capacity to redefine the very meaning and purpose of architecture. To put it in a nutshell, "architecture's limited capacity to influence society is less an argument against any role for utopia in architectural invention than it is an argument for why a utopian dimension is crucial" (Coleman 2014a, p. 52). Coleman contends that utopian thinking would in fact enable architects to play an active part in the configuration of the social environment.

However, it should be emphasised that since utopianism and its philosophy underly normative assumptions, both must be brought under equal scrutiny as the realities they want to tackle. In a way, the introduction of a utopian methodology into architecture is a utopian project, given the persistent insistence on orthodox methods, tools, and ways of thinking in the discipline. Since utopia(nism) as philosophy essentially is a *method* or *way of thinking*, its effectiveness lies within the way this method is turned into practice. As such, there is nothing intrinsically

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15 See subchapter *4.3 Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation* for an explanation on how crisis thinking has affected imagination. See subchapter *6.3 Embodied Utopianisms of Care* for more on hope-filled visions.

emancipatory nor authoritarian to utopianism, since this is dependent on its *form, function*, and *content* (including the underlying assumptions). How effective a utopian methodology eventually will turn out to be therefore not only depends on the qualities of utopian thinking but on the methods of implementation. Therefore, while utopian thinking can provide beneficial insights in countless ways, there is no one-solution-fits-all for its application and as such it can become highly contested. This means that one should be attentive not to idealise utopian methodology as the new panacea, which could result in reselling a romanticised, perhaps even pre-defined solution under a new name. Sabine Knierbein, for example, has brought to attention how the recent increase in relational approaches in architecture must be wary of possible co-optation by capitalist forces in order not to "run risk of losing their emancipatory capacity" (Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 313). Similar alertness concerns the everyday, which one should be equally cautious to idealise. A superficial reading could reinforce "the commodity condition of academic production, where the everyday becomes simply a fashionable logo for repackaging familiar goods" (Highmore 2002, p. 28).

Having said this, in elaborating significant points for addressing utopianism in architecture and urbanism, David Pinder has highlighted that "[t]he first is the need to attend critically to utopian impulses currently at play within conceptions of cities and urban spaces, and to uncover the desires and dreams that underpin conceptions of urbanism. [...] How are ideals of the good city and good urban life, including those of urban elites, being mobilized now and to what ends? How might uncovering these enable the specific interests they embody to be criticized?" (Pinder 2013, p. 42). Following this inquiry, this book therefore attempts to analyse various power-induced forms of utopianism and their underlying assumptions existing in architecture in the context of multiple crises today. Since it is however equally important to counter such visions with hopeful and creative alternatives, this book will also provide speculative and normative considerations which could act as a promising basis for different forms of utopianism.

> This is perhaps one of the main messages […]: that we have a role to play in these crisis-riddled times, which will start with re-evaluating our own professional agency through radical politics, value systems and actions. We need to increase our own reproductive capacity as specialists and citizens, who look into our uncertain future with hope (Petrescu and Trogal 2017, p. 13).

2.2 Social Imaginaries

Human beings have the capacity not only to imagine the world as it physically exists, but to imagine a conceptual world beyond. This conceptual world is not simply made of mere fantasies and dreams, but is a reflection of a human-made symbolic world made of collective stories and meaning. Even though this world only exists in our minds, it still has real and material consequences on our lives. Everything human beings have created, material and immaterial, is a consequence of this conceptual world, manifested in human culture, artifacts, social norms, rituals and collective beliefs. "[Hu]man is an unconsciously philosophical animal, who has posed the questions of philosophy in actual fact long before philosophy existed as explicit reflection and [hu]man is a poetic animal, who has provided answers to these questions in the imaginary" (Castoriadis 2005 [1987], p. 148, own insertions). This imagined world, or imaginary, creates a sense of belonging and common objectives. It acts as the reason or motivation for human behaviour and establishes structures and contexts to human life. This capability of creating mutual stories, or narratives, is pivotal to human existence since it is the basis of collective life. Not only can human beings imagine this constructed world individually, but they can do so collectively. It binds them together in large numbers, allowing for cooperation even beyond borders.

This imagined conceptual world has not only been of interest to sociologists. Anthropologists and historians, such as Yuval Harari (2015), have identified the ability of collective extensive imagination as *the* distinct human trait, distinguishing human beings from all other species

on this planet.[16] Having the ability to create collective stories with collective intentions is believed to be the key reason for *Homo sapiens* to have outlived other human species, despite not having had the biggest brain capacity. "[H]uman beings are especially sophisticated cognitively not because of their greater individual brainpower, but rather because of their unique ability to put their individual brainpowers together to create cultural practices, artifacts, and institutions" (Tomasello and Moll 2010, p. 331). To describe this phenomenon, anthropologists have introduced the term 'shared intentionality' (borrowed from philosophy), sometimes also called 'we' intentionality (ibid.). It describes the collaborative interactions in which humans share psychological states with one another and serves as the "psychological foundation for all things cultural" (Tomasello and Carpenter 2007, p. 124). Central processes and aspects of shared intentionality are the ability for cultural learning, teaching, and normativity. The normative judgement "is essentially a judgement based on the perspective of the group – how 'we' do things" (Tomasello and Moll 2010, p. 343). This means that "[a] child raised alone on a desert island, or even by chimpanzees, would cognitively not be very different from the apes, as its unique adaptation for absorbing culture would be intact but there would be nothing there to absorb" (Tomasello and Moll 2010, p. 332). Human beings thus come into a world full of social and cultural context and, as human beings, do not exist outside of it. None of it has been created individually, but through collective interactions, and has developed into increasingly sophisticated systems of cultural and cognitive complexity over time.

These contexts are thus always specific to a certain society and define what, for a given society, appears as 'real'. "Every society up to now has attempted to give an answer to a few fundamental questions: Who are we as a collectivity? What are we for one another? Where and in what are we? What do we want; what do we desire; what are we lacking?" (Castoriadis

16 While there are other species who can imagine too, the imagination of human beings is unique because they have specific learning capabilities which allow for appropriation and building on the imagined, allowing the increase in complexity over time.

2005 [1987], p. 146). Even though these questions may not be explicitly posed, they are always embedded in the social imaginary of every society. Answers to those questions, "neither 'reality', nor 'rationality' can provide" (ibid.) but are implicit in society's way of life. "Society constitutes itself by producing a de facto answer to these questions in its life, in its activity. It is in the *doing* of each collectivity that the answer to these questions appears as an embodied meaning" (ibid., original emphasis). Reincarnation, the American dream, the nation state, human rights, money or corporate cultures thus are all myths that initially only exist as part of our conceptual world. As long as people believe in them, however, they are rendered credible and lead people to act upon them. The myths, rituals, norms, and symbols that make up human imaginaries are thus a reflection of a particular way of life specific to a certain society. They are an articulation of the way humans see the world and how they place themselves in it. Social imaginaries "create a proper world for the society considered—in fact—they are this world and they shape the psyche of individuals. They create thus a representation of the world, including the society itself and its place in this world" (Canceran 2009, p. 26).

As the imaginary refers to myths and idea(l)s, it has, from the moment of its conceptualisation been linked to ideology (and somewhat later also to utopia). However, "it has always been assumed that the imaginary is a mere reflection, a specular image of what is already there" (Thompson 1982, p. 659). The most widespread understanding perhaps is Karl Marx's (1845) analogy of ideology as a *camera obscura*, in which reality appears upside down, as an inverted or distorted perception of reality. In his critique of Marx, Karl Mannheim (1929) was the first to bring together ideology and utopia (see also Sargent 2010). While Marx described both the ideas of the oppressed as well as the ideas of the ruling class as ideology, Mannheim distinguished these ideas in defining the latter as ideology and the former as utopia.[17] Mannheim

17 While ideology "reflects the desire of identifiable groups to block change to protect their own status; utopia reflects the desire of identifiable groups to bring about change to enhance their status" (Mannheim as cited in Karbasioun 2018, p. 84).

thus described ideology as a tool for enforcing and preserving the current form of domination, which he opposed with utopia offering radical alternatives. While ideology would seek to cover up its deficiencies and utopia would perceive reality in urgent need of transformation, both would act as a form of distortion and prevent society to see reality as it actually exists. In opposing these two terms, Mannheim's theory thus preserves a dualistic and deterministic notion typical of orthodox Marxist thought. Traditional Marxism "has always situated reflection on the socialhistorical within an ontology of determinacy; it has always assumed that 'to be' has one sense: 'to be determined'" (Thomson 1982, p. 662).

It was only in 1975, when Paul Ricoeur (1986) brought those terms back together and argued for more nuanced understandings of both by placing them within the same conceptual framework, namely *the social imaginary* (Karbasioun 2018; Langdridge 2006; Sargent 2010). This set both concepts in a more complex and dialectical relation in which both could assume positive as well as negative effects. To Ricoeur's account this meant rendering "ideology as the symbolic, which serves to bond human culture through identity and tradition" (Langdridge 2006, p. 646), while depicting utopia as that which "projects a real and possible future rather than a fantasy and therefore enables a critical vantage point from which to view ideology" (ibid.). Rather than seeing ideology only as a source of legitimisation for authority or distortion of social imaginary, Ricoeur renders ideology as something constructive, since there exists a pre-existing symbolic system that precedes distortion. Seen this way, ideology acts as the mediating role between social action and meaning and as the preservation of social identities. Utopia, in turn, is seen as the rupture or challenge to 'what is', or, at its most profound level, as the "critical imaginative variation on this identity by forwarding practical alternatives that may be realized" (ibid., p. 654). According to Ricoeur, by creating "a distance between what is and what ought to be" (Ricoeur in ibid., p. 651) utopia therefore becomes a necessary condition to break out of a regressive cycle and transform the social imaginary into a progressive spiral. He thus conceptualises utopia as a powerful tool for rupture and critique.

In a similar vein, for Cornelius Castoriadis (2005 [1987]) the social imaginary is not a mere reflection or veil, but the framework through which human beings mediate and enact reality. This means that the imaginary does not only present the necessary means for society to *express* itself, it also provides the means for its identity to *come into being* in the first place. The "'icons, totems, symbols of religious authority and god are not only the expressions of an instituted authority; they [also] act as the means to constitute this authority as real'" (Castoriadis as cited in Kaika 2010, p. 456). Furthermore, Castoriadis too draws on the imaginative force of society to disrupt the status quo. However, whereas Ricoeur places the imaginative capacity to shatter present conditions within utopia, Castoriadis theorises the creative core in the self-instituting society through his concept of autonomy.

For Castoriadis, autonomy means people's ability to self-determine and self-govern according to their social imaginary. His conception of autonomy differs from the concept promoted by neoliberalism in that people act as collective agents and "recognise the contingency and invention of their world" (Canceran 2009, p. 30). Instead of self-reliance and independency, intersubjectivity plays a central aspect. In his concept, the individual is placed within the context of society since it is necessarily socialised. The individual is always embodied in collective society and therefore social autonomy implies and presupposes individual autonomy. Therefore, for Castoriadis, individuals that exercise their autonomy, actively participate in the making and remaking of society (Castoriadis 2005 [1987]). Thus, what makes a society autonomous, is its ability to self-reflect and distance itself from its own imaginary in order to reinterpret and recreate it. It recognises itself as the source and origin of its own existence and as such society can undo what it has created. According to Castoriadis, an autonomous society does not rely on external factors and is fully aware that there exists no external source for its institutions and laws. As such, it is self-instituting because it realises that it is society itself that has created these laws and therefore it is society too that has the ability to alter them. "By instituting itself, society inaugurates a new ontological form that could not be derived from the preex-

isting social order. This society is an offshoot of a rupture or break from the present world order in history" (Canceran 2009, p. 28).

However, this role of the social imaginary becomes increasingly difficult to accomplish in contemporary society due to the increasing role of bureaucratic organisation as society's institutional structure. "This organization reveals that the modern imaginary […] merely autonomizes and valorizes a limited, instrumental rationality. The modern imaginary is thus fragile and prone to crisis, endowing contemporary society with the 'objective' possibility of transforming what has hitherto been the historical role of the social imaginary" (Thompson 1982, pp. 664–665). This furthermore indicates that ideology is inseparable from capitalist societies, since the emergence of capitalism in modern societies undermined the transcendent reference to 'another world beyond'. "The distinctive characteristic of ideology […] is that it is implicated in the social division it serves to dissimulate; that is, the division is both represented and concealed within the world of production, and no longer with regard to an imaginary 'beyond'" (ibid., p. 672).

Nevertheless, Castoriadis rejects determinist ontological understandings, as implicit in traditional Marxist thought, since it "misses the essential feature of the social-historical world, namely that this world is not articulated once and for all but is in each case the creation of the society concerned" (ibid., p. 663). Furthermore, in modern societies the economy presents itself as the 'most perfect expression of rationality'. "But it is the economy that exhibits most strikingly the domination of the imaginary at every level – precisely because it claims to be entirely and exhaustively rational" (Castoriadis 2005 [1987], p. 157).

He therefore instead calls for an ontology of creation, which stands for "the emergence of radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty" (ibid., 184). For him, imagination is the driving force of any revolutionary project. It is precisely his distinction between the *actual imaginary*, the ability to reflect an already constituted identity, and the *radical imaginary*, the ability to imagine in creative and different ways as they exist, which allows human beings to break out of any determinist circle. "If ideology and utopia are constitutive of the social imaginary and this in turn is constitutive of our lived experience of the world, then we cannot

escape the circle" (Langdridge 2006, p. 654). However, "these structures are as much the product of our ideologies as the cause, and therefore they are amenable to change should we collectively have the will to effect it" (ibid., p. 655). As much as society is shaped by its imaginaries, it is human beings who (re)produce these.

Thus, through the social imaginary society defines what for a given society is possible – and therefore also what is not. Tackling the social imaginary therefore becomes pivotal in rewriting urban narratives. If utopia has currently been sent to the back of our minds, it is either because other concepts have become more prominent in our imaginary (like crises, dystopian futures, or the glorification of the present) or because our ontological conception does not allow it (being more open to contingency and other forms of knowledge). The current narrative of rendering every form of utopianism unreasonable is an especially troubling one as it is imagination itself that is being threatened. If there is no need to envision alternatives, then there is no longer room for extensive imagination, leading imagination to dwindle – even in a discipline which has made this its key trait. However, as mentioned above, these concepts are human-made and thus they can also be unmade. As humans, we have to remind ourselves that there is always a possibility of being *other* than what we are (Hage 2011, 2015). To be able to deconstruct such (false) beliefs, however, we must first come to realise them as such, since "they appear to us as though they were things – as if they were a fate rather than what they really are which is our own creations naturalised" (Unger 2014).

2.3 Spatial Imaginaries

"The city as we might imagine it, [...] is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate in maps[,] statistics, [...] and architecture." (Raban 2017 [1974], p. 10, own insertion) That space exists not only as a physical entity, but is socially and culturally constructed and therefore imagined, is not an entirely new concept within the social sciences and has gained significance especially since the spatial turn of the 1980s. In

architecture, however, "space is abstracted and emptied of its social content, so better and easier to subject to control" (Awan et al. 2011, p. 29). While French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1997 [1974]) famously argued that 'space is a social product' and 'architecture is a social practice' almost 50 years ago, within the discipline of architecture the aspects of the social production of space still bear little significance in comparison to its material production.[18]

While human geographers have been researching spatial imaginaries for over 20 years, reviews of this research are still surprisingly sparse (Watkins 2015). Like social imaginaries, spatial imaginaries refer to ideas about people, the environment, politics, or economy which are shared collectively. "In this sense, spatial imaginaries are closely tied to social imaginaries, and researchers often evaluate their interconnection. [...] The difference between a spatial and social imaginary is a spatial imaginary's meanings are related to spatiality, while a social imaginary's need not be." (ibid., p. 510) For example, the concept of the nation state can relate to its spatial relations whereas an exclusively sociological or political framing would focus on shared pasts, language, lifestyles etc. On the other hand, however, imaginaries, even seemingly global ones, are always created within a specific place and time and thus have local origins. Attention to the spatial furthermore connects imaginaries to everyday life. "Social and geographic imaginaries are mutually constitutive and

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18 In *The Production of Space* (ibid.), one of the foundational texts of the spatial turn, Lefebvre distinguishes between perceived (*espace perçu*), conceived (*espace conçu*) and lived space (*espace vécu*). Whereas perceived space refers to the physical space, conceived space refers to mental constructs or imagined space, and lived space is that which is modified in everyday life. This conceptual triad can be translated into spatial terms, wherein each space is furthermore produced in a different way: first, *spatial practice* (which produces the perceived aspect of space) is produced through the material production of space; second, *representations of space* (which produce the conceived aspects of space) are produced through the production of knowledge; and third, *spaces of representation* (which produce the experienced or lived space) are produced through the production of meaning (see also Stanek 2011).

intimately related to experiences and livelihoods pursued within specific historical geographic contexts." (Leitner et al. 2007, p. 12)

Like social imaginaries, spatial imaginaries can refer to competing ideas of 'reality' (such as concepts of successful urbanisation, globalisation or land use), 'othering' other realities in the process. *Othering* refers to the idea that certain people or places are seen as naturally different, meaning that some are rendered 'normal' whereas opposing groups or places are rendered as 'less than' in the process. Furthermore, spatial imaginaries can apply on different scales (ranging from outer space, supranational regions, nation-states, to cities, and the home). Depending on the approach or disciplinary focus there exists a wide range of different terminology. Some of them are *imaginary geographies, environmental imaginaries, spatio-temporal imaginaries,* or *socio-spatial imaginaries*, to name a few.

Regardless of the approach to spatial imaginaries, Josh Watkins stresses that these are all umbrella terms and obscure the fact that there exist three different types of spatial imaginaries, a differentiation that is allegedly often neglected. According to Watkins these are the following: (1) specific *places* (like Vienna, Manhattan, The Middle East); (2) *idealised spaces* (such as the ghetto, developed country, or global city); and (3) *spatial transformations* (such as globalisation, gentrification, or deindustrialisation) (Watkins 2015). Accentuating these distinctions can give further understanding as to how broader concepts are enmeshed within a local specificity and vice versa. While being interdependent, these terms tell different kind of spatial stories and different versions of 'othering'.

Place imaginaries refer to the characteristics that supposedly render a place unique and can refer to neighbourhoods, regions, cities, nation states, etc. There can also exist conflicting and competing spatial imaginaries of the same place, each 'othering' the competing interpretations. *Idealised space imaginaries* refer to more universal characteristics. They can be connoted positively (such as 'developed') or negatively (such as 'ghetto'). Whereas the positive framings usually argue that a space should stay that way, the negative framings indicate that a space should change. Therefore, idealised space imaginaries often become

incorporated into debates over the future of specific places. For example, "Golubchikov stresses that the idea of the world city has become a 'frame' through which governments pursue strategies to engender world city characteristics in the 'here and now', concluding that the world city imaginary materializes through concrete changes to urban policy and form, 'othering' different ideas of 'successful cities'" (Watkins 2015, p. 513). The third type, *spatial transformation imaginaries*, refers to narratives of how a certain place or space *did*, *should* or *will* change over time, thus incorporating "different ideas about what has been, is, or may come" (ibid.), such as globalisation or gentrification. Doreen Massey, for example, has shown that while in modernity space was understood by boundaries, today the general belief of unbound space is rendered inevitable and therefore leads people to act in ways that make globalisation possible, essentially turning it into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The idea that all boundaries are being transcended has thus been naturalised as 'truth' (Massey 2005). Accounting for these different types of spatial imaginaries can thus help better differentiate various meanings and idea(l)s embedded in different socio-spatial understandings.

While there exist three different types of spatial imaginaries, they can furthermore be distinguished into four different ontological conceptions which they are embedded in – *semiotic orders, worldviews, representational discourse,* and *performative discourse*. Whereas spatial imaginaries have predominantly been understood as *representational discourses*, more recently they are being defined as *performative* discourses, which emphasise embodiment and material practices.[19] This depiction therefore portrays them not as a static representation, but as a medium through which social relations are both reproduced and changed – in fact, very similar to Castoriadis' conception of social imaginaries. "In other words, spatial imaginaries are stories and ways of talking about places and spaces that

19 The conception of social imaginaries as *semiotic orders* and *representational discourse* relate more to linguistic phenomena and their linguistical representation in images and text, while their understanding as *worldviews* paint imaginaries as ideologies, as a shared system of ideas and beliefs.

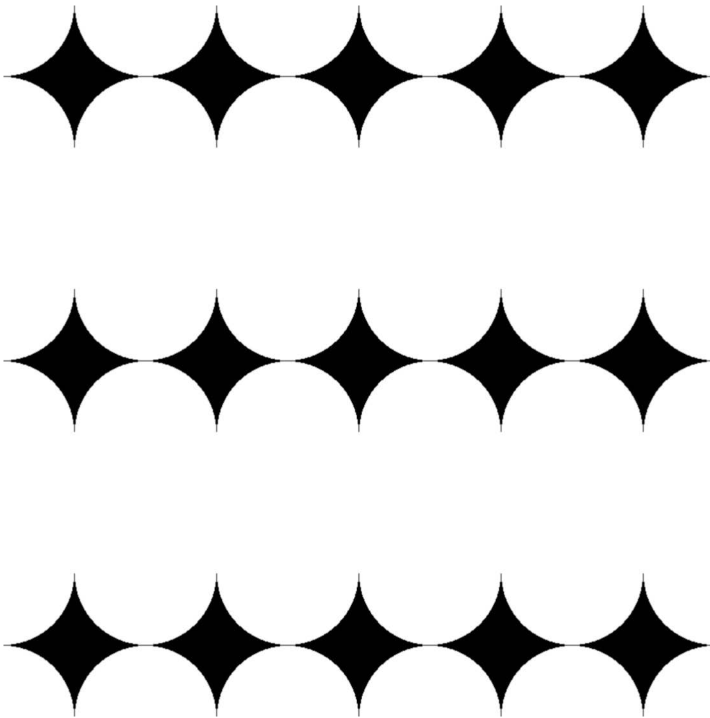
transcend language as embodied performances by people in the material world." (Watkins 2015, p. 509) The performative aspect places value on people acting in relation to spatial imaginaries and thereby on the interdependency of material practices and imaginaries. The aspect of performativity sees space as produced through performances, emphasising material aspects of discourse, which has also been advocated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014 [2001]). Seen through this lens, spatial imaginaries can be changed and created through material practices over time.

Yet, the most interesting aspect, namely how exactly these changes take place still needs more empirical exploration (Watkins 2015). So too within architecture, where the concept of how imaginaries (however often limited to the symbolic), space, and spatial practices relate to each other remains a disputed topic. However, "new (relational) approaches in urban studies have allowed the emergence of new ways of seeing change and paths for acting change" (Tornaghi and Knierbein 2015a, pp. 13–14), "elaborating on the relations between society […] and how (urban) space is actively produced by social agents" (ibid.). Opening up conversation to greater transdisciplinary dialogue therefore becomes necessary to further explore the meaning between space (production) and society.

However, while studying the relation between meaning and space is important for enacting change, it is also important to consider what new imaginaries should be constitutive of. If neoliberalism renders imagination superfluous, contesting socio-spatial imaginaries therefore must place imagination at the centre. "The failure of contemporary mainstream politics to capture (or inspire) imagination in the direction of achieving better—superior—conditions has arguably been as destructive to democracies and social life as the ideological emptying out of architecture has been for the realization, even partially, of the just city." (Coleman 2012, p. 322) Addressing imagination thus becomes inevitable in post-political debates, since repoliticising space essentially comes down to new visions and narratives. "A politically engaging urban […] research and practice is about changing the frame through which things and conditions are perceived" (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2012, p. 26). This too has been recognised by Gabriella Gomez-Mont, founder

of *Laboratorio para la Ciudad*, the experimental arm and creative think tank of the Mexico City government, which was active from 2013 to 2018. Made up of an interdisciplinary team of artists, policy experts, social scientists, data analysts, architects, urban geographers and many more, the lab functioned as a "place to reflect about all things city and to explore other social scripts and urban futures [...] insisting on the importance of political and public imagination in the execution of its experiments" (Gomez-Mont 2019). For her, the power to co-produce starts with the right to imagine again, 'democratising imagination' so to say. "We must claim not only the city and its streets – not only its institutions and its policy – but also its possibilities, its social potential, its symbolic and imaginative capacities of our societies." (ibid.)

3 Constructed Narratives



"[Human beings] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."
(Marx cited in Brand 2016a, p. 517, own insertion)

3.1 Unfulfilled Promises of Modernity

"To be sure, the future promised by modernity has no future." (Santos 1995, p. 489) It is in modernity that, for the first time in Western history, tensions between the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' are placed in the mundane world, rendered credible and set in motion by the idea of progress (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97]). Sustained by promises of equality, liberty, and peace, the ongoing Enlightenment Project is established on the conviction that all human beings are born free and equal. Yet, these promises have remained but empty promises, since they have from the very beginning been exclusionary. What on the outside has been presented as premised on universal ideals of liberal philosophy, on the inside was underpinned by three modes of domination. Still, to this day, societies are structured by a supremacy of the West over the rest of the world, a supremacy of the market over the state and community, and a supremacy of the white man over all other human beings and nature. They reveal that "Europe and modernity are neither unitary nor pacific constructions, but rather from the beginning were characterized by struggle, conflict, and crisis." (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. 70)

While wealth, health and individual freedom have tremendously advanced on a global level over the past few decades, these achievements have not benefitted everyone equally and remain largely overshadowed by increasingly unequal power relations. These lead to a growing gap between rich and poor, grounded in a discrepancy between political inclusion and social exclusion (Knierbein and Viderman 2018b). As Sabine Knierbein and Tihomir Viderman (ibid.) indicate, already Marx (1844) had referred to this issue by addressing the 'Jewish question'. He had voiced criticism of bourgeois society which had separated between political and social rights and had not extended the emancipatory project to wider society once their ideals had been accomplished. In a similar vein, Faranak Miraftab has stressed that "[s]ymbolic inclusion does not necessarily entail material re-distribution" (Miraftab 2009, p. 34) and, in fact, "citizens have gained rights they cannot eat!" (ibid., p. 41).

These tensions point to the current political order in which neoliberal governance which promotes "political inclusion, but avoids translating it into redistributive equity" (ibid.) runs parallel to the reduction of politics to technocratic managerialism. In political theory, this arrangement of societies is described by 'post-politics',[1] in which 'the political', the expression of social agonism, has been removed from politics (Laclau and Mouffe 2014 [2001]; Swyngedouw 2009; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015b).[2] It is a form of representative democracy in which contrasting visions and dissidence have been replaced by consensual, technocratic, and market-oriented ('neutral') approaches up to the point of depoliticisation. This leads to a weakening of the public sphere and democracy in which:

> political contradictions are reduced to policy problems to be managed by experts and legitimated through participatory processes in which the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance. 'The people' – as a potentially disruptive political collective – is replaced by the population – the aggregated object of opinion polls, surveillance, and bio-political optimisation. (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015a, p. 6)

What caused this shift was the restructuring of the state during the late 1970s and early 80s towards neoliberal principles. For David Harvey, "[n]eoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within

1 The over-use in ascribing various forms of 'post's' has been criticised in different contexts for implying a radical break, turn, or end to something. In the context of the post-political, Anneleen Kenis and Matthias Lievens therefore "prefer the term 'depoliticization', as the notion of 'post-politics' problematically suggests a historical succession has taken place whereby we were once political and now no longer" (Kenis and Lievens 2017, p. 1766).

2 See Knierbein and Viderman 2018a for more on urban emancipation in the context of post-politics.

an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2005, p. 2). Neoliberalism is being described in various other ways, such as a 'restructuring ethos' rather than a defined set of policies (Baeten 2018), a form of governmentality (Davoudi 2018), a hegemonic ideology promoting the superiority of market solutions (with reference to Springer, Baeten 2018), as 'the restoration of class power' (Harvey 2005), 'the avant-garde of conservative thinking' (Santos 2006), as well as a "'pragmatic' combination of socialism for the rich and austerity for the poor" (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015a, p. 8).[3]

A significant turning point for this politico-economic order marks the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which came to be known as 'the end of history' (Fukuyama 1989). It marks a profound alteration in thought on a global scale, not only in a politico-economic sense, but also on a cultural level. As such, post-modernist thought defined itself in opposition to modernism on many levels and therefore is accompanied by a wide range of announced 'ends', 'deaths', 'posts', 'radical breaks', and intellectual 'turns' (Elin 1999). What made the fall of the Berlin Wall so significant was its symbolic representation of the introduction of democracy and capitalism as the winning political forms after the ideological battles of the past.[4] Alongside the neoliberal mantra *There is No Alternative* (TINA), the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the ultimate 'end' of grand narratives (Lyotard 2019 [1979]) and of teleological understandings of history and emancipation, and as such simultaneously the 'end' of utopia (Santos 1995, 2006; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015b; Žižek 2012c).[5]

The equation of the end of utopia with the end of communism, however, marks a very narrow, if not false, definition of utopia(nism) and ne-

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3 See also see also Gunder, Madanipour and Watson 2018.

4 This furthermore reveals the source for the deep-seated shock caused by the Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2022. While a lot of outspoken criticism has been placed on deterministic ideas of progress embedded in the liberal philosophy of history, the idea of going back to the ideological battles of the past seemed an utter impossibility (Reckwitz 2022).

5 The profound impact this shift had on architecture is a theme that runs throughout this book.

glects the permanence of desire. It is meanwhile clear, that announcing the end of utopia is in itself ideological (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015a) (in the same sense that declaring something political is not just a description of fact, but has a performative trust: to call something political or not is in itself political [with reference to Schmitt, Kenis and Lievens 2017]). Nevertheless, from the moment of its existence, neoliberalism has not just changed the economic world system, it also "presents itself as a global civilizational model, which submits practically all aspects of social life to the law of [monetary] value" (Santos 2006, p. x, own insertion), influencing the way we think and as such the very essence of human nature. This has led to a long-lasting crisis in the political imaginary of progressive intellectuals in which fundamental social change outside of the neoliberal framework has not only been labelled 'unrealistic' but difficult to imagine.

In a world that relies on certainty and an "all-knowingness about the world" (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 3), 'experts' have therefore come to believe that "anything new would not work" (ibid.). Even within the social sciences, thinkers have noticed a "deep-seated negativity associated with an 'epistemological practice'" (with reference to Sedgwick, ibid.). This has led to a dire situation for imaginative thought in which a "double blockage exists: the lack of an alternative vision prevents the formation of an oppositional movement, while the absence of such a movement precludes the articulation of an alternative." (Harvey and Wachsmuth 2012, p. 264)

Yet, over the past few years, voices from various fields have been raised to not only reclaim the right to politics and the city, but to reclaim imagination and inventive utopian thought. Such approaches wish to transform social imaginaries and urban consciousness, create new narratives, and imagine stories yet untold. In this sense, the right to the city "must be understood not as another addition to the self-contradictory liberal-democratic list of 'human rights', but rather the right to a radically different *world*." (With reference to Lefebvre, original emphasis, Goonewardena 2011, p. 106) First, however, it is necessary to analyse what this radically different world poses an opposition to.

3.2 The Crisis Narrative

Corona Crisis, climate crisis, energy crisis, biodiversity crisis, housing crisis, democracy in crisis, economic crisis, healthcare crisis, cost of living crisis.[6]

Crises have become an inseparable part of our everyday social and political reality and as such a key narrative concept for society to make sense of its increasingly complex world. The outbreak of Covid-19 is not just a recent addition to a long list of crises in collective memory but is meanwhile known as 'the worst crisis since World War II'.[7] Media have turned crises into their natural code of language for painting dystopic and apocalyptic pictures while in depoliticised politics it serves as the source of legitimisation for a government full of 'experts', "cynically claiming 'that we are all in this together'" (Levitas 2013b, p. xii). However, whether tied down to individual circumstances or to society's structure, crises are also very much constructed. While this is not to say that they do not have real consequences on everyday lives, what does this mean for modern society that has turned crisis into an intrinsic condition of social being?

Etymologically, the word *κρίσις (crisis)* has its roots in the Greek verb *κρίνω* (*krinō)*, meaning *to judge* or *to decide* and originated as a mental process which results in assessments, thoughts, and decisions.[8] The word assumes a specifically political connotation in 17th century Europe, when

6 This is an adaptation of the German quote "Umweltkrise, Immobilienkrise, Bankenkrise, Demografiekrise, Flüchtlingskrise, Asylkrise, Wohnungskrise, Bildungskrise, Arbeitsmarktkrise: Die Welt ist im Wandel, gefühltermaßen stärker und schneller denn je, und wohl jede Profession ist gefordert, nach ihren Möglichkeiten Verantwortung zu übernehmen, um von der Krise nicht ins Desaster zu schlittern" (Leeb 2016, p. 3).

7 One of the first statements of this kind has been made by the U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during the opening of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland in February 2020.

8 See 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation* for a closer examination of its etymology.

modern society begins to take a reflexive attitude toward itself and its social and political environment. It is in this context, that crisis developed into a key concept of modernity to the extent that "Modernity itself is defined by crisis, a crisis that is born of the uninterrupted conflict between the immanent, constructive, creative forces and the transcendent power aimed at restoring order. This conflict is the key to the concept of modernity." (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. 76)

While the term crisis can signify a range of different events, be it a time of unsettlement, a moment of epochal transition, the eruption of systemic societal contradictions, or a state of emergency, it always describes a situation that is different from 'how things ought to be' or 'normally are'. Distinguishing what is normal from what is exceptional is, however, problematic to begin with and is implicitly advantageous to the status quo. It is also grounded on Western modernist thought that a good society is first and foremost an orderly and stable society. "This conceptualization relies on a problem and response scheme, and departs from an ontological faith in the possibility of order and the elimination of social uncertainty through structured, rule-governed human behaviour." (With reference to Coleman, Patrona 2018b, p. 2) Interest is thus placed on crisis intervention, stabilisation, and monitoring (see also Patrona 2018a).

This assumption, however, becomes troublesome when viewed as a necessary precondition for human life. "While there are indeed crisis situations that require, on *technical grounds*, the delegation of decision-making authority [...], we must be wary of reifying this requirement into a conceptual distinction between the requirements of order and stability, on one hand, and those of justice, deliberation, and legitimacy, on the other, wherein the latter must answer to the former." (Milstein 2015, p. 156, original emphasis) A good example of this is the current technocratic management of the climate crisis.[9] Not only has change become dependent on an authority who decides on 'the exception'; what is even more apparent is that change in modern societies has become

9 More on this in the subchapters 3.3 *Transformation, Multiple Crises, and Truth Regimes* and 5.3 *Techno-Utopias: Utopianism 'Solving' Crisis*.

entirely dependent on crisis, "the rule being: no crisis, no change" (Unger 2014).

Furthermore, the dependence on crisis consciousness means that there exists a discursive space for the production and attribution of crises, which creates room for controversial claims about crises. "It allows for the 'false' declaration of crises, for the failure to recognize 'real' crises, for the abuse and overuse of the crisis concept, and […] the dilution of its effectiveness as a concept." (Milstein 2015, p. 155)

Another characteristic of modernist thought is its long tradition of distinguishing between theory and practice, "between that which is objective, empirical, or factual and that which is normative, prescriptive, or ideational" (ibid., p. 146), pointing to the typical division of society into the dual distinctions of 'agency versus structure'. Predominantly, crisis is seen as something that acts upon society and remains an external objective force. As an objective event, an entity 'out there', it remains in the field of empirical science with real causality. This understanding however fosters a paralysing effect towards change for the better and "is often nested in dystopian, even apocalyptic understandings of events: the future is both uncertain and unknown." (Hallgrimsdottir et al. 2020) Similarly, Stephen Coleman states, "[t]he experiential texture of crisis evokes feelings of helplessness in the face of spectral contingency. It reminds us collectively of infantilised defencelessness against the unknown and uncontrollable." (Coleman 2018, p. 17)

While crises exist as an intrinsic part of modern society, the narratives depicting them have been transformed in largely negative ways. The apocalyptic overtone and a perpetually announced 'permanent state of crisis'[10] has led to alienation and acts of defiance. Sociologist Harald Welzer stated in an interview that people under 40 had never heard something other than humanity running out of time before the world collapses. According to him, this is however not reflected in the daily life

10 Typing this phrase into any search engine will show the extent to which it is used.

of a society surrounded by fancy technology and glossy buildings (Decker 2019).[11]

Nevertheless, since crises and the narratives they are embedded in are not natural phenomena, but ideas brought into the world by humans, they can also be shaped and acted upon by them. In this sense, crises can entail emancipatory potential as they call into question the assumed premises of social life. They bare the potential of opening a window of negotiation and social change. Therefore, the concept of crisis calls for a different understanding. Seen as a conceptual tool it could be used for guiding judgement and coordinating actions. Looking at crisis as a *reflexive concept* (Milstein 2015) would require deliberate crisis consciousness and imply active participation. In the same vein, Antoon De Rycker proposes to reconceptualise the concept of crisis as a *social practice*, which draws attention to its performative character. As such, emphasis is placed on embodiment and "the dependence of human activity on know-how, shared skills, practical understandings and dispositions" (Rycker 2018, p. 34) and thus privileges the actual doing and materiality of everyday life. Such approaches view crisis as a participatory process that calls to take responsibility.

A further method to address the prevalence of negative thought could be a new theory of politics which is not based on fear in the Hobbesian sense, but the ability of 'love and desire' to confront crisis, as called for by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2003). "The biopolitical, seen from the standpoint of desire, is nothing other than concrete production, human collectivity inaction. Desire appears here as productive space, as the actuality of human cooperation in the construction of history." (ibid., p. 387) Furthermore, they place the power for transformation in utopian thought which goes "beyond the pressures of homology that always limit it to what already exists" (ibid., p. 185). Such approaches are pivotal for rethinking and reshaping political imaginar-

11 It has to be mentioned, however, that this view neglects a large part of society which is excluded from such a lifestyle and affected by crisis in much more direct and different ways.

ies which have led us to believe that the current state of affairs is the only possible way that life could be organised.

3.3 Transformation, Multiple Crises, and Truth Regimes

In recent years, the term transformation has gained increased attention in contemporary debates regarding socio-ecological processes of change. In general, it has become an umbrella term that constitutes a new political-epistemic terrain for tackling global and transdisciplinary responses to the ecological crisis, including a variety of debates such as degrowth, resilience, and transition studies. However, despite the increasing prominence of transformation literature in the scientific community, there is no clear consensus on what the concept means in practice, since it has been used in very different ways.

In his analysis of the research field around transformation, Ulrich Brand[12] and other scholars (Brand 2016a, 2016b; Brand et al. 2013) have differentiated between *normative-strategic* and *analytical-descriptive* understandings of the term. Both conceptions differ from mere state-of-art scientific endeavours in that they advocate change against business-as-usual strategies. They situate the ecological crisis in a wider context and unite transdisciplinary approaches. In this sense, the debates around transformation bear similarities to the sustainable development debates of the 1990s. In contrast to earlier debates, however, there is an increased awareness of the growing complexity and interdependency of crises. Furthermore, ecological issues are no longer perceived as a responsibility of the Global North alone but are situated within a global context.

Despite these commonalities in current transformation debates, there exist varying ontological assumptions about central aspects such as the nature of crises, the drivers of change and their responsibilities. This refers to an inherent constitutive tension in the (implicit as well as

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12 Because of Brand's seminal work on transformation and multiple crises, this subchapter will heavily draw on his research.

explicit) assumptions that meaningful change could occur within the current economic and political system.

According to Brand, normative-strategic understanding "does not pay sufficient attention to the structural obstacles to far-reaching transformation processes" (Brand 2016b, p. 25) such as the ongoing expansion of production and consumption, continuing economic growth at any cost, a fierce world market competition, as well as austerity politics. It furthermore does not question dominant institutions, governance structures, their bureaucratic nature and motivations. Normative-strategic accounts believe in existing institutions to solve current challenges and place a strong degree of trust in innovation. Critical and broader reflections on the economy (beyond market economy and wage-labour) as a basis for other forms of well-being are rarely considered. Emancipation remains an equally absent topic. Normative-strategic approaches are motivated by an urgent need to avoid or at least mitigate climate change and have a bigger wish for transformation than a thorough understanding of the underlying complexities and contradictions. Brand (2016b) has described this way of thinking as a 'new critical orthodoxy' (in the sense of a belief system that is difficult to question). According to him, the new orthodoxy fails to recognise the inherent conflicted nature of modern societies which arises from interest-driven actors who want to maintain domination and power. It does not question in what way the existing institutions and governance structures are part of the problem. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge that societies are constantly changing and that debates therefore should not focus on *if* societies will change, but *how*.

Analytical-descriptive understandings of transformation, in contrast, intend to unveil the underlying tensions in the varying ontological assumptions about the subjects of transformation (the state, governance structures, institutions, policies, private enterprises, etc.) as well as the objects of transformation (crises, social relations, globalisation, technologies, land use, natural systems etc.). Analytical-descriptive conceptions point to the unequal distribution, reproduction, and intersectionality of power relations. While they are explanatory in nature, they are desirous of social change and linked to empirical work (from ex-

amining systems and actors to effects on everyday life). Brand therefore stresses the necessity for analytical-descriptive accounts to complement and inform the normative-strategic motivated orthodoxy. He therefore places huge emphasis on the social sciences to contribute to societal and political reflexivity and decision-making processes. Some relevant questions the social sciences could pose, for example, are: "What is the role of values, meanings, beliefs and belief systems?" (Brand et al. 2013, p. 482) or "How is change constructed, managed or even blocked between state, corporate and civil society actors?" (ibid.).

While the social sciences can serve powerful in this respect, it is important to stress that they are not inherently progressive and that they are undermined by a "powerful truth regime, led by the natural sciences, regarding the nature of the problems" (Brand 2016b, p. 26). They have therefore been criticised by progressive thinkers for being too descriptive and lacking in imagination: "The fundamental problem with the social sciences today is that they have severed the link between insight into what exists and imagination of what might exist at the next steps – the adjacent possible. [...] The result is that the predominant methods in the social sciences lead them to be a kind of retrospective rationalisation of what exists." (Unger 2014) To Roberto Unger, the conception that the arrangements of society are not a natural phenomenon but are made and imagined has been the central revolutionary realisation of social thought, that started with thinkers like Montesquieu in the 18th century. According to Unger, the social sciences today, however, have lost insight into how the imagination of structural systems takes place in history. "And as a result of lacking any insight into structural change, we fall back on a bastardised conception of political realism which is proximity to the existent. So then we suppose that something is realistic if it's close to what already exists – then why do we need insight?" (ibid.) In a similar vein, Ruth Levitas has criticised the social sciences, especially sociology, for neglecting the imaginative capacity, which for her reflects a utopian dimension. According to her, utopianism has played an important aspect in the early days of sociology as a discipline, but this connection became severed once sociology became institutionalised and struggled for recognition as a 'respectable science'. "The denial of

utopia resulted in a triple repression within sociology: repression of the future, of normativity, and of the existential and what it means to be human." (Levitas 2013b, p. 85)

Furthermore, knowledge has become commodified, highly specialised, and consequently fragmented. "This fragmentation accompanies a short-term orientation to problem solving in which the future appears only as an extrapolation of the present: 'if present trends continue'." (Levitas 2013b, p. xvi) Brand too has noted that depicting climate change as a problem to be 'solved' is not the right way to conceptualise it (Brand et al. 2013; Brand 2016b). Instead, it should be seen as a condition that requires humanity to make choices – which essentially means depicting the crisis as a *social practice* (as mentioned in the previous subchapter).

This has thus led to a "scientific division of labour, which consigns the realm of (global) environmental problems to the natural scientists, while the social sciences have largely accepted the natural science definitions as their point of departure" (Brand 2016b, p. 26). At the same time, exploratory and evaluative forms of knowledge as well as lay knowledges are often not perceived as 'real' knowledge. The contents of the natural sciences thus often remain as given and the social construction of problems rarely questioned. However, 'nature', 'the environment', 'planetary boundaries' etc. are not simply 'there', but socially constituted and appropriated. Another essential aspect is not that nature is simply colonialised (this has been a tendency in all human societies) but the specific way in which it is commodified and entangled with capitalist, imperial, and patriarchal structures. For Brand, an ecological critique of political economy, such as political ecology for example, can therefore not only give valuable insights but serve as a starting point for a critical concept of transformation rooted in the concept of *multiple crisis* (Brand 2009).

According to him, the central task of critical analysis and progressive politics is decoding the interdependence between multiple crises and drawing socio-political consequences from them (ibid.). The introduction of the concept of multiple crisis allowed for a new framing of crisis, which stood in contrast to narratives of a selected singular crisis, such as the financial crisis of 2008, which has been employed as legitimisation

for neoliberal politics. This is a form of politics based on imperial ways of living which has eroded democratic structures, marked by a shift in the orientation of states towards competition. The financial crisis has been prioritised and disconnected from other crises and therefore created a form of politics that neglects crises which do not overlap with capitalist- and power-driven interests. Looking at crisis through the lens of *multiple* crisis instead, reveals that crises have their own logics while *simultaneously* being interrelated. Furthermore, this multiple aspect of crisis is precisely the result of neoliberal and imperial restructurings of capitalism. It is a consequence of the inherent contradictions of this form of globalised capitalism and therefore depicts the crisis as institutionalised. In addition, while the concept of multiple crisis has been criticised for depicting a homogenous conception (see for example Brand 2016b, footnote on p. 23), it is meant to bring to attention the different time frames, spatialities, and non-simultaneity of crises.[13] In a similar vein, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt describe that crisis today "is organized not around one central conflict but rather through a flexible network of microconflicts. The contradictions [...] are everywhere. Rather than crisis, then, the concept that defines imperial sovereignty might be omni-crisis, or, as we prefer, corruption." (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. 201)[14]

The debate around transformation is thus deeply rooted in the contradictions arising from multiple crises while simultaneously being highly influenced by power-induced knowledge-production. This means that any critical transformation analysis must not only rigorously scrutinise the contradictions present in society, but also the dominant ontological assumptions underlying knowledge-making processes (such

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13 In accordance with this critique, this book prefers its plural form (multiple crises).

14 The etymological root for *corruption* comes from Latin *cum-rumpere*, meaning *to break*. In *Empire*, the authors' theory of a new headless power, it is stated that imperial rule essentially functions by *breaking down*, which however not necessarily leads to ruin but indicates that crisis is the norm of modernity (Hardt and Negri 2003). See 5.2 *Junkspace: Anti-Utopianism and Omni-Crisis* for a closer examination.

as prioritising Western concepts, disregarding other ways of knowing, only perceiving the natural sciences as 'real' science, etc.).[15]

Therefore, assumptions on the extent to which transformation should take place and how it should come into being distinctly vary. As mentioned, the main discrepancy can be attributed to an insufficient analytic understanding of the complexity and interdependency of multiple crises in too strategic and often managerial accounts. "Hence, visionary and strategic claims should not be avoided [...] but they might run the danger of downplaying the deeply inscribed socio-economic, political, cultural, and subjective social relations, and their contradictions contingencies, that need to be transformed." (Brand 2016a, p. 505) Any progressive politics thus has to acknowledge the deep contradictions and multifaceted aspects in the underlying social relations as well as knowledge-making processes induced by patriarchal, imperial, and neocolonial structures. Furthermore, implicit assumptions in the subjects and objects of transformation have to be made more explicit. While acknowledging that change has to occur globally, understanding that responsibilities and timescales spatially vary (e.g., short-, medium-, and long-term time scales in combination with various spatial scales such as local, national, and international) is important. In addition, any meaningful conversation on transformation has to acknowledge the non-linearity of challenges, while accepting that there cannot be one preferred way of transformation. Furthermore, because of the inherent contradictions of globalised capitalism, entire new ways of thinking and imagining politics beyond the current status quo are necessary. Therefore, the transformation debate has to equally engage in conversation about futures, visions, and pathways while constantly reflecting on their contested nature.[16]

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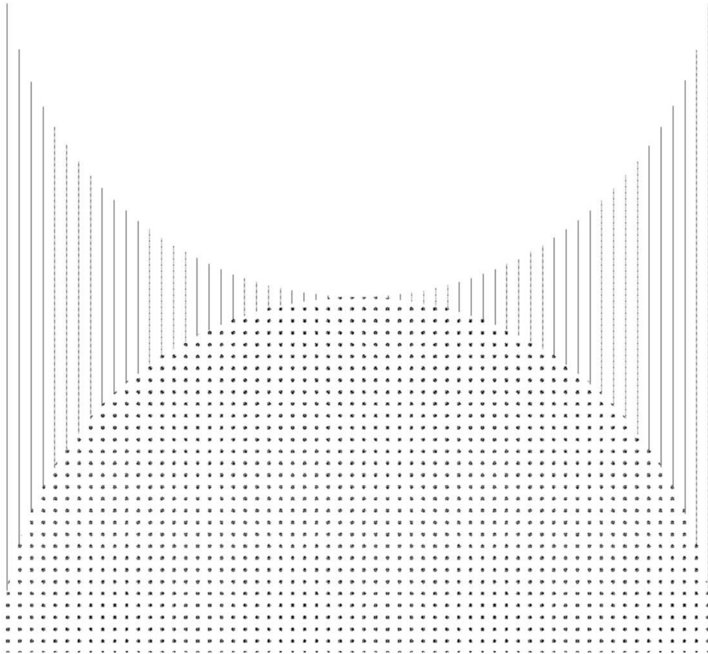
15 See also Santos 1995.

16 One important aspect, for example, is the notion of *futuring*, which does not entail critical thinking of the *possible*, but is the process of integrating specific future visions into dominant decision-making processes. See also 5.3 *Techno-Utopias: Utopianism 'Solving' Crisis.*

Essentially, this is also where the crux of any *transformative utopianism* lies. In the words of Roberto Unger and Cornel West: "It is easy to be a realist when you accept everything. It is easy to be a visionary when you confront nothing. To accept little and confront much and to do so on the basis of an informed vision of piecemeal but cumulative change, is the way and the solution." (Unger and West 1998, p. 32) Since the web of contradictions is increasing in complexity in the context of multiple crises and furthermore always in flux, it is clear that long-lasting transformation cannot be achieved by some selected few, nor by a single project. Furthermore, while it is necessary to reunite segregated knowledge, "it does not suffice to combine sectional views together into a more coherent picture, but to be aware of the shortcomings and potentials of each sectional perspective." (Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 417) In this sense, there can never be a holistic or full understanding which is able to completely grasp the complexity of this ever-changing world, just the repeated attempt to analyse it and combine knowledge as well as possible, in the full knowledge that something will always be left out. *Transformative utopianisms* therefore have to be a *continuous movement* made of analytical as well as creative thinkers, lay people as well as professionals, from various and differentiating fields and parts of the world. They need to exchange, (un)learn from each other, build alliances, and envisage together, re-evaluating every day anew.

4 Linking Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture



"All major social changes are ultimately characterized by a transformation of space and time in the human experience." (Castells 2010, p. xxxi)

4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society

Being situated in material and conceptual worlds at once, architecture and crisis both refer to the social imaginary while existing in and affecting material realities of human beings in substantial ways. While crisis is not a material entity in itself, it nevertheless materialises through bodily performances and gets inscribed into the built environment. In fact, architecture, in some ways, *is* materialised crisis. The ways in which crisis plays out in architecture are therefore countless and could fill whole shelves in libraries. Below are some important considerations, which could be differentiated into two groups. The first set of questions reflects *Architecture in Crisis Society* and thus refers to the metaphysical exploration of the meaning of architecture in a society marked by crisis. The second could be defined as *Crisis in Architecture*, which is further split into two sub-aspects.

Architecture in Crisis Society:
If crisis is integral to the constitution of modern societies, what then is architecture's task in such a society? How is architecture relevant for the constitution of the modern subject that has turned crisis into an intrinsic condition of social being? How does architecture position itself in society? What are its tasks?

Crisis in Architecture:
If, however, crisis is such a fundamental part of society, how is architecture itself (as a discipline as well as its projects) then marked by crisis?

Crisis in Architecture as a Discipline:
Refers to its institutions[1] and practices. If society is crisis-ridden and architecture is made of social practices, how do society's power relations

1 Such as universities, museums, professional associations and organisations, unions, and advocacy groups.

such as patriarchal, imperial, and capitalist structures play out in architecture as a heavily institutionalised system? In what ways do belief systems and worldviews impact the discipline and its capacity to deal with crises?

Crisis in architectural projects:
Refers to architectural objects in the context of multiple crises. How do crises influence architectural design explicitly as well as implicitly? How does architecture react or respond to crisis?

The first inquiry into the relation between crisis and architecture, *Architecture in Crisis Society*, will be part of this subchapter, while the second, *Crisis in Architecture*, will be addressed throughout this book. Furthermore, there is a specific form of architecture which is almost exclusively informed by crisis, namely *crisis architecture*, meaning buildings for catastrophes, conflict, and war. While such architecture is heavily informed by crisis, it is less so by utopianism: architecture for crisis-ridden environments is less concerned with building a better world as it is in *repairing* or *protecting from* the present one. Since this book explores architecture in relation to both crisis *and* utopianism, crisis architecture therefore is not part of this topic.

What thus is architecture? From a sociological, anthropological, and philosophical perspective, "architecture defines the world from the human centre, provides a place for human beings in the scheme of nature, and offers security and continuity for communal life." (Adam 2006, p. 120) From the viewpoint of the social sciences, space always contains symbolic meaning. This means that there exists no objective reality of the physical world since it is always subject to the human perspective and its interpretation. "At a[ny] given moment in time, materiality is both about the way we experience the tangible reality that surrounds us, from materials to light, and about our understanding of ourselves as subjects of this experience." (Picon 2020, p. 281, own insertion) This means, that even such a thing as nature does not exist as a 'natural' objective entity but is tied to symbolical value from the human standpoint.

Architecture thus (re)defines the human place in space and time. It is *through* architecture that human beings distinguish and position themselves in history and geography, thereby creating their own identity. Architecture is therefore a materialised form of the social imaginary, constantly changing (with) society. Contrary to historical perception, neither the social imaginary nor space are mere *reflections* of society, they *are* society: "space is not a reflection of society, it is its expression. [...] space is not a photocopy of society, it is society." (Castells 2010, p. 441) Societal desires are expressed through architecture as a form of socio-cultural expression and artefact. According to Delitz (2010, 2015) and Castoriadis (2005 [1987]), in the same ways people of the Middle Ages were dependent on gothic cathedrals for their way of life, human beings of the 20th century would not have been the same without the reductionist modernist architecture, *constituting* society as a new form of function-oriented 'rational' collectivity. To both, architecture carries a *constituting feature* of society and enables society to bring itself *into existence* in the first place. However, while being *the point of departure* from which social, political, and economic processes take place, architecture simultaneously is the *result* of these processes. As such, architecture and socio-cultural practices are interdependent and presuppose each other (Schäfers 2012).

However, since representation has historically been the most obvious way for mediating knowledge and since architecture has from the very beginning been financed by those in power, it is through representation and therefore architecture's formal aspects that architecture has been used as a tool for expressing ideological values. Any monumental architecture can be described as "the externalization of knowledge through representation, which holds in unchanging form what is moving, changing and interconnected." (Adam 2006, p. 120) Based on claims of an eternal authenticity, architecture has therefore historically been associated with the freezing of time, as if materialisation could act as a safe haven for temporal movements. It is however representation, not space, which

is beyond movement and change (Adam 2006; Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005).[2]

The focus on representation meant that "[f]or a very long time, ornamentation represented one of the most evident means through which architecture was connected to political questions." (Picon 2020, p. 286) Meaning-making and transportation of collective values in architecture has thus historically been associated with symbols and signs, also referred to as the 'language' of architecture. Ornament, for example, was used to refer to social hierarchy, such as the rank of the owners, the meaning and use of the building or to other references in mythology, history, astronomy, physics, and the natural sciences. This was one of the reasons (besides serial production) for modernist attempts to rid architecture of all its symbolism. An ornament-free architecture, without any references to pre-existent knowledge or social hierarchy, would enable a classless society, according to the modernist assumption (Kaminer 2017). By the 1970s it was clear, however, that symbolic content was not restricted to ornament alone and that even modernist architecture, as any space, was not devoid of it. The attempt at its reduction to pure function therefore had just created a new type of symbolism. Quite interestingly, by the time post-modernist architects had deliberately returned to symbolism, they justified the use of symbols and signs as being a mere representation of a self-referential system with no meaning or agency. At the time when scholars like Althusser, Lefebvre, and Foucault had thus begun to widen the conception about the shaping of society, post-modernist architects had denied architecture its effects on society. Therefore, "while the understanding of the diverse factors and forces that shape society was widening, in architectural circles it was narrowing." (ibid., p. 10)[3]

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2 See *4.2 Architecture and Utopianism: Space and Projectivity* for a closer examination of the conceptualisation of space and its consequences.

3 What concerns the use of symbolism today, is that architecture critics have noticed the celebrated comeback of ornament once again. Ornament is back "but only on condition: ornament must function" (Levit 2008, p. 71). Furthermore, its contemporary revival tends to simulate organic structures, reflecting an at-

Meaning-making in architecture thus remained reduced to representation and the visual experience, a trend that continued to intensify alongside mediatised consumer culture. This has led many to argue that the built environment has in fact contributed to alienation and crisis instead of successfully grounding the human place in a world of uncertainty. To counter the sole focus on the visual senses, phenomenological approaches have therefore tried to bring attention back to the body, stressing that the task of architecture in creating a sense of belonging was created through a *multisensory* experience. "The suppression of the other sensory realms has led to an impoverishment of our environment, causing a feeling of detachment and alienation." (Pallasmaa 2007, book cover) According to Finnish architecture critic Juhani Pallasmaa, any architecture making us feel at home in the world, giving human situatedness meaning and order, would be an architecture enacting all of our bodily senses.

While the phenomenological approach shifts attention from the visual alone to architecture's materiality, it has been criticised for disregarding social processes and power structures (and thus the aspects that would relate architecture to crisis and society). Such theories would promote a supposedly universal physiological foundation and focus on individual subjective experiences, often in the search of something 'pure', 'authentic', or 'essential' to architecture (Crysler et al. 2012; Fischer 2012; Jormakka 2011a; Verschaffel 2012). While bodily senses are indeed subjective experiences, they are however equally constructed socially and historically (Schurr and Strüver 2016). Feelings and affect created through sensory experiences such as light and sound are therefore no individual or primitive traits but contain societal and political value (Picon 2020). They are relational phenomena, embedded in a network of human and non-human agents such as animals, nature, technologies, and other material artefacts. Buildings thus "tend to generate certain sensations and affects that are related to the way we think and act collectively." (ibid., p. 278) Feminist critics have therefore stressed to

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tempt of reconciling architecture with nature (see *5.3 Techno-Utopias: Utopianism 'Solving' Crisis* for more on this).

explore theories of affect which compliment representational theories (Schurr and Strüver 2016). Such *wider-than-representational* theories as put forward by Carolin Schurr and Anke Strüver seek to position the physical body within power structures, extending textual and visual representation with the lived experience, the everyday and ordinary, as well as the materiality and corporeality of the social. Such theories wish to overcome the dualism between the realistic-material and constructivist-cultural. The body therefore should be understood as a 'hinge' between corporeality and discursive power structures (ibid., p. 91). Essentially, these theories raise the question of how spatial structures can create a sense of belonging in crisis society and therefore offer a contemporary exploration of the meaning of architecture in a society marked by crisis.

There is however another fundamental aspect regarding architecture's role in crisis society, namely its role as the aesthetic dimension of neoliberal ideology according to contemporary ideology critique. While the physical organisation of space remains "the most direct and concrete means of communicating via materialised systems of self-representation" (Carlo 2005, p. 13), limiting ideology to representation alone has previously portrayed ideology as a mere illusion or distorted reality. Following Fredric Jameson (2013 [1983]) and Slavoj Žižek (2012 [1994]), ideology is however far more complex and equally lies beyond the representational. To explain this, Žižek (ibid., see also Lahiji 2011) refers to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of 'the Real', associated with the concept of trauma. In psychoanalysis, trauma refers not to something that happens 'in reality' but to a psychic event that prevents to see reality as it is. Trauma in this sense acts as a repressed memory causing pain and suffering which can however not be put into language. The Real therefore expresses the excess that lies beyond the symbolic and the imaginary, beyond the sayable and representable.

With this in mind, Žižek (ibid., see also Vighi and Feldner 2007) approaches ideology from a class-based analysis. He portrays ideology as a dialectical device between malleable ideas and a non-symbolisable traumatic kernel. To him, this traumatic kernel represents social antag-

onism,[4] the "'primordially repressed,' the irrepresentable X on whose 'repression' reality is founded" (Žižek cited in Lahiji 2011, p. 218). It is this traumatic, repressed antagonism around which, according to Žižek, social reality is structured, and which prevents society from stabilising itself into a harmonious whole.

It connects to architecture through Jameson's theory who contends that "the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solution' to irresolvable social contradiction." (Citing Jameson, ibid., p. 220) Žižek again comments on Jameson by saying that "we are not dealing with a longing for a real equality, but with the longing for a *proper appearance*." (Citing Žižek, ibid., emphasis by Žižek) Therefore, "there is a coded message in formal architectural play, and the message delivered by a building often functions as the 'return of the repressed' of the official ideology." (Citing Žižek, ibid., pp. 220–221) From this analysis Nadir Lahiji deduces that "[e]very architectural design, project or projection, is the *Imaginary Resolution of a Real Contradiction*." (ibid., p. 221, original emphasis) Form making in architecture today is therefore an attempt to come to terms with reality which is beyond solving. It allows to create an appearance of order for a society struck by crisis. As such architecture essentially represents a formal solution to being-in-crisis. In this sense, it becomes the task of ideology critique to 'demystify' aesthetics as an ideological act working through social antagonism. Including architecture in contemporary ideology critique is therefore an 'ethical responsibility': "the ideology critique of architecture is not a luxury but, rather, a necessity in linking architecture to the discourse of social *exchange*." (ibid., original emphasis)

On a broader societal level, there is another important aspect in contemporary ideology critique, which places ideology no longer on the level of *knowing* but on the level of *doing*. The subject today is therefore

4 Referring to the concept of class struggle as defined by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014 [2001]).

no longer motivated by the logic of reason following Kantian Enlightenment but cynicism, since "the cynical subject is well aware of the distance between the ideological mask and social reality, but still insisting upon the mask" (with reference to Sloterdijk, ibid., p. 221). Social reality is thus guided by a 'fetishistic inversion' in which people "very well know how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called *ideological fantasy*." (Žižek cited in ibid., p. 222, emphasis by Žižek) For Žižek this means, once again, that the fantasy is not just a *distorted* image of reality, it *is* the actual *lived* reality: The fundamental level of ideology "is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself." (Žižek cited in Andreotti and Lahiji 2017, p. 36) Since knowing alone does not dispel it, "we are fetishists in practice and not in theory." (ibid.)[5]

Nevertheless, since there *is* a part which *can* be expressed in society – the symbolic and imaginary – there is a part in society which can consciously be altered. Following Castoriadis' theory that society can reinstitute itself, "the need for a new radical imaginary, i.e. of instituting new imaginary significations and symbols, becomes imperative during moments of crisis and change" (with reference to Castoriadis, Kaika 2010, p. 457). Since it is through new imaginary significations and symbols that society enables to reposition itself, architecture has the possibility to offer the stage for a self-altering society in times of crisis. "In moments of political crises and economic instability, the symbolic 'effect' of architecture takes on an intensified degree of responsibility. Indeed, it is the 'reading' of architecture that begins to signify what is at stake, that is, what is considered to be important or not. [...] In times of crises, it could be argued that symbolism takes on a more heightened sense of meaning and urgency." (Hwang 2013)

If architecture's task is rendering human life meaningful, giving human beings a sense of order in the arrangement of the world, then the

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5 See Andreotti and Lahiji 2017 and Lahiji 2011 for an extended analysis.

demands have become quite high in a society increasingly marked by crisis, disorientation, and alienation. As has been mentioned, architecture in fact often contributes to a feeling of unease instead of eliminating it.[6] While there is no ready-made formula for how architecture could achieve a sense of well-being and belonging, it is clear, however, that the question of what implies a good life, which every architectural project implicitly gives an answer to, is a political endeavour. Most projects today imply that a good life is tied to the visual experience of the object and by further extent to the exchange value of a building. However, any architecture going after this quest in a more meaningful way, will most probably be an architecture firmly positioned in society's context(s); political and social, cultural and historical, geographical and temporal.

If, however, architecture has a 'task', then this is essentially about what architecture can 'do'. Asserting architecture *agency*[7] today however means overcoming deterministic and demiurgic ways of affecting society since "the experience of architecture is always multifaceted, open-ended, and ultimately ambiguous." (Picon 2020, p. 282) What architecture can *do* might thus be limited to less straightforward means such as creating atmosphere, orienting action, enabling situations, structuring places for inhabitation and co-habitation, or enhancing a feeling of grounding and inclusion. It can do this by simple architectural tools (of opening or closing, separating or uniting, making visible or invisible) employed in intelligent and context-relevant ways. Such decisions can be political, and for architecture critic Antoine Picon even "reorganize 'the distribution of the sensible', who and what can be seen and by whom in a given society." (With reference to Rancière, ibid., p. 286)[8] In this sense, in a society that has made crisis an integral part of social being and a

6 See 5.1 *Degenerate Utopias: Utopianism and the Disavowal of Crisis* for more on *technoaestethics* confusing the senses.

7 For more on agency see 6.1 *Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension*.

8 For Jacques Rancière, the 'distribution of the sensible' refers to a repoliticised form of democracy in which people who cannot take part in politics are included by means of rendering the 'invisible visible' or creating 'a part for those who have no part' (see subchapter 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation* for a closer examination).

way of life, architecture is most definitely beyond solving society's inherent struggles. Architecture can therefore never be truly utopian or truly democratic. It can, however, act as the stage in which egalitarian actions take place. Where human beings can become affected in ways that enhance the feeling of collectivity and belonging and where human life and action ultimately is rendered meaningful.

4.2 Architecture and Utopianism: Space and Projectivity

"It is perhaps no surprise that utopian visions for new societies so often involve a new physical layout – as if a new life would require a new setting to be lived in." (Bell and Zacka 2020a, p. 2) Throughout history, architecture and utopia have undoubtedly shared an intimate connection. When Thomas More (2009 [1516]) famously coined the term *Utopia* in 1516, he had simply given a name to something that had long been existing in mankind. In Western thought, the first modern utopia is believed to date as far back as Plato. Even back then, the built environment was understood to play a significant role for pursuing the achievement of a better society. Plato "accorded architecture and urban design a place on a par with other basic social institutions. For just as we think that the structure of our laws can channel behavior, express collective values, and foster a public ethos – so too, Plato suggests, does the built environment." (Bell and Zacka 2020a, p. 2; see also Bell and Zacka 2020b)

The reason for this is, of course, the deep link between the configuration of space and social life. It is also what makes space so utterly political. As an arena of contestation, it is not merely the backdrop to social and political life but plays "an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities" (Valentine 2014, p. 7) which are constituted in and through space. However, this understanding would not arrive until the 1970s, until which the approach to space was of positivist nature. Until then, the understanding of space as absolute would dominate spatial imaginaries for up until most of the 20th century, if not even still to this day. As "a pre-existing terrain which exists outside of, or frames everyday life" (ibid., p. 4) space assumed fixed characteristics. As such, it

was seen as an empty container of objects and events, "an entity in itself, independent of whatever objects and events occupy it" (Davoudi 2018, p. 17).

This understanding of space is rooted in the Cartesian duality of mind and matter, separating ideas about *why* the world exists from *how* it works. Believing that there existed a single truth to be discovered with the help of scientific endeavours, empiricism was privileged over idealism and fell into the domain of science (starting with scrutinising the physical world and expanding to the social world in the 18th century). The conceptualisation of space thus fell into the realm of geometry and physics, which was heavily influenced by Euclid's definition of space through the dimensions of height, depth, size, and proximity. Its later incorporation into Newtonian physics, which portrayed space as an infinite container, is the main reason for the long uninterrupted currency of space as absolute and its persistence as modernism's dominant spatial imaginary. In fact, the very concepts of planning and architecture are so deeply linked to the Euclidean mode – and so too, to the modernist understanding of utopia – "that it is tempting to argue that if [the] traditional model has to go, then the very idea of planning must be abandoned" (Friedmann cited in Davoudi 2018, p. 18, own insertion). Modernist understandings of space have so profoundly shaped the concept of utopia, that it still difficult to imagine utopia otherwise today.

The importance space played in the configuration of societies is furthermore mirrored in the etymology of the term itself. More (2009 [1516]) created *Utopia*, the title of his fictional text, by borrowing from the Greek words *eu* and *topos*, meaning *fortunate* or *good place*. The satiric tone of the text and an English reading of the word, however, allow for a second reading. The etymological and phonetic pun simultaneously gives reference to the Greek word *ou*, which indicates *no place*. The ambiguity of the term has left a lot of room for theoretical speculation ever since. Is utopia the good place that cannot exist? Or is the no(n)-place just an indeterminable place, rather than an impossible place? Does it refer to nowhere *thus far*? Is no place the good place or is the good place, in fact,

no place at all? Whatever the exact meaning, the aspect of space and place remains, nevertheless.

In Thomas More's *Utopia* its inhabitants live on a faraway island of the same name. This means that space, not time, was initially the dimension that separated the utopian society from existing society. The perfect society lived *somewhere else*. A closer look at the circumstances of More's time reveal the roots for this conviction: voyages of the 15th and 16th century sparked interest in undiscovered, faraway places and fuelled the belief that somewhere within the present, may it be on earth or a different planet, a better place could exist. This way of thinking about space remained a pivotal aspect in the creation of utopias. Societies were not only envisioned in the spaces they lived in, but space was seen as the dimension that *set different societies apart*. This is why "the utopic is always conceived as a space, usually an enclosed and commonly isolated space – the walled city, the isolated island, a political and agrarian self-contained organization […]. The utopic is definitionally conceived in the topological mode, as a place, a space, a locus with definite contours and features." (Grosz 2002, p. 268)

However, whereas Thomas More's *Utopia* was never intended for implementation, simply illustrating a fictional story that functioned as critique and satire of the prevailing system, it was the discovery of the (malleable) future that turned utopias into plans for realisation. Whereas in the past, the future belonged to god(s) and thus rested in the realm of destiny, fate and fortune, from the 17th and 18th century on the future was seen as something to be colonised and controlled through rational human behaviour in the present. The better society thus no longer lived somewhere else, but *at another time* – no longer *not here* but *not yet*. Since within the positivist belief system, the future, and with it the idea of 'true progress', was believed to be predicted and manipulated through scientific endeavours and mathematical analysis (Adam and Groves 2007), space was now implicitly understood to control and freeze time.

Since space was seen as an objective structure instead of a social experience, and because it was assumed that the human condition is based on laws as infallible as those of physics, space was furthermore believed to control the social, also known as spatial determinism. As

a result, spatial planning has a long history of giving spatial solutions to social problems, believing space would result in changes in social behaviour. “It was hoped that the clarity and uniformity of the external setting would secure a similar clarity and uniformity of human behaviour, leaving no room for hesitation, uncertainty or ambivalence” (Bauman cited in Gardiner 2012, p. 7). This approach has not entirely disappeared today.

What followed during the rapid and widespread urbanisation from the 19th century onwards in the West was an overconfidence in spatial projects to solve and control the tensions that city life bared. “In 1923, Le Corbusier famously posed the choice between ‘architecture and revolution’, claiming revolution could be avoided through the reshaping of the urban built environment in ways that could come to terms with the demands of industry and the modern age” (Brown 2009, p. 127). Thus, “utopianism of solid modernity […] is concerned about remaking the world along the lines of abstract plans of symmetry, formal order and perfection.” (With reference to Bauman, Gardiner 2012, p. 7) Furthermore, modernist endeavours of (re)making the city were haunted by the concept of *tabula rasa* – only once the old has ceased to exist could the new come into being. This is indebted to the fact that modernist projects (of political, social as well as of the spatial kind) where largely induced by eschatological[9] characteristics. (Destroying the old to make space for the new is furthermore a very colonialist attitude). Cities were hence conceptualised as diseased organisms, which “presupposes that they can only be cured by radical surgery as something necessary for protecting citizens.” (Coleman 2015, p. 27) Instead of seeing the modern city as a result of the underlying systems, it was portrayed as a ‘sickness’ of society and planners as the ‘doctors of space’ (with reference to Lefebvre, ibid., p. 26). “[T]he logic of a pseudo-scientific rationalism has overwhelmed the traditional city.” (Coleman 2005, p. 2)

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9 A definition of *eschatology* can be found in the glossary at the end of this book. For a closer examination of eschatological influences in modernist utopianism see next subchapter 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*.

In this sort of pseudo-scientific rationalism, the underlying assumption of space as a tool for control thus had vast effects not only for spatial projects, but for projects of any (social or political) kind. This is indebted to the interdependence of space and politics and hence their respective significance for either conceptualisation: not only can the spatial be thought of in a political way, but the political can be thought of, and indeed *has* historically been thought of, in a spatial way (Dikeç 2012). Mustafa Dikeç has emphasised that "systems of domination impose orders of space (and time), and that space often appears as a means of control and domination – the tool of closure *par excellence*." (Dikeç 2012, p. 671, original emphasis) He exemplifies this by looking into Plato's politics, which was a very authoritarian understanding of democracy (which is why Foucault referred to it as a "utopia of the perfect governed city" [ibid.]). In Plato's *Republic*, "[e]verything, including the number of the community's inhabitants, had to be *mastered* by a simultaneity in which *being and knowledge entered into strict correspondence*" (citing Laclau, ibid., emphasis by Dikeç). Plato's scheme thus tried to eliminate uncertainty through spatial fixation in which no change could occur. This way of thinking about space has indeed been one of the main characteristics of utopias from ancient Greece until modernity. It does however *not* represent an inherent characteristic of space (nor necessarily of utopias since there have been consistent attempts at reinventing the concept over time; it therefore only represents an inherent characteristic of *traditional* utopias). Thus, what it *does* show is that traditional blueprint and as such modernist utopias "are not marked by multiplicities of time and space for they are representations of an ideal and ultimate time and space, achieved once and for all." (ibid.)

To put it in a nutshell, if "not just [...] the spatial is political [...], but rather [...] thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated" (Massey 2005, p. 9), then this has become especially true for utopias. Modernist readings of space have played a pivotal role for the "common view of utopia as absolute" (Coleman 2005, p. 5), authoritarian, and totalitarian and by extension so too orthodox modernist architecture. Furthermore,

the general consensus is that modernist architecture failed[10] precisely as a consequence of its utopian character. However, attempts at redefining utopia into more processual and open-ended accounts have been made since, stressing the idea that traditional utopias failed due to their inducement of authoritarian idea(l)s rather than utopianism *per se*. The traditional concept of utopia was thus flawed because of the *specific form* utopianism took at that specific moment in time (and space). Hence, what if, what led to the failure of modernist spatial projects were rather the underlying positivist and modernist assumptions about space (and society) than their utopian aspirations? Architectural theorist Nathaniel Coleman even argues, "not only was modern architecture not as utopian as presumed but its failings can actually be understood as resulting, at least partly, from a poverty of utopian imagination: modern architecture was never utopian enough." (Coleman 2012, p. 317)[11]

However, even if modernist architecture was never truly utopian (in the transformative sense) in the first place, modernist architecture nevertheless tried to change society through spatial projects. This is, after all, what makes the connection between architecture and utopia so profound. Not only is space the setting and active part for the construction of

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10 Also defined by K. G. Bristol as 'the Pruitt-Igoe myth'. In architecture theory, the demolition of the housing project Pruitt-Igoe only 20 years after its construction came to be equated with the downfall of modernist architecture, as if the architectural design alone was responsible for its demise, rather than the political-economic and social context within which it was created. Placing the fault on the architectural design alone furthermore legitimised the turn towards a new (post-modernist) style (with reference to K. G. Bristol, Coleman 2014b). This phenomenon furthermore is an argument against architecture being able to 'solve' social problems through design.

11 Here *utopian* is understood not in the modernist sense, but as a conceptual category engaging critical and creative modes of thinking as elaborated in *2.1 Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method*. Coleman states that "one must be left to wonder on what basis [modernist projects] could be identified with Utopia" (Coleman 2012, p. 318, own insertion), since none of the 'Techno-Utopian futurist visionary architects' such as Le Corbusier, Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright or Walter Gropius "questioned the nature of society, institutional models, or the human condition" (citing Borsi, ibid.).

the social and vice versa, but both architecture and utopia imagine ways of organising society beyond the present. Both account for a certain degree of *projectivity*.[12, 13] Moreover, architecture, more than any other discipline, *transforms imagination into materiality*. However, clearly not every architectural project envisions entirely alternative ways of organising society. Some envision society close to its existing form, whereas others might be of greater projective and visionary character. What then, however, makes architecture truly utopian?[14] Is it a certain level of projective-*ness*? And if not all architecture is inherently utopian, is, on the other hand, every utopia architectural?

For David Harvey, all blueprint utopias (even of social and political kind) are in any case *spatial* "since the temporality of the social process, the dialectics of social change – real history – are excluded, while social stability is assured by a fixed spatial form." (Harvey 2000, p. 160) It is the "turning of space into time" (Massey 2005, p. 7) that is at the core of what is often described as the utopian paradox: "Utopias of spatial form are typically meant to stabilize and control the processes that must be mobilized to build them. In the very act of realization, therefore, the historical process takes control of the spatial form that is supposed to control it" (Harvey 2000, p. 173). Utopias that describe a final state can thus only

12 Projectivity here does not refer to the 'projective project' which Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting have defined in opposition to the 'critical project' in their seminal article *Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism* (Somol and Whiting 2002), but simply to the inherent character of the architectural practice of turning immaterial ideas into material projects. Furthermore, "it somehow went unnoticed, that the notion of *projective architecture* [...] was, in fact, a pleonasm" (with reference to Somol and Whiting, Jeinić 2019b, p. 128, original emphasis). As Ana Jeinić states, Somol and Whiting's definition implies the existence of a 'non-projective' practice, suggesting that a practice could be *either* projective *or* critical.

13 As has been mentioned in 2.1 *Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method*, the notion of projectivity is well-reflected in the German word *Entwurf*, which means not simply *to design*, *plan*, or *create* – but *to design the **not-yet***.

14 A preliminary answer to this question was given in 2.1 *Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method* and will be further explored in 6.3 *Embodied Utopianisms of Care*.

exist in environments that never change, or at the end of time, when time stops. They represent a frozen snapshot in time which indeed is essentially *outopia* – nowhere (that is, except in the imagination). Since they are only concerned with the final state and do not take into consideration how to get there, their implementation is necessarily authoritarian. Furthermore, by the time they would be implemented, society would have already changed. This is the case for all traditional/ blueprint/ modernist utopias. They produce architectures of direct control and political inflexibility. However, Harvey's definition 'utopias of spatial form' is misleading nevertheless, since it is not the spatial that freezes and controls time – but the representation. The rigid dimension of space is only one of many dimensions it can assume and occurs when it is associated with a fixation of meaning (Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005).

Thus, if no utopia of *fixed* spatial form can account for the processes of becoming, and if therefore "all realized utopias are degenerate – to achieve utopia is to fail the possibilities of utopia" (Ashcroft as cited in Gardiner 2012, p. 8), where does this leave utopian architecture then? This dilemma has led many to argue that no spatial form can ever entail utopia – the good place being indeed no place at all. "The utopic is beyond a conception of space or place because the utopic, ironically, cannot be regarded as topological at all. It does not conform to a logic of spatiality. It is thus conceivable, and perhaps even arguable, that the utopic is beyond the architectural." (Grosz 2002, p. 267) As long as architecture remains in the domain of manipulating made-spaces and as long as it is only conceptualised in fixed spatial terms, "[a]rchitecture remains out of touch with the fundamental movement of the utopic" (ibid., p. 268).

Therefore, instead of seeing architecture *as* utopia, "thinking of architecture as having a *utopian potential*, or a *utopian dimension*, promises a more productive way to consider utopia and to put it to work as a method for the (social) enrichment of architecture" (Coleman 2005, p. 26, original emphasis). Instead of presenting it as a problem-solving endeavour to society's 'ills', it must find a way to engage in conversation and consider the social and political processes it is entangled in. For architecture to open itself up to the temporal movements of the utopic, it must be seen as a negotiation of the question of how to live and inhabit space

with others. "The task for architecture, as for philosophy, is not to settle on [modernist] utopias, models, concrete ideals, but instead to embark on the process of endless questioning." (Grosz 2002, p. 277, own insertion) For this reason, the precision and determinacy of planning buildings, which leaves no room for the unexpected, "must not be confused with the kinds of planning that are required for political organization and reorganization" (ibid., p. 276).

Furthermore, since contemporary architecture is more often than not preoccupied with problem-solving, rather than "spatial question-raising" (ibid.), it mostly only offers solutions for the present as it exists, rather than imagining what could be. "Architecture […] is nearly always preoccupied with some *ought*; yet much contemporary architectural theory and practice is obsessed with expression of how the world *is*." (Coleman 2005, p. 9, original emphasis) Today, a "gradual decline of the utopian character of architectural design and the reorientation of the discipline toward 'concrete' and 'realistic' tasks" (with reference to Kaminer, Jeinić 2013, p. 68) can be observed. Furthermore, because of this shift (partly indebted to the aftermath of the deterministic readings of space), the outlook on whether architecture can or should do anything is nowadays being dismissed in favour of superficial aspects such as form (which presents itself as fixed and final).[15] "This oblivion appears all the more paradoxical given that architectural design has never been invested with so many expectations regarding its political, social, and economic effects. In the eyes of various urban constituencies, from mayors to real-estate developers, architecture is supposed to contribute to a better urban life, to make cities both more attractive and sustainable." (Picon 2020, p. 279)

Thus, the way space has been conceptualised, implicitly or explicitly, has had substantial consequences for projects of *any* kind (especially since the social, political, and spatial always imply each other). Consequently, this has had very direct effects on architecture since architecture is a very *explicit* expression of the spatial, social, and political project at once. The architectural project furthermore currently enjoys a very

15 More on this in the following chapters.

prominent status in society and is bound to great expectations, which indicates that it is currently of great significance for the pursuit of human flourishing. What forms does utopianism then take in contemporary architectural projects and what are the underlying assumptions of space today?

4.3 Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation

"[C]risis is not merely a description of events and moments in history that are deeply disruptive, but a view of history itself" (Cuttica et al. 2021, p. 2). As a concept inextricably linked with the philosophy of history, crisis is conceptually interdependent with ideas about progress, renewal and contingency – and as such, with ideas about *time* and *temporality* (Cuttica et al. 2021; Koselleck 2006 [1972–97]; Milstein 2015; Rao et al. 2014). Set in motion by the tension between the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' of and in modernity, crisis was introduced as the key concept for interpreting the past, present, and future (Koselleck 2005) and developed into a fundamental category to make sense of daily experiences (Cuttica et al. 2021). By disrupting and throwing into question the assumed premises upon which social life is organised, crisis evokes moral demands for a difference between what *has* occurred and what is *yet to come*. As a conceptual tool it therefore bares potential for renewal and consequently has repeatedly been linked to utopianism in political thought. In fact, history itself is told as a story of crisis and renewal.

This is especially the case in the work of Reinhart Koselleck, one of the most known historians concerned with the philosophy of history, to whom the Enlightenment project is first and foremost a story of crisis and utopianism (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97]). For him, however, utopian philosophical thought of modernity[16] was too naïve, over-simplified, and too disconnected from history as it really was. Others have characterised modernity, "by what has been called *Machbarkeitswahn*,

16 A 'near-synonym' of the Enlightenment (Cuttica et al. 2021, p. 15).

a 'fury of doability': a belief – a conviction even – that society can be comprehensively renovated, not in the least thanks to the progress of science, technology and governmentality." (Cuttica et al. 2021, p. 2, original emphasis) Indeed, modernity up to the first half of the 20th century was haunted by an (over-)confidence in pursuing utopia – defined as a project set in the future, linked to revolution and progress, and haunted by ideals of complete emancipation. Modernist utopianism and crisis therefore were characteristic of containing eschatological components: "crisis is interpreted as involving a decision which, while unique, is above all final. Thereafter, everything will be different." (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97], p. 371)

This can be explained by a brief examination of the original meanings of *κρίσις (krisis)*. As has been mentioned, *crisis* has its etymological roots in *κρίνω* (*krinō)*, meaning *to judge* and had already assumed political and juridical meaning in ancient Greece due to its use in trial and in court. It had gained an added theological dimension with the Greek translation of the Old and New Testament. In the wake of apocalyptic expectations, the Greek meaning of juridical judgement got linked to God and therefore assumed the promise of salvation. "[T]he *κρίσις (krisis) at* the end of the world will for the first time reveal true justice. Christians lived in the expectation of the Last Judgment *(κρίσις/ krisis = judicium)*, whose hour, time, and place remained unknown but whose inevitability is certain." (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97], p. 359, original emphasis) Beyond its juridical and theological meaning, however, *crisis* furthermore existed as a medical term, where it referred to both the *observable condition* of an illness as well as the *judgment* of its course (ibid.).

All three original meanings got incorporated into the modern development of the term *crisis* at the end of the 18th century, while the theological aspect assumed a secular meaning – depicting the revolution as salvatory, inevitable, and all-encompassing.[17] "At all times the concept

17 According to Zoltán Boldizsár Simon (2019) there have been claims that the philosophy of history is nothing other than secularised eschatology. However, what made the modernist conceptualisation of history so unique, was the invention of a *course* of human affairs, placing the possibility of change into the mundane

is applied to life-deciding alternatives meant to answer questions about what is just or unjust, what contributes to salvation or damnation, what furthers health or brings death." (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97], p. 361) This diversity in meaning allowed for its manifold applicability and expansion into all areas of social and political life as well as its development into the concept of history. As such, crisis continued to point towards mutually exclusive alternatives such as fear or hope, dystopia or utopia, social order or collapse (ibid.). This is further exemplified in the phrase 'socialisme ou barbarie' (Hastings-King 2014).

There is another interesting connection between utopianism and crisis, in that utopia(nism) presupposes crisis: the absence of crisis would mean the presence of utopia. After all, among the huge diversity in utopias, whether in *function*, *form*, or *content* the one common denominator, even among utopia's counterpart dystopia, is that they are always induced by and rooted in the dissatisfactions of the present (representing the respective *context*). Furthermore, it is precisely *because* utopia works through the concept of crisis, that it can assume similar qualities of throwing assumptions about the world into disarray. It does so either because it accentuates a certain crisis (through dissolvement or *estrangement*, or through exaggeration in case of dystopias) and as such can act as form of critique. Etymologically, *crisis* and *critique* share the same roots of *krinō* (*to judge)* and therefore indicate a similar form of mental assessment. Critique in this sense emerged simultaneously with the creation of both the modernist concept of crisis and modern bourgeois society as a self-reflective apparatus.

As it was the *belief* in progress and society's self-awareness "as a historical community *capable of achieving* continual progress" (Milstein 2015, p. 145, own emphasis) that placed utopia in the future and thus linked crisis to renewal, it is the *perception* of time which plays a crucial role for the way society positions itself in history. How the past, present, and future are interpreted and brought into relation has inescapable effects on social life. As profoundly historical concepts, utopianism and crisis

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world. As has been mentioned, *eschata* only stands for '*the last things*' and does not portray the road leading to it.

therefore are unequivocally permeated by society's ideas on time. Again: utopia took on the role of a catalyst for social change only once the future *appeared* to be increasingly malleable and open to human control.

While all living beings experience time and temporal movements in some way or other, human interpretation of time can take many different forms and is culturally and historically constructed. "The relationship to time is at the very root of what makes us human." (Adam 2006, p. 119) Therefore, "[t]ime is always social time because only humans regulate and organise their lives by time. Only they conceptualise time. Only they use, control, allocate, and sell their time. Only they lead an 'in time' existence and create their own histories and futures." (Adam 1994, p. 154) Aside from deciding how the past relates to the future, the interpretation of time and temporal relations defines society's perception on death and change, transience and transcendence, ephemerality and contingency.

As for the aspect of contingency, crisis has since its modern development served as an analytical tool for eliminating chance and controlling the unknowable. "[C]risis, ultimately a signifier for contingency" (Rasch cited in Roitman 2014, p. 94), is to this day used to comprehend and interpret the circumstances of the past to simultaneously diminish further uncertainty in the future. As "the main tool of historicisation in the Western world and beyond" (Jordheim and Wigen cited in Cuttica et al. 2021, p. 3), crisis is used as a tool to recalibrate the past into a prognosis for the future. Notwithstanding contingency being an inevitable part of the social as well as the physical world, "our protocols for constructing knowledge are based on a decision about what to hold constant, on how to decide what is certain, and what has already occurred." (Rao 2014, p. 15) Nonetheless, rendering contingency negative has intensified even further in the last two decades by connecting it to the concept of risk. Risk has transformed contingency and chance into economically quantifiable concepts and hence into concepts for discounting the future. Defined as "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself" (Beck as cited in Levitas 2013a, p. 123) by Ulrich Beck in his influential work *Risk Society*, the concept "is a mode of thinking about potential negative events in the future which calculates their probability and the severity (usually as the fi-

nancial cost) of their effect" (ibid.). However, the problem with bringing the future into a calculative relation to the present, is that it is used for the *benefit of the present*, disregarding future generations affected by it in the process. "Since all profit is established on the basis of its relevance to the present, future events decrease in value proportional to the temporal distances involved." (Adam and Groves 2007, p. 125) This not only renders problems set in the future harmless but downplays the necessity for action needed now to address future events.

Consequently, discourses of risk have tied contingency to economic and environmental uncertainty, insecurity, and anxiety and therefore fuelled apocalyptic and fatalist thinking. They also have highly limited utopian thought: "A transformed future, especially one which is, as it must be, substantially unknown, and which stands in a very uncertain relation to the present, is unthinkable within the discourse of risk, which quite clearly operates as a legitimation of the existing system." (Levitas 2013a, p. 123)

What is brought to the fore in all these aspects, is how the framing of time can serve as a form of co-optation. As time, beyond its natural form, exists as a social construct, its framing is never neutral but, like space, induced by power relations and therefore essentially a contested concept. This means that ideas about time (e.g. on the future, on time scales of societal change, on daily rhythms etc.) "reflect deeper ideals and visions of how social life and political order ought to function." (Marquardt and Delina 2021, p. 4)

This is especially the case in energy and climate politics, where "[t]ime has become a key reference point for measuring the success, failure, and progress of climate action." (ibid., p. 2) It heavily relies on energy and climate studies which are grounded in temporal scenarios, predictions of the future, and competing long-term trajectories. Despite predominantly apolitical framing, these temporal frames are not bound by natural limits alone but induced by power relations. They are so because they involve socio-political transformation, choices in technical inventions and the contested nature of science as knowledge-making. They thus reveal how intertwined the (re)making of time is with knowledge-production and knowledge-claims. "Yet, there is only little

reflection about how time is constructed in these targets, by whom, and for what purpose." (ibid., p. 1)

For example, globalised and generalised time frames in climate science "risk to distract from the drivers behind climate change" (ibid., p. 3) as well as from "the dislocation of atmospheric carbon from the activities that produce it" (ibid.). In doing so, they do not differentiate between distinct uses of carbon or the various localised socio-political contexts. Therefore, scholars have highlighted the importance of localising climate change within distinctive spatialities and temporalities as well as knowledge-making practices, such as lay knowledges as legitimate forms of knowledge in climate change debates (Brace and Geoghegan 2010).

Beyond the contested nature of the future or time scales, also time in the present is a concept open for co-optation. With the belief in progress ingrained in the concept of history, for example, capitalist modernity has produced a time order of acceleration and forward movement. This deterministic notion of time has produced "hierarchical power relations in which the 'powerful are fast, the powerless are slow'" (with reference to Wajcman and Dodd, Marquardt and Delina 2021, p. 3). It has its roots in the commodification of time and is inescapably tied to clock-time, the invention of which "provided the ultimate tool for social control." (Adam 2006, p. 124) Imposed and globally exported by the West, the valorisation of speed has expanded into all social interactions and has hence become naturalised. However, "[w]hile clock-time dominates the world of work and the global economy" (ibid.), there is a large amount of society whose labour and time "does not register on the radar of commodified time" (ibid.). Children, the elderly, women, and the unemployed are thereby predominantly rendered invisible and their work 'unproductive'.

These highly contested time framings and time orders however have further implications on contemporary society. Depicting the future as *exploited*[18] has *extended* the past into the future, which is thereby nowadays rendered as *already decided for*. Whereas the future in modernity was conceptualised as open and up for the taking, today it is haunted by the

18 "[T]he industrial extension into the future is characterized by parasitical *borrowing* from the future" (Adam 2006, p. 155, own emphasis).

past. However, while in modernity the future was rendered open, its inducement of eschatological components led to claims for emancipation being *infinitely postponed* (Knierbein and Viderman 2018b). As Knierbein an Viderman indicate, the time frame of contemporary utopianism has therefore shifted from the future to the present, insisting on emancipation *now*. This is reflected in movements such as the Spanish anti-austerity movement of 2011, which called for '¡democracia real ya!' *(real democracy now!)*. Isabelle Lorey describes these sorts of movements as a new understanding of democracy, 'presentist democracy', where presentist "refers to a present becoming, to an extended, intensive present." (Lorey 2014, p. 59) It describes a form of politics that breaks "with the linear and continuing narratives of time […] in order to practice an untimely and unpostponed non-Eurocentric becoming of democracy in the now-time." (Lorey 2016, p. 149) However, while the time of the struggle has been moved to the present, the future has been completely emptied out of meaning. Lorey for example states that the "future becomes insignificant, in a certain sense, in presentist-democratic struggles" (Lorey 2014, p. 60) or that "present becoming of presentist democracy does not project into the future" (ibid.).

However, can emancipatory movements actually achieve change without any ideas on the future? What would it mean for society to exist in such an extended present? With reference to the democratic politics of the May '68 protests, Lorey exemplifies the importance of "practices of organisation that 'function as the crystallisation of the moment and whose strength lies in their power of initiative'" (citing Rancière, Lorey 2014, p. 61). There was however a huge difference between today's movements and those of May '68 regarding the outlook on the future. While 50 years ago the future was still rendered promising, today it is often rendered as a threat. From politics to pop culture, today, the future is deeply embedded in apocalyptic rhetoric and dystopian narratives. While linking crisis to the end of the world is anything but new (as has been shown above), what is different today, is the perspective on what will happen *thereafter*. While in the past, the apocalypse served as the entrance into a better world, today, it is no longer believed that the post-

apocalyptic world will be better – if there should be anything left at all. Furthermore, it will be humanity itself responsible for its own demise.[19]

For these reasons, indeed many theories postulate a changed experience and perception of time as an elongated and extended present. Examples of such theories of changed temporalisations are the theory of a 'broad present' (Gumbrecht 2014) or a presentist 'regime of history' (Hartog 2017). "Today we increasingly feel that our present has broadened, as it is now surrounded by a future we can no longer see, access, or choose and a past that we are not able to leave behind." (Gumbrecht 2014, p. 20) Furthermore, according to Gumbrecht, the present today invokes ambivalence because it no longer serves as the moment of transition between *past experiences* and the *open horizon of possibilities* (as theorised by Koselleck). This however used to be the epistemological habitat of the Cartesian subject and as such "the foundation and precondition of action." (ibid., p. 54) Today, in 'the chronotope of the broad present' this ability is allegedly lost. "In this present it is impossible to forget anything, yet at the same time […] we no longer know in what direction we should progress." (ibid., p. 32) The past has thus ceased to offer any orientation for the future, while the future seems already anticipated and thereby made present. The crucial reason for this lies in the changed nature of the crisis: while in modernity, crisis was used to describe a difference between past and present, a mode of instable transition between two stable periods, crisis today is understood to be multifaceted, omnipresent, and systemic.[20]

As for the theories postulating a changed experience of time, these are indebted to post-modernist theories of the 1970s and 80s, which have argued against the conceptualisation of history as processual. They have spoken out "disbelief about the future as the promise of human and social betterment" (Simon 2019, p. 75), on "the impossibility of

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19 As of February 2022, such prospects have suddenly resurfaced in light of nuclear threats following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine by which "the threat of total destruction has yet again become tangible." (Viderman et al. 2023, p. 1)

20 For multiple crisis see 3.3 *Transformation, Multiple Crises, and Truth Regimes*.

predicting the future of human affairs based on the past" (with reference to Popper, ibid., p. 76), on "the illegitimacy of knowledge-claims about the future" (with reference to Danto, ibid.) as well as the past, and an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (citing Vattimo, ibid.). In short, post-modernist theories have argued for the abolishment of the philosophy of history. However, in so doing they have simply created a *new* metanarrative, since "no one can write history without relying on a philosophy of history (understood as the course of human affairs)" (Simon 2019, p. 76). Thus, rather than describing an end to history or the philosophy thereof, what post-modernist theories have expressed is a *changed conceptualisation* of historical time. Simon (ibid.) has emphasised that Western thought in fact has great difficulties in abandoning the idea of change over time – which, essentially, *is* a conceptualisation of history. Therefore, as long as Western thought continues to conceptualise change over time, a philosophy of history will continue to exist. According to Simon, what differs in today's perception of history, is that change is no longer anticipated in form of a processual change over time but rather in form of singular events (e.g. of the ecological or technological sort). Simon argues that such an *evental* temporality would be a philosophy of history, nevertheless.[21]

Doubting that this is entirely true (it does for example not apply to feminist movements and others which essentially perceive themselves as an ongoing process of emancipation), the main point to be made here is that theories which illustrate today's temporality as entirely presentist run the same risk as post-modernist theories: depicting time in an ahistorical and thus apolitical fashion. While presentist emancipatory theories[22] such as Lorey's are not entirely apolitical (in fact, their intentions are predominantly *to politicise*), focusing *solely* on politicising the

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21 However, it could be argued that Simon's evental temporality could equally have a slightly ahistorical effect, if it leads to conceptualising expected events which stand in no relation to the past or present, such as in some apocalyptic depictions.

22 Emancipatory theories stand in contrast to historical theories, whose latter intention is primarily to describe, rather than to invigorate change. Nevertheless, even within historical theories apolitical framings are not meaningless in this

present *without* envisioning a future can risk politicising for the sake of politicisation.

Theories which primarily focus on politicising the present (such as Lorey 2014, 2016) often refer to a 'full' conception of time, which is principally a good starting point. They stand in opposition to discourses which portray a homogenous conception of time, where time is rendered 'empty'. In the latter conception, each moment equals every other and anything that cannot be achieved today, could be postponed to tomorrow (as in the apolitical time of the calendar). This however conceals the contingent possibilities of every moment and risks missing possibilities to act. A conception of 'full' time, however, politicises, because it recognises each moment as a nexus of contingent possibilities for action and initiative which, once missed, might never return (with reference to Walter Benjamin's conception of time, Kenis and Lievens 2017). This means, that "[t]he time of the political is the time of events, which can occur unexpectedly, but which need to be seized upon" (ibid., p. 1770). Another possible way of politicising the present has been theorised by Jaques Rancière, who postulates rendering the 'invisible visible' or creating 'a part for those who have no part' (with reference to Rancière, Kenis and Mathijs 2014; Lorey 2014).

However, in only politicising the present, without any ideas on the future, movements can enforce a we/them distinction in which it becomes too "difficult to constitute a 'we' at all." (Kenis and Mathijs 2014, p. 155) This has been exemplified by Anneleen Kenis and Erik Mathijs (ibid.), who have analysed the Climate Justice Action (CJA), a grassroots movement whose strategy was to politicise precisely in a Rancièrian fashion. As mentioned, for Rancière politicising is not about developing future imaginaries, but creating the political in the present. However, especially in protests concerned with ecological change, not having any "positively embodied content with regard to the future, articulated vision, myth or imaginary ideal waiting to be realized" (ibid., p. 155) might leave large

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regard since they contribute to knowledge-production and therefore influence conceptualisations of time.

parts of society disengaged. In contrast, "the desire and hope for an alternative and the belief in its possibility appear to be crucial preconditions for enthusing a critical mass of people for a political project." (ibid., p. 155) Only politicising the present in a Rancièrian fashion "appears to be necessary, but it is not a sufficient basis upon which a movement can genuinely repoliticize because it risks preventing the movement from gaining a sufficient social basis." (ibid.) Essentially, "[en]visioning the future [is] a crucial element in any attempt to repoliticize the present." (ibid., p. 149, own insertions) Therefore, politicising time has to be about both: recognising the possibilities of the present while equally portraying hopeful futures.

In fact, if one were to continue the implications of a *full* conception of time, this would mean that at any present moment in time a myriad of possible futures could develop from. This would furthermore illustrate the possibility of *multiple* futures, rather than '*a* future' which supports the narrative of *one* singular trajectory. Instead, a "rejection of this narrative includes the recognition of the plurality of social foundations as always varied, contingent and temporarily established" (with reference to Marchart, Knierbein and Viderman 2018b, p. 278).

To conclude, this subchapter has shed light on how thoroughly contested and complex the concepts of time are. Such concepts can include ideas on the future, the present, on time scales, on (societal) change and its velocity, as well as on temporal aspects such as contingency, ephemerality and transcendence. It has been shown that the experience of time is an inextricable part of human life and how far-reaching therefore the effects of its interpretation are on all areas of social life. The reflections in this subchapter have furthermore brought to the fore how culturally and historically unique the interpretation of time is, while exemplifying that multiple and contrasting perceptions of time can simultaneously exist. Essentially, "[a]ll major social changes are ultimately characterized by *a transformation of space and time in the human experience*." (Castells 2010, p. xxxi, original emphasis)

Moreover, it has been revealed how human beings have turned crisis into an essential analytical tool for interpreting the philosophy of history and therefore its conceptual interdependence with time and

utopianism. However, the problem today, "is that this 'crisis' cannot be reduced to a phase of instability between two stable periods: Quite the reverse, it is becoming the mode of existence of modern societies on a world scale." (Lefebvre cited in Gabauer et al. 2022b, p. 11) The conceptualisation of crisis thus has had inevitable implications for the varying interpretations of time and consequently for the development of utopianism. As such, modernist utopias, revolution, progress, or emancipation can all be understood as different expressions of the pursuit of a better life in which ideas about time vary.

In contrast to traditional utopias, however, emancipation is "not a completed constitution of ideal space and time, but an ongoing process." (With reference to Rancière, Dikeç 2012, p. 671). Therefore, *transformative utopianisms* in contemporary movements tend to be associated with processual and partial emancipation, a shift that began with utopian feminist thought of the 1970s. Utopianism in the form of emancipation tends to be closer related to the experiences of everyday life and its time frame moved from an idealistic future to the ever-conflicted present. Furthermore, such movements have made clear, that "[t]he promise of change can no longer be conceptualized within a singular dialectics of co-optation and revolution; rather, it must be sought in a multiplicity of hope-filled political actions that range in scale from the small performative act to the politics of grand revolutions" (Knierbein and Viderman 2018b, p. 278). Hopeful visions and imaginaries set in multiple futures are therefore necessary to affect[23] society in the long run. As mentioned, emancipatory movements which *only* politicise the present and *not* the future risk creating demobilising effects. This has become even more urgent in times when the future is not only rendered empty and exploited but apocalyptic and already decided for. Moreover, exclusively present-oriented as well as fatalist apocalyptic thinking both have the tendency to render time ahistorical.

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23 Referring to affect theory. Other than emotions, affects are generated through specific material conditions and sensed in relational ways. For more on affect see subchapters *4.1 Crisis and Architecture: The Meaning of Architecture in Crisis Society* as well as *6.1 Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension*.

In addition, more openness is needed towards contingency and the unknown. This however often seems too big a task in times of uncertainty, where one is inclined to hold on to the world as one knows it. We thus find ourselves trapped in a situation where change is desperately needed, but from which change evidently cannot emerge out of the present or past experience in any continuous way. Therefore, any claim for constructive change gives the impression of a radical break, which again is rendered too extreme by those in power. "[W]here change seems difficult, utopia is either impossible to imagine, or becomes collapsed into the analysis of the present itself" (Levitas 2013a, p. 199). This way of thinking thus creates a form of *problem-solving utopianism*, a utopianism close to reality as it exists and working within the present system.

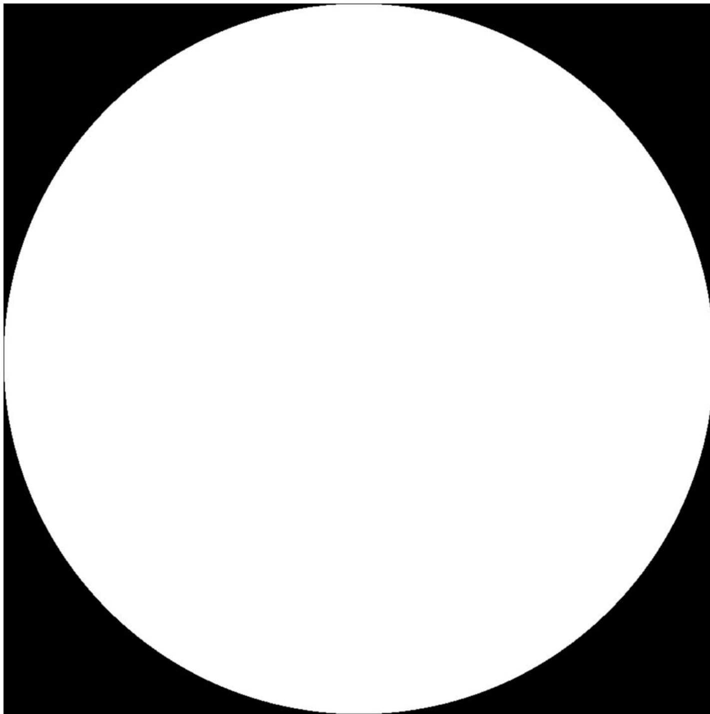
We thus find ourselves in a complex world in which the past no longer makes the future comprehensible but which we nevertheless still try to control and foresee. "Yet there are clear signs that the world we inhabit today and one we have inherited may have moved beyond our ability to conceive of the contingent and the unknown as manageable objects." (Rao 2014, p. 16) This means that "[n]either the dominant Western institutions nor the West's conceptual tools are any longer appropriate to the conditions of their making." (Adam 2006, p. 119)

Essentially, for utopianism to be transformative, entirely new ways of thinking about time-space and space-time[24] and about our position therein are necessary. However, as mentioned in the last few subchapters, there are many concepts and myths that influence the experience and interpretation of time and space (such as realism, positivism, truth regimes, capitalism, globalisation, technological, political and environmental events, as well as growth-oriented, dualistic, and deterministic ways of thinking). These therefore equally influence the forms utopianism takes in architecture today. In addition, architecture *contributes* to the experience of time and space, while simultaneously being a *product* of their interpretation. Therefore, the next chapter will explore the forms

24 Space-time and time-space "are not distinct concepts; the choice of term in general depends on the emphasis of the argument." (Massey 2005, p. 197)

utopianism takes in architecture today and the role architecture plays in the experience and production of time-space orders as a result.

5 Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianisms



“Strong architecture for strong men” (Jormakka 2011b, p. 72).

5.1 Degenerate Utopias: Utopianism and the Disavowal of Crisis

Marked by a 24/7 flow of information, simultaneity, immediacy, sped-up mobility, unbound space, and an unlimited flow of goods, globalisation, or rather the specific form it takes, namely globalised neoliberalism, unfolds within the ahistorical temporality of presentism. Space now seems meaningless, as the narrative of globalism goes, evoking the impression that space could now be annihilated by time. However, ever since neoliberalism started to develop, it did so in a very geographical and geographically dependent way. Leaving very physical traces, the global restructuring of cities, for example, can be seen as a direct reflection of the worldwide political economic restructurings which started at the end of the 20th century.

While architecture and urbanisation have since the very beginning shared an intimate connection with capitalism, under neoliberalism this is taken to a heightened form. For example, while previously predominantly driven by the state, urban development today is increasingly financed by private transnational elites. The primary interest in land and the built environment therefore lies in the extraction of capital (often even when owned by the state, as it too increasingly behaves in an entrepreneurial fashion). In this context architecture serves as a pivotal tool for the endless cycle of capital accumulation in which surplus value is created to be reinvested again elsewhere. This leads to the extensification and intensification of capital, or 'the frontiers of capital' as defined by Marx, in which capital extends into uncharted territories or intensifies production (Yarina 2017). The latter results in an ongoing increase in value and financial speculation of land and the real estate market, in which the built environment is primarily rendered as commodity. This affects cities in various ways, for example, by growing unequal distribution of capital (leaving some areas over-invested in and others neglected) or through the expulsion of lower income inhabitants in previously affordable areas, also known as gentrification. Capital thus acts disruptively in very obvious but also far more subtle ways. Furthermore, since capital has to continuously discover new terrains for capital extraction,

its repercussions are constantly changing. As a progressively aggressive force its effects extend to the precariousness of labour, new means of production, the development of new markets and bigger pressure on the natural environment, which is why capital is often linked to imperialist and neocolonial endeavours (Harvey 2008).

Since architecture's value is now increasingly dependent on its exchange value rather than its use value, accommodation is often no longer the most important task of architecture. "You don't have to live in these apartments to love Vienna. Owning them will do." (Citing a marketing slogan, Heindl 2019, p. 125) said the inscription of an inner-city construction site in Vienna in the year 2011. The same can be said for public space, which increasingly serves economic aims such as setting the stage for consumerism or attracting investment from companies, builders, buyers, and visitors. This leads to a decrease in accessibility which, however, is *the* key feature of public space. "The more accessible a place, the more public it becomes." (Madanipour 2019, p. 45) Accessibility is therefore a prerequisite for diversity and inclusion and its decrease an indicator of shrinking democracies.

These developments were supported by an ongoing intellectual shift in architectural critical thought (or the intended resignation thereof) starting at the end of the 20th century. Architects since allegedly abandon any pretensions to change the world (exemplified in Rem Koolhaas' 'realist cynicism') and aim at connecting architecture with the 'real' challenges of its time instead – "[t]o 'solve', not to 'problematize'" (Fischer 2012, p. 58). Architectural practice has hence transformed into an ideology of realism, pragmatism, and an "obsessive matter-of-factness, or a non-critical embrace of global capitalism." (Coleman 2005, p. 6) Members of this 'post-criticality' or 'post-theory' movement aim at "recasting hyper-conformity [to neoliberal globalisation] as a supposedly subversive tactic for overloading the system, by intensifying its contradictions in the belief that they will become glaringly obvious, thereby bringing them to the point of crumbling." (Coleman 2020, p. 220, own insertion) Instead of evoking contradictions, however, the architectural object has gained a sudden prominent cultural status in society, transforming into an identity-forming experience. True to the

logic of commodity culture, the fetishisation of the object has fully extended onto buildings and elevated architects to *starchitects*. Enforced by a rising significance of the visual in mediatised society, "architectural design is reduced to the superficial play of empty, seductive forms, and philosophy is appropriated as an intellectual veneer to justify these forms." (Leach cited in Karbasioun 2018, p. 108) Practices reducing buildings to their visual appearance try to perpetuate architecture as an autonomous, self-referential discipline in which architecture is abstracted and de-contextualised. "If such practice is guided by theory, it is theory of the traditional type, based on the model of the natural sciences, which attempts to develop universal and systematic methods removed from the vagaries of the particular" (Awan et al. 2011, p. 29), such as parametrics, for example.

Through this uncritical embrace of globalised neoliberalism, architectural design and the building industry have become fully incorporated into the global competitive market. Architects who now act as globalised professionals, compete for projects on a worldwide market, thereby no longer limited to the immediate vicinities but stretched out across the entire planet. This, on the one hand, results in a division of labour in which "Western 'design architects' often produce the massing, concept and promotional renderings for a foreign project before handing off the design drawings to a local architect to translate them into construction documents." (Yarina 2017, p. 245) On the other, it further enforces the process of globalisation, in which social, political as well as spatial dimensions become increasingly homogenised. Built on the premises of inevitability (which bears striking resemblance to a *grand narrative*), time is turned into a singular determined trajectory (that of the West/ the 'developed world') and space depicted as a temporal sequence (the countries of the Global South are 'lacking behind'/ 'developing'). In this logic, other forms of development are foreclosed and the particular disregarded (Massey 2005).

This presents space with a rather confusing paradox. While in the process of globalisation the particular of localised contexts is disregarded in favour of increasingly homogenised and standardised solutions, design nevertheless is meant to distinguish cities from one

another, which too now compete on a global scale. However, while iconic architecture presents itself as radical innovation and a tool for globalised individualisation (for cities as well as their inhabitants), its radicality is restricted to the conformity of technology and the intensification of existing conditions. In globalised (st)architecture, "[e]xisting conditions are accentuated [...] to obscure simple reproduction of *what is* in an extreme form." (Coleman 2020, p. 220, original emphasis) Such architecture thus serves as the ultimate celebration of globalised culture, reproducing spaces of "an ever-intensifying urban present, instead of a radically different future." (Picon 2013a, p. 22) In this contemporary consumerist ideology, as in any ideology, "[w]hat is consumed is always 'new', but this novelty is a mere difference in time that signals the eternal return of the same." (Thompson 1982, p. 620) Any change is an internal change of the (ideological, neoliberal) system and thus results in a reinforced version of existing reality. As Harvey states, iconic architecture simply has to present itself as "unique and particular *enough*" (Harvey cited in Yarina 2017, p. 244, emphasis by Harvey).

As a symbolic asset and commodity at once, architecture is thus meant to attract and manufacture desire through its iconicity. Since desire here is however tied to consumerism, real desire is oppressed, while commodified desire has to continually be fed. As mentioned, it is however not fed by true novelty or alternativity but produced from within the existing framework. Imagination is thus restrained to the infinite space of consumerism. Further increasingly owned and maintained privately, globalised capitalised space hence assumes very specific characteristics. It presents itself as decontextualised, well-ordered, non-conflictual, ahistorical, inward-focused, sanitised, secure, controlled, under surveillance, tied to consumption and property rights. As such, it bears striking resemblance to the characteristics of traditional utopias.

In his analysis of Disneyland, Louis Marin was the first to describe this kind of idealised and capitalised space as a materialised utopia, for which he introduced the term *Degenerate Utopia*. As an actually existing place it "alienates the visitor by a distorted and fantasmatic representation of daily life, [...] of what is estranged and what is familiar: comfort, welfare, consumption, scientific and technological progress, super-

power, and morality." (Marin 1984, p. 240) David Harvey and other scholars (Harvey 2000; Olkowski 2007; Suvin 2010) have further extended the term to places outside of Disneyland, realising that they have become a dominant part of commodified city life: Escapist and compensatory places where life is presented in a fetishised and illusionary manner.

The *Disneyfication*[1] of the built environment can range from subtle gentrified (semi-)public spaces to very outspoken forms with walls and fences. Such places can include shopping malls, shopping districts, corporate spaces, gated communities, segregated suburbs, or large-scale development projects. As such they all assume the spatial qualities mentioned above. Here, the right to the city is overruled by the ability to pay. Tied to specific rules and regulations, they represent supposedly harmonious places, in which political difference is repressed through surveillance and control. They are representations of authorities and police order where ideology is, through the help of iconic architecture, transformed into myth and collective commodified fantasy. "Their organization and functioning may well be symptomatic of the entire society of control [which] has masked itself as a site of freedom and equality" (Olkowski 2007, p. 184, own insertion). As a rupture to everyday life, they infantilise us, thereby alienating us from meaningful cohabitation.

A further means of control and alienation is created by a sensory addiction to a compensatory reality through the increasing reliance on technicity and illusion, or *technoaesthetics*.[2] "In a time dominated by spectacle in culture and politics, every new developmental stage of technology brings about a new mode of alienation of the corporeal

1 *Disneyfication* is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "the transformation (as of something real or unsettling) into carefully controlled and safe entertainment or an environment with similar qualities" ("Disneyfication." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Disneyfication. Accessed 20/02/2022).

2 *Aesthetics* here refers to the original Greek *aisthesis* meaning *perception by feeling*. Thus, the "'field of aesthetics is not art but reality' in a corporeal and material sense." (With reference to Buck-Morss, Andreotti and Lahiji 2017, p. 80)

sensorium." (Andreotti and Lahiji 2017, p. 144)[3] As illusionary appearances such spaces create a blurred distinction between the real and the imagined and therefore alienate us from our bodily senses and our surroundings. "The underlying operations of control affiliated with desire, fear, and the promise of enjoyment are always and inevitably predicated on the impossibility of the subject establishing a firm place from which to make sense of one's world" (with reference to Dean, ibid., p. 129).

Because this kind of space "pre-empts any alternative imagination, any fertile possibility of a radical otherness" (Suvin 2010, p. 394), iconic architecture is frequently depicted as anti-utopian.[4] The possibility of a different future is foreclosed, which means that no other time and space than that of the celebrated present is rendered possible. However, this, in fact, makes it *entirely utopian* in its *traditional* sense. To recollect:

> [Blueprint u]topias are not marked by multiplicities of time and space for they are representations of an ideal and ultimate time and space, achieved once and for all. Utopia [in its traditional sense] […] 'is not the fairyland where all wishes are fulfilled. Utopia fulfils only *one* wish: the wish of seeing things and people identical to their concept' (citing Rancière, Dikeç 2012, p. 671, emphasis by Rancière, own insertions).

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3 According to Libero Andreotti and Nadir Lahiji, technical manipulation has however further intensified and since developed from the spectacle to *phantasmagorias*. These define "a new stage of capitalist totalization in which every aspect of life is reconstructed to align with a new set of normative trajectories that tie it into the tempo, the operations, and the new spatial coordinates of markets and information networks." (ibid., p. 127)

4 This is the case for those who understand utopia as a method and systemic alternative. For those with an understanding of utopia as an unrealistic ideal, such architecture is defined as anti-utopian because it refers to the 'real' world. Since utopianism in this book is defined as the expression of human flourishing, *anti-utopianism* refers to the philosophy of a *non-pursuit* of a better life, meaning any action resulting in insignificance rather than contribution to human flourishing. See the glossary or next subchapter *5.2 Junkspace: Anti-Utopianism and Omni-Crisis* for a closer examination.

The sort of architecture which fixes concepts to representation in time and space therefore *produces blueprint utopias* ***in form***. Furthermore, even if the envisioned society is simply an intensified version of the present, such forms of architecture attempt at contributing to a better life, nevertheless. The production of spectacular architecture is therefore never motivated by money alone, but by an additional factor: "To make architecture is to take part in – to imitate and compete, or to emulate – this endeavour of making perfect work" (Verschaffel 2012, p. 166).[5] Any production of (such) iconic architecture can be seen as a motivated effort in making a significant contribution to society and therefore is ultimately informed by some kind of utopianism. If uncritical architects depict themselves as 'realist cynics', then the only thing they are *really* cynical about, is architecture as a tool for *systemic* change – not, however, architecture as a frame for providing the good life. What has changed is thus not the assumption that architecture would no longer contribute to human flourishing, but the outlook on *how* this would be achieved. It is not that utopianism has disappeared; it is more that it has *changed*.

The noteworthy shift in the way betterment is believed to occur can be observed in society at large: human flourishing is no longer set in the realm of the political or social, but in that of the *cultural*. In addition, culture today is being increasingly linked to technology, while technology assumes the role of culture in its own right (Harvey 1996). This sort of utopianism thus attempts at contributing to better life *through design*. It is the building, its form, its visual appearance, which is rendered as the answer to making life 'better' – most notably, through the help of technology. Social issues are hence formulated as 'problems' to be 'solved' which in architecture renders the finished building as the 'solution'. For this reason, this book refers to this kind of thinking as *problem-solving utopianisms*. Ultimately, this must also be the reason for the architect's stardom: it is *(s)he* who bring this better life upon us.

Furthermore, it can be noted, that this form of commodified myth-making is not restricted to buildings alone but extends to any form of

5 The inherent link between architecture and making perfect work is further explored in *6.2 Rethinking Architectural Education*.

representation (visual or text) and performances (behaviours, events, and festivals). Architecture critic Davide T. Ferrando (2016b), for example, has noted a rising popularity in animated videos as a new communication tool for architectural projects. He particularly refers to a striking method of visualisation in which buildings are conjured out of nothing, construction elements floating in mid-air, magically assembling themselves into spectacular sculptures.[6] Not only is this a very direct and double form of *Disneyfication*, but it also obfuscates the hard work, labour and material procurement that actually goes into creating such buildings. Most strikingly, it delineates the architectural product from its social and political context, celebrating it, once again, as a spectacular and innovative cultural product.

However, as has been mentioned, if the general trend of globalisation is marked by a process of homogenisation in which no true novelty is created, then this presents us with the paradoxical situation in which any attempt at individualisation eventually amounts to homogenisation. This means that the process of identity construction simultaneously creates the city without qualities. In the attempt of distinguishing themselves from each other on the outside, cities therefore level down internally (with reference to Löw, Meier 2011; see also Faschingeder et al. 2011). For Manuel Castells this means creating architecture so neutral, clean and transparent that it actually does not stand for anything specific, but stays open to various coded interpretations (Castells 2017). However, what kind of space are we left with, when any production of novelty ends up perpetuating sameness? Does the absorption of uniqueness then not amount into a totality of an eternally present, universalised space?

6 In his article Davide T. Ferrando refers to a video project in which he compiled such animated presentations (see Ferrando 2016a). It includes visualisations of the Hudson Yards, BIG's Dry Line in Manhattan, as well as projects by Herzog & De Meuron, Daniel Libeskind, Snøhetta, and Zaha Hadid architects.

5.2 Junkspace: Anti-Utopianism and Omni-Crisis

"People in search of a presentist experience need only look around them at certain cityscapes, replicated across the globe, for which the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas has invented the concept 'Generic City,' associated with the notion of 'Junkspace'. This is where presentism is really at home, eating up space and reducing or banishing time." (Hartog 2017, p. xix)

If utopianism is the pursuit of a *better* society, then *anti-utopianism* refers to its implicit as well as explicit *non-pursuit*.[7] It is a philosophy of *non-improvement*, founded either on the idea that betterment is not rendered possible (which links it closely to cynicism and nihilism) and/or on the idea that the worst has already happened (assuming that the present as it is, is already the final and achieved utopia). In both cases it serves an ahistorical and presentist end of history logic. People supporting this view often refer to the achievement of unprecedented global wealth and political rights, conveniently disregarding the growing gap between rich and poor or the discrepancy between social and political liberties. The arguments often touch upon how far we as human beings have come and that we ought to be satisfied and thankful for what we have got (or, on a more irritated note, *don't you have something better to whine about?*). Evidently, the only people defending this perspective are privileged ones, either because they are blind and/or ignorant to the deep-seated conflicts of society, feel discriminated against,[8] or because they want to perpetuate their supremacy. While, in the latter case, they would no longer pursue utopianism on the level of a broad *society*, they would very well pursue improvement of their *personal* situation. This reveals that not only utopianism has been detached from social and political endeavours but has also largely become individualised and therefore no longer concerned

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7 Note that it is not necessarily *dystopian*. See glossary entry for *dystopia*.

8 There is a frequently cited saying going "When you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like discrimination." (Original source or person who coined the phrase is unknown; there are however various references on the internet. Depending on the context, the word *discrimination* is frequently replaced by *oppression*).

with society as such. *Anti-utopianism* is thus the unquestioned acceptance of the current state of affairs with no motivation to improve them 'for the greater good', neither on a socio-political, nor on a cultural level. In architecture this translates into unmotivated spaces, endlessly reproducing the presentist experience, where any action results in insignificance rather than human flourishing.

In architecture theory and beyond, this kind of space has been attributed to the notion of Rem Koolhaas' *Junkspace* (Koolhaas 2002) as well as Marc Augé's *non-place* (Augé 1995). As for Augé, who is speaking from an anthropological perspective, *supermodernity* increasingly produces places stripped of any identity, context, and history but in which human beings nevertheless spend more and more of their time. These are "spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overburdening or emptying of individuality" (ibid., p. 87), of which the traveller's space marks the archetype. Whereas the "'[a]nthropological place' is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers." (ibid., p. 101) This shared identity however is only shared temporarily and in fact marked by identity-loss and role-playing, therefore not creating any relations – only solitude and similitude. Non-places harbour a homogenised mass of isolated individuals, separated in their sameness.

In a similar vein, also *Junkspace* is described as a product of our time. "Junkspace is what remains after modernization has run its course [...], its fallout." (Koolhaas 2002, p. 175) It is characterised by continuity and endless expansion, an infinite interior continuum of homogenised space. "[A]ir-conditioning [...] has truly revolutionized architecture. Air-conditioning has launched the endless building. If architecture separates buildings, air-conditioning unites them." (ibid., 176) Furthermore, *Junkspace* is marked by endless maintenance and flexibility: it is constantly rebuilt to stay essentially the same. It is space without form, without design, without memory. "Junkspace cannot be remembered." (ibid., 177)

Notably, both Augé's *non-place* and Koolhaas' *Junkspace* represent spaces *devoid* of utopia, or spaces of *anti-utopianism*. For Augé, "[t]he

non-place is the opposite of utopia" (Augé 1995, p. 111), since collective society no longer exists, only commodified individuals. To Koolhaas, "[c]hange has been divorced from the idea of improvement. There is no progress" (Koolhaas 2002, p. 178), meaning *Junkspace* is motivated by market needs alone. Augé's *non-places* are equivalent to Koolhaas' *Junkspace* in that they both are emptied out of any trace of history and context, creating an eternal present in which the only time measured is clock-time.[9] They both create a universal space standing in discontinuity with traditional urban contexts and the memory of the past. "There is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment." (Augé 1995, p. 103)

These descriptions of time and space seem to reflect the general experience of the modern subject within philosophy in which subjectivity increasingly correlates with 'negation' (with reference to Ubl, Meier 2011).[10] While the experiences of time and space which started to develop within modernity are still relevant today, these have since further transformed and intensified under globalised neoliberalism. In a need for revision, Hardt and Negri have updated such analysis through a Marxist

9 Augé for example states "[s]ince non-places are there to be passed through, they are measured in units of time" (Augé 1995, p. 104) while simultaneously saying that "[e]verything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history" (ibid.).

10 Interestingly, this is also reflected in the German translation of Koolhaas' text *The Generic City* (Koolhaas 1998 [1995]). The translation of the title into *Die Stadt ohne Eigenschaften* (Koolhaas 1996), meaning 'the city without qualities', strongly reminds one of Robert Musil's novel *The Man without Qualities*. Also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri make reference to Musil's novel in saying it would reflect modernity's inherent contradiction: "For the philanthropists of Musil's world there is a conflict at the center of modernity between, on the one hand, the immanent forces of desire and association, the love of the community, and on the other, the strong hand of an overarching authority that imposes and enforces an order on the social field." (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. 69) All these texts (of the socio-spatial, philosophico-political as well as literary genre) thus confirm in some way or other the aforementioned negation in the experience of the modern subject.

lens in their description of *Empire*. *Empire* here does not stand in for a direct metaphor, but a concept introduced to describe a new regime that acts as a headless authority, encompassing the totality of time and space:

> First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality [...] Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history. (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. xiv)

Whereas places in modernity were in continual exchange with their outsides, the space of imperial sovereignty appears as a continuous, borderless, and uniform space. "In this smooth space of Empire, there is no *place* of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia,* or really a *non-place.*" (ibid., p. 190, original emphasis) Space thus appears boundless and universal while time is rendered permanent and eternal. Because *Empire* has no spatial and temporal boundaries, governing the totality of time and space, it extends to the entirety of the social world. It governs not only human interactions but over very human nature and therefore describes a form of biopower. The non-place of *Empire* thus marks the shift from the industrial economy to the biopolitical management where industrial labour has been replaced with immaterial and intellectual labour.

Interestingly, "[w]hereas the previous, transitional perspectives focused attention on the legitimating dynamics that would lead toward the new order, in the new paradigm it is as if the new order were already constituted." (ibid., p. 14) *Empire* thus presents itself as an *actually existing utopia*. While, on the outside, *Empire* "is always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside of history" (ibid., p. xv), its practice "is continually bathed in blood" (ibid.). This then might be *Empire's*

biggest paradox. While presenting itself as an achieved utopia in which the existence of crisis is negated, crisis, however, is *omnipresent*. Crisis consequently becomes *internalised* and *naturalised* in the age of *Empire*.

It is therefore defined as *smooth* because boundaries and differences are set aside, welcoming everyone into the imperial space of consensus. Differences are set aside, not because they do not exist, but because of indifference and ignorance. They are imagined to be cultural instead of political and therefore non-conflictual. Built on the premises of universal acceptance and neutrality it "makes possible the establishment and legitimation of a universal notion of right that forms the core of the Empire." (ibid., p. 198) *Empire* is thus a machine for universal integration in which subjectivities glide without substantial resistance or conflict. This also marks a shift from the negation of differences to their affirmation since it prevents subjects from appearing as a unity. "Contingency, mobility, and flexibility are Empire's real power." (ibid., p. 201)

Thus, if *Empire* marks the totality of the social world, then *Junkspace* is its spatial setting. "Junkspace is the result of the unification or integration of the totality of the built spaces of modern metropolises. It is incessantly devouring the entirety of the spaces on the planet and combining all the existing spaces to produce an interior whose limits and edges are not perceivable." (Karbasioun 2018, p. 145) Not only do many similarities between *Junkspace* and *Empire* exist, conceptually as well as in vocabulary; Negri himself has argued that "Junkspace is biopolitical." (Negri 2009, p. 48) However, if biopolitical space is conceptualised as the all-encompassing space of *anti-utopianism*, how does a certain degree of utopianism, even if limited, survive in this equalising totality? How does bland, anonymous *Junkspace* relate to the spectacular architecture of *Degenerate Utopias*?

For one, whereas *Junkspace* represents the unmotivated by-product of capitalist globalisation, iconic *Degenerate Utopias* are the affirmative celebration of it. Whereas the latter is therefore still to some extent motivated to make a valuable contribution to society, be it only on a cultural level, the former is completely detached from any form of societal improvement and motivated by market needs alone. However, since both at the end of the day are heavily motivated by economic forces, it could

be argued that *Degenerate Utopias* control and fix time-space for as long as surplus value can be created, while *Junkspace* generates the infinite cash-cow, endlessly reproducing itself. For Zygmunt Bauman this means that such *Degenerate Utopias* have to create the impression of endless new beginnings. "Hence the attraction of a modicum of happiness known to be on offer in the already visited and familiar places needs to compete with the magnetic power of 'virgin lands' and 'new beginnings' […]. […] In the transgressive imagination of liquid modernity the 'place' (whether physical or social) has been replaced by the unending sequence of new beginnings" (Bauman 2003, pp. 23–24).

This creates a peculiar landscape of singular capitalist utopias existing *within* an endless anti-utopian space. It reveals two deciding aspects: that abstract systems of power still need very physical places to attract real human beings and that these will therefore continue to be informed by symbolism, culture, and meaning, and thus ultimately by some kind of utopianism. To paraphrase Castells, this is the most fundamental paradox existing in our globalised, urbanised, networked world: a world in which functionality, wealth, and power are created in abstract networks, human beings live and work in very physical places (Castells 2017). Furthermore, places and non-places are not strictly separatable as Augé observes. "In the concrete reality of today's world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from any place. Place becomes a refuge to the habitue of non-places" (Augé 1995, p. 107). Moreover, many of the spaces of the modern metropolis typically defined as *Junkspace* meanwhile have become the central projects for iconic architecture: railway stations, airports, hotels, convention centres, shopping malls. "[I]rregularity and uniqueness are constructed from identical elements." (Koolhaas 2002, p. 178) This creates contradictory combinations of seemingly exclusive opposites such as celebrated individuality versus equalising homogeneity, novelty versus sameness, etc. Nevertheless, both *problem-solving utopianism* and *anti-utopianism* ultimately produce time-spaces of control. While authority can act in a visibly controlled fixity, it can also act in contingent and imperceptible ways. Furthermore, both these forms of utopianism seem to produce

restrictive time-spaces of an ahistorical, presentist experience which lacks historical legitimacy, cultural heritage, and broader references to socio-political contexts. Both create the ideological and material manifestation of globalised neoliberalism in the early 21st century.

“But can one actually *live* in a presentist city?” (Hartog 2017, p. xix, original emphasis)

5.3 Techno-Utopias: Utopianism ‘Solving’ Crisis

So far, this book has shed light on how utopianism and crisis relate to architecture and how they are influenced by various other concepts, values and (outdated) myths. Amongst others, the idea of growth-oriented progress, scientism, solution-oriented thinking as well as deterministic understandings of time and space have been addressed as essential aspects in comprising the underlying assumptions in *problem-solving utopianisms*. In architectural projects this form of utopianism leads to the reduction of architecture to aesthetics, function, and form, which is presented as final and thus as a frozen snapshot in time. Architecture here is offered as the final solution to social as well as environmental problems and presents a pivotal tool for capital accumulation. While this reveals architecture's development as a power-induced, problem-solving discipline in general, in the context of multiple crises this way of problem-oriented thinking seems to come to a head in distinctly future-oriented projects, namely *Techno-Utopias*.

What largely separates *Techno-Utopias* from the previous two spatio-temporal formations is their relation to crisis: In *Degenerate Utopias* any reference to crisis is *avoided*, creating superficially harmonious crisis-free places. In *Junkspace* crisis is so *omnipresent* that it dissolves and becomes *naturalised* and *internalised*. *Techno-Utopias*, however, reflect architecture's *engagement* with crisis. They represent a direct architectural *response* to a specific crisis. Furthermore, *techno* here carries a double meaning. Similar to *Degenerate Utopias* and *Junkspace* technology and *technoaesthetics* are a significant feature. The second aspect, however, reflects the deep inclination to *technocracy*: In *Techno-Utopias,* multiple

crises are reduced and abstracted to a *singular* crisis, mostly the climate crisis, and viewed as a problem to be solved, best with technocratic bureaucracy and technology. To demonstrate their future-compatibility, such projects are accompanied by buzzwords such as *resilience, innovation, smart, sustainability*, or *the future*.

'Sustainable' and 'smart' projects catch a lot of attention today, "attention that extends far beyond their actual impact on the metabolism of cities" (Picon 2020, p. 279). In the case of *smart cities*, there exists a similar discrepancy between rhetoric and reality found in public spaces (Madanipour 2019): While claiming to serve public interests, smart city concepts are often part of a hidden neoliberal agenda. Giuseppe Grossi and Daniela Pianezzi (2017), for example, have analysed how smart city projects try to benefit from debates regarding democratic participation, emancipation, and ideas on civil society, while in reality being driven by entrepreneurial goals of businesses which are not democratically elected, planned top-down, and with a view of inhabitants as consumers. While they often rhetorically target urgent urban problems of contemporary urbanisation processes, "supply-driven smart city solutions [...] are disconnected from their social context and fail to tackle a city's problems in a cohesive way" (citing Angelidou, ibid., p. 83). In addition, existing city rankings that measure the 'smartness' of cities and countries indicate that buzzwords can be of monetary value. "A 'smarter' country is worth up to 10 points in GDP annually." (Citing ABB, ibid., p. 81)

Smart city concepts are good examples of the broader culture of techno-managerialism resulting from neoliberal governance. Following neoliberal restructurings of the public sector, attention has shifted to competition, deregulation, and collaboration between government and stakeholders, resulting in private-public partnerships. This leads to contesting assumptions in addressing social change in the context of multiple crises. According to Ulrich Brand (2009, 2016b), the biggest discrepancy comes down to believing that meaningful change could occur within the current economic and political system. As Ruth Levitas has noted, "where change seems difficult, utopia is either impossible to imagine, or becomes collapsed into the analysis of the present it-

self" (Levitas 2013a, p.123). Managerial, *problem-solving utopianisms* are therefore restricted to known territory, tools, and institutions. This means that crisis gets 'managed' by authorities who decide on 'the exception', often benefitting private interests.[11] Technocratic fixes address phenomena only superficially, "to assure that the world as we know it stays fundamentally the same" (with reference to Žižek, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2014, p. 7).

A good example of such problem-solving techno-utopianism in architecture is Bjarke Ingels, who advocates for 'hedonistic sustainability' in which the building is supposed to resolve environmental issues in such a way that the current lifestyle of the inhabitant (or consumer?) can be sustained. In an interview he states that creating sustainable buildings means "to find ways of designing cities and buildings [...] where the outcome doesn't actually force people to alter their lifestyle to have a better conscience. They can live exactly the way they want, or even better, because the world and the city are designed in such a way that they can actually do so. Essentially, it is to approach the question of sustainability not as a moral dilemma but as a *design challenge*" (Jordan 2018, own emphasis).

Lifestyle indeed seems to be a crucial aspect in *Techno-Utopias*, which is indebted to the fact that socio-environmental responsibilities have become heavily individualised as a means of distraction from big players and systemic change. Today, even bringing a child into the world is debated as a sustainable decision and its renunciation "[t]he greatest impact individuals can have in fighting climate change" (with reference to a study, Carrington 2017). However, "[w]hen it comes to polarizing rhetoric, there is no greater opportunity to divide people than when it comes to lifestyle choices, for they are tied directly to one's sense of identity." (Mann 2021, p. 72) So too for architecture, which plays an increasingly important role in the creation of sustainable identities. In contradiction to the alleged rationale of pure pragmatism, this hence reveals once more the extent to which symbolism in architecture is of (inherent) significance. Beyond merely representing 'sustainable'

11 See 3.2 *The Crisis Narrative*.

projects, say as a means for saving energy, it is as if "architecture was particularly apt to convey essential aspects of the urban future." (Picon 2020, p. 279)

Hence nature 'as thing to be saved' becomes a reoccurring element in future-oriented projects, often simply by placing vegetable elements in "highly visible and improbable positions, like trophies meant to celebrate the victory of sustainability upon industrial philistinism." (Picon 2013b, p. 146) Trees and plants acquire strong symbolic meaning as a way to reconcile architecture with nature "as if to make, through representation, a built world compatible with the natural one." (Levit 2008, p. 81) Making architecture 'natural' can therefore be seen as an attempt of disguising or superficially reversing the divisions between exploiting society as opposed to nature. As Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw have indicated, there is however nothing 'natural' even in nature, since nature is always constructed, "imagined, scripted and symbolically charged" (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2014, p. 6). As any space or human-made concept, nature has no fixed meaning and exists in human minds beyond its actual materiality. "This means, quite simply, that there is no *foundational Nature* out there that needs or requires salvation in name of either Nature itself or a generic Humanity. There is nothing foundational in *Nature* that needs, demands, or requires sustaining." (ibid., original emphasis)

The salvific aspect in apocalyptically painted futures hence quite vividly portrays the survival of the ancient-old demiurgic instinct to save the world through architectural projects. In particularly dystopian visions the primary task of architecture has become harbouring what is left, saving what can be saved, and to create the final habitat for everything living in a world otherwise destroyed.[12] While such visions are abundant in paper architecture, this way of thinking is representative of a broader culture which emphasises architecture as an ideal object and as a product of the mind.[13] While *Techno-Utopias*, built or on paper, may

12 A good example of this would be *Lilypad*, a floating ecopolis for climate refugees by Vincent Callebaut Architectures (https://www.vincent.callebaut.org/object/080523_lilypad/lilypad/projects, checked on 16/01/2022).

13 See *6.2 Rethinking Architectural Education*, p. 130.

offer striking designs, their visionary aspect is debatable since these projects work within the *existing* social framework, which is simply being extrapolated into a (determined) future. They envision a future under the circumstances 'if present trends continue' instead of offering ideas to prevent these trends from happening in the first place. Ironically, "instead of being a project for the future, utopia becomes a critical reflection *on the present,* losing in this way its projective character" (Jeinić 2013, p. 72, own emphasis). *Techno-Utopias* thus lack critical assessments of underlying systemic issues and do not tackle the multiple crises at their roots. They are created by an elite, for and elite, offering consumption-oriented habitats for people that can afford to live in them.[14] Built on a scarcity mentality couched in the jargon of 'sustainability' they ensure, as mentioned, that in fact nothing has to change to tackle the crisis – all that is needed is the *right design*. This reveals the extent to which "architectural green utopianism of spatial form appears as the summit of an authoritarian management of socioecological systems needed to provide conditions for intact accumulation of capital in the era of ecological crisis." (ibid., p. 71)

Furthermore, the varying futures painted out in *Techno-Utopias* reveal once more how thoroughly contested the concept of the future is. While in some visions apocalyptic futures are used to promote personal interests, in others they spread fear to "cancel out as absurd transformative utopian thinking" (Levitas 2013a, p. 123). In this sense, "[f]atalism is not just dystopian, tending to gloomy prognoses for the future, but anti-utopian" (ibid.). In other cases again, dystopian narratives are the result of narrow-minded, stereotypical and deterministic thinking, a trend that has been defined as *noir urban scholarship*, foreclosing the differentiating dynamics and contingent nature of urban spaces (Pow 2015). Other projects in contrast are embedded in optimistic and celebratory rhetoric to promote their realisability (Grossi and Pianezzi 2017). In this sense, there exists a high correlation between urban narratives and the hidden agendas in power-driven processes. With regards to future

14 Ironically, the aforementioned project *Lilypad* is placed in front of the coast of Monaco.

narratives, Ulrich Brand describes this process as *futuring,* in which resource-driven narratives become objects "of *current* (non-)decision and (non-)action" (Brand 2016a, p. 518, original emphasis). As a result, both *futuring* and the extrapolation of the present into the future reveal once more how much even ideas on the future have become heavily marked by presentism.

Regarding the colonisation of imaginative thought, it has to be stressed that projects existing on paper share and interact with the same imaginary of which built architecture emerges from. It would therefore be a mistake to argue that hypothetical projects would have no influence on the 'real' world. In fact, the competition culture in architecture, from which a lot of paper architecture emerges, fosters the reduction of architecture to representation. As "the search for excellence in architecture" (citing Chupin et al., Till 2018, p. 161) competitions not only cultivate the separation of architecture and social processes but celebrate this form of architecture as prestige projects. For these reasons, it is often argued that "competition projects *function like utopias.*" (Citing Chupin et al., ibid., p. 161, original emphasis) Once again, "[i]t may thus be said of architectural discourse that […] it suffers from the delusion that 'objective' knowledge of 'reality' can be attained by means of graphic representations." (Lefebvre 1997 [1974], p. 361) In light of increasing mediatisation and individualisation, knowledge society however increasingly relies on representation as a mediation of cultural codes. In a world in which imagination is restricted to images and presentism, it has thus become far easier to imagine what the future might *look* like, rather than what the future might *feel* like.

Furthermore, since *techno-utopianism* meanders between cultural and nihilistic codes, between *utopianism* and *anti-utopianism*, it sheds light on how such seemingly opposing concepts are not mutually exclusive dualisms, but that projects can paradoxically fluctuate in-between. This also means that projects can simultaneously contain elements that make out *Techno-Utopias* and *Degenerate Utopias*, for example. Similarly fluid is the idea of *Junkspace*, which according to Koolhaas, Hardt and Negri, anyway seems to be surrounding us 'everywhere'.

Finally, it is important to stress that this book does not wish to portray technology as inherently evil or to go culturally back in time. Today's society does not exist without technology. It is nevertheless only as 'good' or 'bad' as the humans who employ it. Its use and embeddedness in culture therefore needs more scrutiny and deeper analysis, which eventually should inform decision-making processes as well as (architectural) education. Thus, while technological innovations are praised for accelerating and improving society, it should be critically assessed if ever-increasing linear forward movement is the right approach at all, and so on. Furthermore, while ideas such as energy-saving buildings are helpful parts in the puzzle for addressing environmental change, their contribution is small in the context of multiple crises. Such 'solutions' downplay the need for changes in lifestyle as well as socio-political frameworks, not only due to a growth- and resource-finite planet, but also due to the increasing socio-political and economic injustices. In this sense, the climate crisis is not the only crisis which needs to be tackled. Superficial attempts at 'solving' crisis therefore disregard the inherent contradictions of globalised neoliberalism induced by patriarchal, imperial, and neocolonial structures.

"We need to understand that the solution to global warming is not to fix the world. We need to understand that we need to fix ourselves."[15] Talking about a vision for society is more than envisioning futuristic buildings. Thinking seriously about how we as living beings want to further thrive together on this planet is a complex and ambitious task. No utopia will ever be able, or ought, to be seen as the answer to this question. Too often utopia has been understood as the remedy to society's problems. In fact, too often planners have believed that the remedy to society's problems could be planned at all. No project of any kind – may it be of political or spatial nature, can, or should, ever be seen as 'the solution' to human needs. If it is not the answer we ought to look for, what are the questions we ought to pose then?

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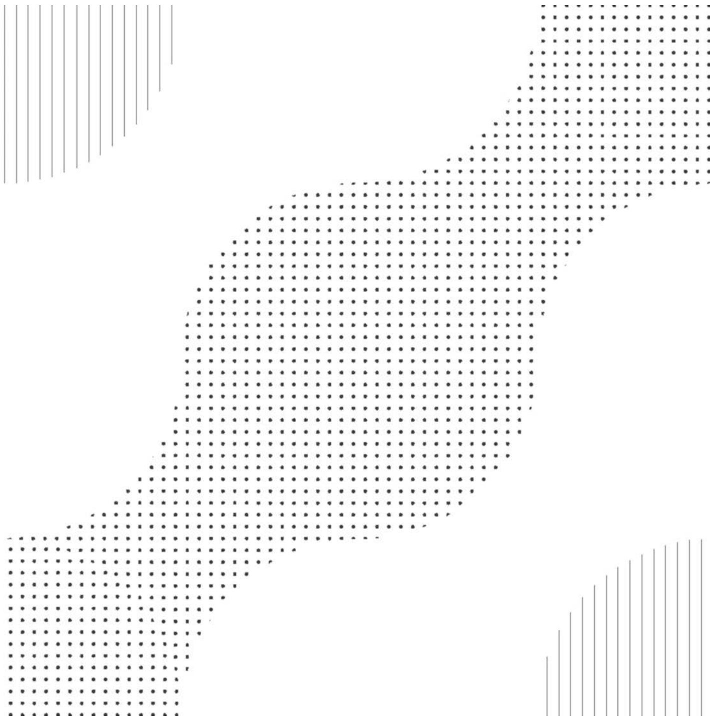
15 This message appeared in the documentary film Carbon and Captivity by Oliver Ressler, 2020.

6 Space-Times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianisms



"Everything that is necessary so humans can live as well as possible most definitely involves architecture. Yet […] architecture has not been referred to as a form of care in the traditional discourse on its history and theory." (Krasny 2019, p. 33)

6.1 Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension

Ascribing political efficacy to architecture and defining its role towards society remains a disputed topic to this day. The lack in clarity seems to be "complicated by the question of the structure and constitution of society" (Kaminer 2017, p. 2) and is part of a long ongoing debate within social and political theory, in which agency is contrasted with structure. Is society shaped by a superstructure of ethics, morals and ideals or is it defined by a structural base, that is, the production of space? Or put differently: "Do the accumulated actions of individuals constitute the overarching societal structures, or are the latter so overwhelming as to allow no scope for individual action and freedom?" (Awan et al. 2011, p. 30) This examination is central to the question if architecture can play an active part in shaping society or if it can only sustain the dominant ideology due to its dependence on economic forces.

Even though contemporary conceptions of society are no longer pinned down to such oppositional understandings, architecture still too commonly and conveniently withdraws from the nuanced and complex positions it necessarily is situated in, which is why a dualistic thinking repeatedly remains within the discipline (Gerber 2014). Placing architecture in a dialectic position, however, places its agency in the field of contingency and is thus up for debate. Positions affirming architecture having some kind of influence on society, while accepting that architecture is to a certain extent influenced by external forces still leave questions on the degree of these influences and their exact relation undefined. The difficulty however lies precisely in the ambiguity of this positioning of architecture.

The question 'what exactly *is* architecture?' has often been portrayed as architecture's innermost dilemma. (Although, to what extent might this dilemma – crisis? – be constructed again?). Nevertheless, the issue mirrors the core of a long ongoing debate within architecture: its simul-

taneous situatedness in the physical as well as conceptual world. "It is this peculiar, myriad being-in-the-world-ness of architecture that raises fundamental questions about how architecture enacts, how it performs, and consequently, how it might 'act otherwise' or lead to other possible futures." (Doucet and Cupers 2009, p. 1)

According to architect and architecture theorist Andri Gerber, the ambiguity which comprises architecture is simultaneously its great strength and weakness, since architecture cannot be exactly classified, notwithstanding the compulsory trend for specialisation and classification (Gerber 2014). Nevertheless, architecture is still often divided into two polar extremes, most vividly portrayed by the separation of architectural education. Commonly, technical schools tend to focus on architecture's materiality and its technological aspects, while art schools tend to be more drawn to architecture's social and cultural implications.

> The very school for the preparation of architects was born out of an ambiguous coupling of art and technology, destined inevitably to generate a sterile practice. Its composition – still almost intact today – was derived from the grafting of a few peripheral branches of the Polytechnical School onto the old trunk of the Academy of Fine Arts, a combination of irreconcilable opposites. [...] Forced into an inorganic coexistence, both academic art and applied technology retarded the scientific transformation of the architectural discipline and interrupted is contacts with social transformations. (Carlo 2005, p. 6)

This indicates that defining architecture's role in society is significantly dependent on varying worldviews from which one looks at society and architecture: is it art, science, craft, or technology? Is it a discipline, practice, project, or building? Depending on the underlying assumptions, value is either placed on architecture's 'purity' or its social aspects, its function or symbolism, its autonomy or participation, its apoliticality or agency, its hierarchical organisation or de-professionalisation. As such, architecture has had to legitimise its position since modernity.[1]

1 Earliest examples of this discussion might be the articulation made by Gottfried Semper, who at the end of the 19th century argued for architecture as

Significant for current discussions around the agency of architecture is the development of neoliberalism as the predominant form of governmentality and the post-political condition as one of its consequences.[2] Opposing any kind of social responsibility or political agency within architecture has justified the deliberate move towards stylistic and formal aspects. While post-modernist attempts at satisfying the client in order to remain 'neutral' therefore might have emptied architecture of its previous ideological values, architecture did not turn value free. Denying architecture its social role has simply allowed it to be taken over by other controlling forces, such as the market. Especially after the global economic crisis of 2008, austerity politics have resulted in the depoliticisation of elected governments in favour of the market, which operates largely outside the control of citizens and their representatives. The post-political condition thus describes "a condition in which politics are too weak to address the great societal challenges of our times, whether the environmental threats, economic instability, forms of radicalization, inequality or other." (Kaminer 2017, p. 13) It is within this context, that addressing the political (not only) within architecture today gains significance again. The current implications of the post-political situation urgently demand an architecture that enables egalitarian societies.

But how can architecture, in effect, enable political efficacy in the first place? While debates around agency have found their way into architecture, the topic raises "such a wide and seemingly disparate range of questions" (Doucet and Cupers 2009, p. 2) that it leaves critics wondering "how [it is] possible even to propose agency in architecture as a single topic of analysis?" (ibid.) Firstly, the topic of agency raises the question: agency of *what* or *whom*? The agency of the architectural object, of the architect (and thus the architectural practice), theory, or of those who use

Gesamtkunstwerk, whereas Adolf Loos famously countered with his manifesto *Ornament und Verbrechen (Ornament and Crime)* in 1931. They are indicative of Gerber's comment on the compulsory need for classification (Gerber 2014). See the next subchapter for more on architecture's need for legitimisation.

2 As mentioned in subchapter 3.1 *Unfulfilled Promises of Modernity*.

it? This then leads to the question of *how* agency comes into action and focuses on the correlation between thinking, action, and affect.

In terms of the agency of the built environment, emphasis is placed on what architecture *does* instead of what it *represents*. For one, architecture is still mainly represented as a static, atemporal image that has reached its final state with the completion of the building, rather than depicting it as a complex process that evolves over time, involving multiple actors from policy makers to its users. Secondly, "architecture is too often understood as a realm of forms merely representing the social, rather than as a process of production that takes place within a larger social world and also helps shape that world." (Cupers 2020, p. 388) Thirdly, history has focused too much on the notion of intent, that is, the intended meaning of the architect. While form fetishises intentionality through authorship, the focus on intention in political projects can run the risk of merely staying discursively political. In both cases, a shift in perspective from intent to effects, and thus agency, can serve as a helpful tool to evaluate architecture's political efficacy (ibid.).

The Actor-Network-Theory is one attempt at redefining architecture and politics as a complex set of alliances between human and non-human entities, from natural phenomena and beings to artifacts and social constructs, with "the ambition […] to disentangle oneself from a history that gave a privilege excessive in their eyes to designers and their realizations" (Picon 2020, p. 279). However, since such approaches tend to remain focused on objectively traceable agents in the network of architecture creation, "such a strategy fails to take into account the imaginary and the symbolic in shaping a particular constellation of agents" (Doucet and Cupers 2009, p. 3) and therefore also the notion of sensations and affects (Picon 2020). Furthermore, 'merely' describing spatial interventions in a value-neutral fashion is believed to hinder the emancipatory and transformative potential that architecture could bear (Doucet 2018).[3]

3 Therefore, other attempts on focusing on the performance of architectural objects have moved attention to the Deleuzian concepts of *immanence* and *affect* (and thus away from meaning and intent as it was espoused through theory).

Thoughts on the agency of the architect, on the other hand, focus on the architect's ability to effect social and political change. In the past, especially after Manfredo Tafuri, "the potential of architecture to be engaged with and thus critical of the existing was no longer to be located in the affirmative realm of the architectural project, but shifted [...] to the realm of history and theory." (ibid., p. 1) What is clear today, however, is that theory alone does not automatically lead to critical practice, but that they are interdependent. Attempts at re-enacting architecture's social project through the agency of the architect today therefore take shape in the form of critical practices induced by theory, often resembling roles of activists and social workers. "One of the key aspects of change has been the role of theory, which has shifted from a tool of analysis to a mode of practice in its own right." (Rendell 2012, p. 91) Critical theories have developed into forms of knowledge that seek "to transform rather than describe" (ibid.). Influenced by feminist work and others, such practices are "self-critical and desirous of social change" (ibid.) as well as of "speculative manner – which combines critique and invention, and is performative and embodied." (ibid.) These understandings are heavily influenced by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, who define architecture as a social practice. However, as Jane Rendell states, "to position a building as a 'methodology' rather than as the end result of the method or process that makes it, is a radical proposition." (ibid., p. 92) This reflects the aforementioned central debate about the essence of architecture. "Despite their potential for change, many critics remain sceptical about the ultimate results and repercussions of these initiatives. Those policing the disciplinary boundaries of architecture have been most readily dismissive of what they consider to be social work and not *architecture*." (Cupers 2020, p. 387, original emphasis)

Another aspect of agency shaking the traditional foundations of the architecture practice is its conceptual counterpart of withdrawal.

However, since such attempts have often revolved around starchitecture and consequently, despite their ambitions, returned to the concepts of authorship and intentionality, Isabelle Doucet and Kenny Cupers stress that the notion of meaning should not be done away with altogether (Doucet and Cupers 2009).

"[A]gency means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs" (Giddens as cited in Awan et al., p. 31). This is especially meaningful and revolutionary in an architectural context, where the main task still is seen in adding something new to the environment. In this sense, "decisive non-action" (Heindl et al. 2019, p. 23) can be just as important a mode of critical action. The architects behind architecture firm Lacaton & Vassal, for example, have repeatedly decided against the tearing down of buildings and opted for renovation and improvement of the existing instead. Architects exercising agency today thus recognise their simultaneous responsibility as architects and active participants in society. Such critical spatial practices are forms of resistance against neoliberal planning 'from within'. However, also Cupers reminds us that "[w]e should be wary of the claim that such approaches are inherently progressive because they offer a critique of capitalism." (Cupers 2020, p. 389)

Another aspect of these practices is that they are necessarily of trans- and multidisciplinary nature and although agency places attention on the individual, such agency can only be attained collectively. "The cases in which the architect appears to have the power to significantly impact society through the design of buildings and cities stress the need for allegiances and alliances that cut across disciplinary and professional barriers, as well as the necessity of the dissemination of ideas, concepts and values which contrast dominant societal forms. Instead of architectural or individual freedom, the architect requires accomplices and collaborators in order to affect society." (Kaminer 2017, p. 181)

Agency in architecture thus sits within a broad context of social and political theory, accounts for a multifaceted range of aspects and stands in close relation to architecture's innermost controversy. Architecture is undoubtedly situated somewhere between art, science, craft, and technology and necessarily accounts for a discipline, practice, project and building at the same time. For Gerber architecture always represents a synthesis and thereby symbolises the contemporary simultaneousness of opposites (Gerber 2014). This means that architecture of the 21st century ought to be measured by more than a reduced set of qualities. While

form alone can thus not suffice to account for 'good architecture', no amount of sustainability ought to legitimise the existence of buildings that do not need to be built in the first place. While this is not to say that socio-politically engaged architecture cannot engage in debates around materiality, it rather means, that architecture today has to simultaneously account for a wide range of aspects and responsibilities. In light of today's circumstances, architecture has become an even more demanding task in which interdisciplinary approaches seem unavoidable in addressing society's complex problems. Overcoming traditional dogmas and myths are necessary steps in such direction. Again, Gerber reminds us that an 'architecture of extremes' is nothing but an evasion of the nature of the discipline, which is located not in but in-between these extremes. According to Gerber, the discipline however seems to fail to recognise this (ibid.).

However, contextualising and situating architecture means that architecture's agency is highly contingent and its political efficacy dependent on the specific circumstances of any project, such as time, place, and context. It is, however, exactly this aspect of contingency that is up for political contestation. What appears as arbitrariness can provide as the space in which counterhegemonic, and perhaps even transformative, voices can be expressed. It furthermore means, "that agency, no matter how multifarious or intricately entangled, is what continues to give architecture its critical potential." (Doucet and Cupers 2009, p. 5)

6.2 Rethinking Architectural Education

"The icon architect: lone, never-sleeping genius, middle-class man, white, cis, able… penetrates beyond the boundaries of the university. Architectural practice, city planning, and cultural production are governed by, and produced for this image, thus structurally reproduced again and again" (Claiming*Spaces 2022a), was one of the opening statements of the conference by *Claiming Spaces*, a collective for feminist perspectives in architecture and spatial planning, which took place on 26th March 2022 in Vienna (Claiming*Spaces 2022b). It could be argued

that architecture, as a heavily institutionalised system, is a direct reflection of society's inherently contested nature: male-centred, power-driven, and western-focused. Its institutionalisation is established on a tradition, an educational system, and responsibilities linked to a legally protected profession. As a well-established discipline, architecture has therefore developed its tools, methods, theoretical principles, and body of knowledge and as such decides on what is (good) architecture and what is not. As any social undertaking, "architecture itself is therefore ideological" (Verschaffel 2012, p. 168).

Knowing the canon of architecture is thus an essential part of architectural education. To make architecture is to know its history and to continue its tradition in a culturally meaningful way. Teaching architecture through its canon alone has however huge implications: focusing on formal aesthetics "inevitably – probably purposefully – abstracts the building from its 'real' historical, social, economical, technical context, transfers it to the timeless, a-historical Gallery of Famous Buildings, and deduces its meaning and value from its place there." (With reference to Tafuri, ibid.) The focus on aesthetic references in architectural education therefore repeatedly reproduces architecture as a Western, male, and iconic discipline. As a result, more than 70% of architecture students who had already received architecture education for a minimum of three years could not name more than five women architects (excluding Zaha Hadid) as a recent study revealed (Claiming*Spaces 2022b).[4] To Petra Petersson, practising architect and dean of the faculty of architecture at the TU Graz, the problem however not only sits in the choice of architectural references but starts much earlier in that women architects often do not even get to work on the iconic projects. To paraphrase, 'why do women design housing and not the big museums?' (ibid.)

To this day, the picture of the architect as the artistic genius reigns beyond the discipline. Architectural education teaches students to be the next Mies van der Rohe or Zaha Hadid, even though this does not reflect the broad reality of the profession. As such the architect is heavily linked to a calling or vocation which makes long working hours and sleepless

4 The study was carried out by Gender Taskforce at TU Graz.

nights for little monetary compensation a natural requisite. If you did not sacrifice at least one night for a project, you did not sufficiently put in the work. This mentality gets ingrained into architectural students early on and then reproduced in architectural labour. Architects are therefore perceived as being "outside of the work/labor discourse because what they do (is) art or design rather than work per se" (citing Deamer, Till 2018, p. 164).

The roots for this conviction were set in stone when Vitruvius, the founding father of architecture, set architecture apart from nature and situated it in culture in his influential *Ten Books on Architecture* written in 30 BC. "He lists geometry, history, philosophy, music, medicine, law and astronomy as the important fields an architect has to study and know. Nature no longer teaches the architect" (Krasny 2019, p. 35). After architecture thus being firmly established as a part of culture since antiquity, in the 15th century the Renaissance period introduces the idea of the independent genius. It is thus on the basis of the nature/culture divide that the *mestiere/arte* (*craft/art*) binary gets created, setting the architect apart from craftsmanship.[5] Following a long history of the architect as the single artistic genius being well-established, systemic architectural education gets introduced during the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century. European 'philosophes' considered architecture, as part of the sciences and technical arts, to be the motor for improving general welfare of free and equal citizens in a democratically organised state. Architecture, well-entrenched on independence and autonomy, thus once again attains an elevated position in society. Quite interestingly, Tahl Kaminer observed that the "constitution of the discipline shifted the centre of architecture from the material object itself, from the building, to the ideal

5 The architect is set apart by Leon Battista Alberti as follows: "For it is not the Carpenter or a Joiner that I thus rank with the greatest Masters […] the manual Operator being no more than an Instrument to the Architect. Him I call an Architect, who, by sure and wonderful Art and Method, is able, both with Thought and Invention, to devise, and with Execution, to complete all those Works, which […] can, with the greatest Beauty, be adapted to the Uses of Mankind: Such must be the Architect" (Alberti cited in ibid., p. 36).

object, and further, to the process of thought and the knowledge of the architect." (Kaminer 2011, p. 3)

While architecture was from the beginning situated in the realm of art, it simultaneously was more than art: architecture is known as the 'mother of arts' because it assembles all forms of art. It is furthermore rendered productive rather than imitative and as such attributed to *design*. In fact, to this day, the majority of mainstream educational programmes rely on the classic design myths which, during modernism, acquired new intensity. Under the rational and functional logic in the context of industrial and market-oriented production they further established architecture as a problem-solving discipline during the 20th century. "Myths taught at design school: 1) Design is good, 2) Design makes people's lives better, 3) Design solves problems." (Auger et al. 2021, p. 19)

Indeed, while the architect to this day is primarily associated with designing, this only reflects a very limited part of the actual job. "The complexity of architectural projects demands a high degree of specialization and division of labour, which leads to hierarchical structures and blurring of distinct authorship, which are typical of contemporary service and the administration sector." (Fischer 2012, p. 56)[6] The state of the architect is in fact uncertain, sitting between engineering, the service industry, and art. An Austrian study of the professional field confirmed a diffuse picture of architects given in their own self-assessments, where they described their roles as being somewhere between technicians, managers, and artists (Schürer and Gollner 2008). The exact identity of the architect thus remains unclear and hybrid, and students acquire a confusing and distorted picture of the architect's responsibilities.

Furthermore, while "[a]rchitecture is well institutionalized as a discipline, […] the field of architecture has a 'weak identity' and is in constant need of *legitimization*." (Verschaffel 2012, p. 165, original emphasis) While being an inherently multidisciplinary field, architecture is in constant search of its 'true essence' and autonomy. The search for the autonomy of architecture is however nothing but a "fallback position of archi-

6 Especially in an international context and in larger offices; less so in small local architecture firms.

tectural practice evading social reality" (Fischer 2012, p. 63). As the conditions of society are changing and an increasing amount of scholarship tries to widen architecture's definition, architecture thus has difficulties to adapt, clinging onto its familiar methods. Gender studies, post-colonial theories, and vernacular movements, for example, have frequently spoken out against the very notion of the canon and have tried to extend the definition of architecture to the social production of space as well as established forms of knowledge-claims and knowledge-production. While problem-oriented and building-driven thinking alone no longer seem adequate to address the complexity of today's challenges, the discipline nevertheless still insists on its orthodox modi operandi. Architecture thus obfuscates its potential weakness as an autonomous discipline and continues to train students by pushing the creation of buildings and iconicity. It thus obsessively focuses on the design process and its instruments such as diagrams and models which have gained 'magical attributes' (Jeinić 2019a). Furthermore, a problem arises when such reductionist methods are presented as absolute and objective truths, as a 'science of space'. Approaches in which "knowledge *of* space (as a product, and not as an aggregate of objects produced) is substituted for knowledge of things *in* space" (Lefebvre 1997 [1974], p. 104, original emphasis), result in a "scientific ideology *par excellence*" (ibid., p. 107, original emphasis) in which the multiplicity and complexity of space is abstracted and rendered as final. As such, the assumption in architecture remains "that space can be shown by means of space itself." (ibid., p. 96)

As yet, the architecture student is thus trained in manipulating space and form, controlling and limiting contingency. Aspects that are unpredictable and contingent and which the architect has limited power over "cause the architects discomfort" (Awan et al. 2018, p. 28). "It is as if architecture were merely a potential space and not an actual place, concrete, made of real materials, and inhabited by people in a permanent and continually changing relationship." (Carlo 2005, p. 13) A discipline which continues to focus on a history that gave privilege excessive to architects and their realisations thus continues to reproduce a definition of architecture limited to representation alone. "Rather than anticipating life, architecture often provides settings that could only function as

planned had the architect also designed the inhabitants." (Coleman 2015, p. 19) Furthermore, representations fix social relations in space and time, creating spaces of control rather than spaces where life can unfold in meaningful and convivial ways (Adam 2006; Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005). Architectural education rarely reminds its students that there can never be a final shape for a city (Madanipour 2010).

These aspects reveal how architecture as a heavily institutionalised system has difficulties to widen its definition, open up to other disciplines, rethink its position and methods, and continuously tries to perpetuate architecture as an autonomous discipline instead. However, new ways of engaging with the discipline's innermost problems would imply reconsidering aspects such as: What should be the tasks and responsibilities of the architect? What is architecture? What should architecture do? These questions refer to the many ways in which architecture is interconnected with utopianism and crisis, of which several have been discussed in this book thus far.

Since utopianism can act as a tool of *estrangement*, offering an *other* (Hage 2011, 2015) way of understanding,[7] its introduction into architectural education could offer promising ways for rethinking architecture's inherent (crisis-ridden) contradictions. As a form of dialectical forward-oriented what-if way of thinking, utopianism can also be referred to as (utopian) speculation. This form of speculation is not related to the financial use of the term, but understands "speculation as a methodology that accommodates our awareness that things could be different [...] Such a methodology embraces the non-intentional contingencies of action, the unknowable, and thus the necessity to weigh and hold in balance a multitude of possibilities." (Kuoni 2014, p. 11)

Therefore, by emphasising *estrangement* and the processual character of the method of utopianism, an *other* way of teaching architecture could be an invitation for going beyond iconography and object-making, shifting attention to processes and practices instead. An *other* pedagogy would furthermore imply demystifying the image of the artistic

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7 See 2.1 *Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method.*

genius and preparing students more accurately for the reality of the profession, for example through negotiation tactics, critical inquiries into the financing of projects, creating awareness for the plurality of society, and developing sensibilities towards people, politics, and policies (Schneider 2019). Furthermore, while architectural tools rely on abstraction, students should learn that space has many other dimensions beyond its fixed measurements. In addition, students learn early on to depict illustrations as invitingly as possible, which often leads to renderings not depicting reality accurately. Yarina (2017) has demonstrated that these tactics continue to be used later on in renderings for concrete architectural projects, for example, by hiding fences to initially give the impression of offering open public spaces, which however would not resemble the later carried-out plans. She contends that while the client might have the final word on the design, architects should resist falsely idealising their renderings. She further stresses to be audibly critical of representations which falsely depict an exclusively middle-class society.

Shifting architecture from its object-centred focus would thus mean to shift attention to its *agency*. While this does not mean that there no longer exists a need for experts, it implies a reduced independence and artistic freedom. It asks professionals to communicate on an eye-level, without being offended by a non-hierarchical knowledge exchange. Essentially, "agency is about the architect as an anti-hero" (Schneider 2011, p. 325).

Furthermore, while high costs and time pressure (although this is part of the problem) partially legitimise controlling contingency in the professional practice, in education there should be room for explicit utopianism and the unexpected. Spending all efforts on limiting spontaneity and cautious planning tends to lead to predefined outcomes and foreclosure. Thinking in individual projects which come to an end with the final building should be a similar cause for concern within utopian speculation. Instead, design processes that are open-ended and playful could be a chance for architecture to reconnect with the social, bodily experiences, and the everyday. Essentially, design processes of 'spatial question-raising' (Grosz 2002) would lie at the heart of utopian speculation in architectural education.

An *other* way of thinking and educating[8] would furthermore mean for universities to critically reflect upon themselves and their history. While systemic architectural education was introduced as the motor for improving general welfare of free and equal citizens in a democratically organised state in the 18th century, this only applied to white male bourgeois citizens (with reference to Pfammater, Krasny 2019). Architectural education was thus from its very beginning exclusionary. Even once women were accepted into the academy in the 1970s and entered the profession, a divide remained in which women were assumed to design the hidden-reproductive spaces and men the public-productive ones (with reference to Stratigakos, Krasny 2019). While some women have managed to acquire seats alongside male architects, discrimination upholds within the discipline, in professional practices as well as education (Manka and Riß 2022; Tether 2017). While female architecture students meanwhile amount to more than half in total numbers in Europe (Waite 2021) and the US (NAAB 2021), their amount decreases as education progresses until they remain largely absent in the professional field due to chauvinist, sexist, and patriarchal environments. Studies presented at the aforementioned conference, for example, have shed light on some of the existing gender biases and gender gaps at the Technical University of Vienna (Claiming*Spaces 2022b).[9] One such study presented the existence of a gender-stereotypical choice in technical courses in the master's programme which was identified due to a lack of self-confidence in female students. They did not feel capable or sufficiently prepared for technically affiliated courses, which shows that the bache-

8 Referring to the German speaking debate between *Bildung* (education) and *Ausbildung* (training). In contrast to education, training is linked to its 'usefulness' and direct applicability. The notion of *Bildung* is perceived as a critique of traditional educational systems and focuses, for example, on the strengthening of cognitive capabilities and adaptability in light of changing environments and increasing cognitive demands (Oelkers 2016). *Bildung* versus *Ausbildung* was furthermore a key theme in the earlier European student protests emerging from Vienna.

9 See Manka and Riß 2022 for the follow-up article on the conference.

lor programme was not able to breach this gender gap properly (ibid.).[10] In a similar vein, another study analysed the distribution of tasks within group work in design studios and found out that a gendered allocation of tasks exists. For example, tasks concerning building technology and aesthetics were mostly carried out by male students, while female students took care of layout concerns and project organisation (ibid.). The gender gap furthermore existed within speaking times during final presentations. In addition, students still encounter discriminatory remarks attributed to their gender, ethnicity and/or further visual appearances on a regular basis (ibid.).

A further study reflected on the fact that while architecture psychology teaches the effects space has on creative processes and well-being, these considerations are not met sufficiently in its own university spaces. The study expressed a need for spaces which, beyond diversity and inclusion, allow for retreat as well as that which would enable meaningful exchange (ibid.). As for inclusion, in an interview on the topic of possible ways to make architecture education more accessible, a blind architecture student stated how presupposing long working hours at architecture firms is essentially ableist. Including perspectives from blind and partially sighted people can therefore not only benefit those excluded but be for the benefit of everyone and the enrichment of the field (Boys and Levison 2023).

This alarming contemporary situation at the very premises of the university show that the discipline is desperately in need of critically reflecting upon, if not of reinventing itself. Institutional (self-)critique however should not be limited to universities but extended to mediational institutions such as museums, professional associations and organisations, unions, and advocacy groups. Education and pedagogy, however, might perhaps be a good place to start, with the hope that changes in other institutions and practices would follow.

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10 It should be mentioned, however, that there is another side to the coin, in that male students should equally be made receptive to studying commonly female-read topics such as housing and care.

As a discipline that is indebted to a long history of Western thought, the discipline is furthermore heavily permeated by what Gayatri Spivak has termed 'epistemic violence' (Krasny 2019). It refers to dualistic ways of thinking, separating the world into irreconcilable binaries in which one concept gets prioritised over the other (here listed in opposition to the traditional hierarchisation), such as: nature/culture, craft/art, body/mind, idealism/empiricism, processes/objects, emotion/reason, space/time, female/male, private/public, disorder/order, etc. Introducing utopian speculation would not mean to simply reverse this logic and define the opposite concept in terms of lack, but to consider more nuanced and interdependent positions which potentially are in a constant state of flux.

Furthermore, a utopian speculation meandering in a dialectic fashion between closure and non-closure (and everything in-between) would invite the inclusion of temporal and processual conceptualisations of space into architecture. In this sense, a utopian speculation as method could prove fruitful in shifting attention to relational considerations such as use and inhabitation rather than pinning architecture down to independent objects and images alone.

To conclude, this subchapter has shown the extent to which the architectural discipline is heavily permeated by society's crisis-ridden power structures. These not only lead to entrenched ideological hierarchies, but also define the boundaries of architecture. Notwithstanding the wide-ranging changes of social arrangements taking place in the past decades, architecture therefore seems to have difficulties in evolving from its orthodox methods and ways of thinking. As such, it remains first and foremost a problem-solving discipline. One could therefore be left to argue that contemporary orthodox architectural education does not adequately prepare students with the sensibility needed to address the complex and demanding challenges of the 21st century.

Architecture as an inherently projective discipline[11] however carries huge potential for rethinking social ways of life, whether through housing, public space, schools, work, or other. What would be possible if the

11 As elaborated on in *4.2 Architecture and Utopianism: Space and Projectivity.*

discipline's creative energy was used for more than just creating objects? Perhaps, however, it becomes equally important to introduce new voices into the discipline and incentivise a broader conversation. Therefore, "if architecture now requires thinkers from outside of the discipline to be able to think its thoughts, that might actually herald the potential for disciplinary renewal, largely because architects [...] have abandoned the possibility of [thinking from within the discipline], and so now require the assistance of non-architects to help them to recollect how to think for themselves." (Coleman 2015, p. 16, own insertion)

What kind of architecture then could be adequate for this era?

6.3 Embodied Utopianisms of Care

"If we spend an ever-increasing proportion of our lives in these non-places [...] and if we as individual subjects are becoming more and more commodified by a dominant discourse – we need to imagine alternative ways of how we can *live together* in these contemporary non-places" (Rumpfhuber 2011, p. 356, original emphasis). Since many intellectuals have argued that contemporary progressive thinkers have fallen back into a reactionary defence mechanism, with limited imagination and only capable of analysing and saying what they are against (Nagle 2018; Santos 1995; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015b; Žižek 2012c), scholars have stressed the urgent necessity to combine thorough analysis of the ways in which cities are marked by exploitation and exclusion with hope-filled, creative insights into alternative ways of living (Brand 2016b; Coleman 2012; Knierbein 2020, unpublished). Imagining urban futures through the lens of conviviality and care therefore might be a good starting point to counter urban realities marked by control, alienation, and a 'pseudo'-scientific rationale (Castoriadis 2005 [1987]; Coleman 2005; Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Unger 2014). A possible method will therefore be introduced in the following as an *embodied utopianism of care*.

Since cities today are the result of an 'age of carelessness' (Madanipour 2022), rethinking how to live together, now and in the future, is not only political, it is essentially a form of care: caring about each other, car-

ing about the spaces we live in, caring about the future planet and the future generations yet to come. In fact, "[o]ur shared survival depends on increasing our collective caring-capacity across every space—with one another, at home, at work, throughout the city and beyond." (McKinnon et al. 2022, p. 24) Scholars have therefore argued that the concept of care has much to offer in thinking about relationalities in a post-colonial (Raghuram et al. 2009), feminist, and urban world (Gabauer et al. 2022b). Care therefore not only offers a way for rethinking communality but "indeed might be a basis for how our democracy imagines a 'good citizen'" (Tronto 2015, p. 7) or "form the basis of a new common sense." (McKinnon et al. 2022, p. 26)

As an analytical concept, care can offer a fruitful lens to shed light on 'uncaring' space-time regimes at various social, spatial, and temporal scales (Gabauer et al. 2022b). It can, however, equally entail a *normative* quality with the goal to potentially inform and transform material experiences in everyday life. As a philosophical and political concept, it includes moral commitments and ethical considerations, "shap[ing] what we pay attention to, how we think about responsibility, what we do, how responsive we are to the world around us, and what we think of as important in life." (Tronto 2015, p. 8, own insertion)

Since the 1970s feminist scholars have tried to untie care from being predominantly perceived as a feminine trait and practice (see Gabauer et al. 2022b for an overview). Care has, however, since further developed into a political concept for rethinking human relationships, placing the reciprocal neediness between people and other beings at its centre. While human beings are socially dependent on each other, care is nevertheless still being negatively associated with dependency and weakness in the neoliberal age which upholds self-reliance (Gabauer et al. 2022a). Care receiving is however neither restricted to the vulnerable, elderly, disabled, children, or those groups that are identified with state welfare provision, nor is caregiving practised by independent, autonomous subjects (Bowlby 2012).

> In the most general sense, care [is] a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so

> that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Fisher/Tronto as cited in Tronto 2019, p. 29, emphasis removed)

This understanding of care therefore is neither restricted to informal care work at home, nor to formal, institutionalised care work, but refers to a *relational practice* always already being performed by human beings potentially everywhere and anywhere, between strangers, friends, family, and colleagues.

As a relational concept, care has therefore historically not been the primary focus in architecture which is occupied with creating buildings as objects rather than buildings as relationships (Rendell 2012). While some might argue that buildings protect and provide shelter, for feminist intellectuals like Joan Tronto, they however do not provide a form of care. "The point is not that contemporary architects and planners are all uncaring; the point is that they are caring wrongly. They care about *things*, and, often, about the wrong things." (Tronto 2019, p. 27, original emphasis) Tronto refers to scholars such as Batya Weinbaum and Amy Bridges who have stressed that 'things' (such as buildings or money) are in themselves not a form of care but need to be transformed through caring practices. For architecture to be caring would therefore imply "entirely new ways of seeing the relationships among the built environment, nature and humans" (Tronto 2019, p. 26), shifting attention to its situatedness in a life-sustaining web.

The problem, however, is that "in most cities around the world the 'official story' is the story of men in power" (Friedmann 1999, p. 7) and therefore about money and 'things'. In this sort of story, representational architecture tends to be deeply entangled with those in power and their capital. However, even though architecture *is* dependent on large amounts of money, there *do* exist possibilities for alternative forms of architecture production from within the present economic system. Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny (2019a) have explored numerous contemporary examples of caring architecture which make use of diverse economy practices such as "the introduction of circular economies,

the support for self-managed infrastructures and local production, the reuse of existing buildings or building materials, community engagement, volunteering, participatory workshops, skill building or public environmental pedagogy" (with reference to Gibson-Graham, Fitz and Krasny 2019b, p. 14). The exemplary projects in their publication *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a broken Planet* and exhibition of the same name reveal that caring practices make use of situated knowledges, different ways of knowing, learning, and sharing. They therefore reveal that there is no one-solution-fits-all, but that such practices always act in specific, context-dependent, and distinctly different ways. In analysing these projects, they stress the need for alliances between caring agents (such as local residents, architects, urban planners, public administrators, or developers) and knowledge agents (craftspeople, researchers, social workers, residents, artists and many more). These architectural projects have expressed how architecture can, through caring spatial practices, care for the well-being of residents, communities, and the environment. They reveal "what architecture *can do* in times of 'economic and ecological ruination' and 'what urbanism seeks to plan for, given the reality of crisis'" (partially citing Tsing, ibid., p. 15, own emphasis).

In a way, introducing the concept of care into architecture would tackle many of the things that have been mentioned in this book thus far. For one, in depicting space as relational, care essentially politicises architecture. While space can have many qualities, it is its embrace of the movement of the social, which would make it inherently political. "In order for space to have political import, it has to be associated in some way with change in the established order of things, leading to new distributions, relations, connections and disconnections" (Dikeç 2012, p. 675). However, in architecture, as has been mentioned, shifting buildings from independent entities to the product of relations, "is a radical proposition." (Rendell 2012, p. 92)

Furthermore, as a very broad concept, care can be applied to various social, spatial, and temporal scales, each coming with their own spatiality and temporality. As such, care could work against space-times of control and alienation on various levels. For example, Gabauer

et al. (2022a) have shown how important transitory and threshold spaces are for informal caregiving and care receiving and how these can create a sense of belonging, especially intergenerationally. As an embodied temporality, care furthermore is tied to daily rhythms which are not only bound by biological necessities but intimately bound up with social experiences and under capitalism controlled by clock-time (Bowlby 2012). The attribution of informal care work to those who do not show up on the radar of commodified clock-time, for example, has rendered a lot of care work invisible (Adam 2006). Adjusting daily rhythms to care responsibilities, therefore could create broader cultures of care and lead to entirely new constellations of intersectional relations amongst society. Research has shown "how temporal routines of care can help carers cope with both everyday pressures and crises." (With reference to Wiles, Bowlby 2012, p. 2107) Furthermore, already Lefebvre has stressed that "[r]elational space thus renders time as 'lived time'; it integrates the analysis of different times and rhythms of practices in public space in order to overcome the one-sided functional time conception implicit in capitalist urban development. Appropriation, in this sense, is considered as 'de-alienation'" (Lefebvre cited in Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 112). On a macro-level, in contrast, care could be introduced to reverse the uncaring practices which underpin global relationships and rethink exploitative power structures. On this scale care acts spatially with regards to the exploitation of human and natural resources while its temporal aspect refers to the imposed determined trajectories and processes of globalisation and modernisation in the Global South (Raghuram et al. 2009). Other temporal aspects of care are its embeddedness in past experiences and memories as well as in expectations and anticipations of the future (Bowlby 2012). As such, a politics of care towards future generations could substantially influence political decisions being made today.

These aspects give a glimpse into care as a multilayered field of political contestation, shaped by social interactions and expectations and bound to various spatialities and temporalities. As an analytical concept, care can therefore help rethink unequal relationships between carer and cared for in various contexts and scales. As a normative concept, how-

ever, care is equally about creating “alternative visions [and] alternative understandings of how the world could be better” (citing Gilmartin and Berg, Raghuram et al. 2009, p. 11, own insertion). As such, care has a lot to offer for *embodied utopianisms* motivated to change material realities.

As has been mentioned in *2.1 Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method*, such forms of utopianism, located in everyday life, “are not purely imaginary projections because they are grounded in the direct experiences, aspirations and embodied or ‘felt’ needs of individuals and the communities to which they belong. They express all the ambiguities, contradictions and inherent ‘messiness’ of human life […] marked by contingency and open-endedness, albeit always shaped by specific material conditions.” (Gardiner 2012, p. 13) *Embodied utopianisms of care* would therefore be grounded in the material reality of everyday life, while equally engaging in the urban (im)possible and inventing new paths and stories for a caring society. In this sense, *embodied utopianisms of care* could be the basis for caring spatial practices, which not only focus on repairing and fixing current ‘ills’, but on fighting for the (yet) untold stories of the city. “For what, in the end, is an embodied utopia but the act of imagining an alternative to the constrictive and discriminatory spaces of the present, and then enacting that vision in all its materiality?” (Bingaman et al. 2002a, p. 12)

Such *embodied utopianisms of care* therefore portray the everyday as a space of resistance. It is here, that calls for different stories can be made and where the pressure and desire for a different architecture ultimately must come from. According to Raghuram et al. (2009), care and responsibility have the capacity to channel desires, emotions, and affect, making them not a burden but forward-looking. “And these productive emotions can form the basis for generating long-term embodied and pragmatic responsiveness.” (ibid., p.11) Care bound up with decidedly hopeful utopian thinking could thus nurture imagination for creative, optimistic visions of conviviality and de-alienation, combined with a desire for their fulfilment. In a similar vein, Hardt and Negri stress the possibility for resistance within *Empire* in the creative forces of intellectual labour (see *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri 2005) and the ability of ‘love and desire’ to confront crisis (Hardt and Negri 2003, pp. 387–388).

Essentially, care as a relational concept ideally makes use of situated understandings, and utopianism, on the other hand, contains the possibility to engage *normatively, critically, creatively,* and *epistemologically*[12] with the contingent arrangements of society. The method proposed here thus combines utopian thinking (as *method* or *form*) with the concept of care (as *content*) to improve material realities (*function*) through the production of space and imaginative thought. The outlined method thereby also proposes to go beyond stereotypical, fixed, and one-dimensional views of architecture and the city and to look for more nuanced understandings instead. As such, *embodied utopianisms of care* could not only be helpful for tackling *noir urban scholarship* and stories of urban dystopia in decline (Pow 2015), but also depictions of capitalism or biopolitical power as all-encompassing. As Negri himself has stressed, "[t]he greater the critique of the city and its fading horizon, the more the metropolis becomes an endless horizon, the more this junkspace [...] takes on an extraordinary physicality" (Negri 2009, p. 48). Thus, the more such spaces are conceptualised as all-encompassing, the more this might actually become a self-fulfilling prophecy, supporting a notion of defeat. Instead, it is necessary to actively search for more nuanced and differentiated accounts, for "movement and possibility, [and an] indeterminacy within the modern space of fullness and closure." (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p. 90, own insertion). Instead of proclaiming ourselves victims to a totalising force, it is therefore necessary to claim that part of it that is always "in motion, providing a space of becoming, of undecidability" (ibid., pp. 89–90) and "rendering the niches and gaps that always remain, as productive, emancipatory, and potentially innovative." (Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 416) Neoliberalism, or *Empire*, in this sense, are essentially composed of a diverse range of (situated) social practices. Imaginative and critical thought therefore needs to be equally situated and contextualised, combined with an openness, understanding, and desire for change. We should start, therefore, by "acting as a beginner, refusing to know too much, allowing success to inspire and failure to

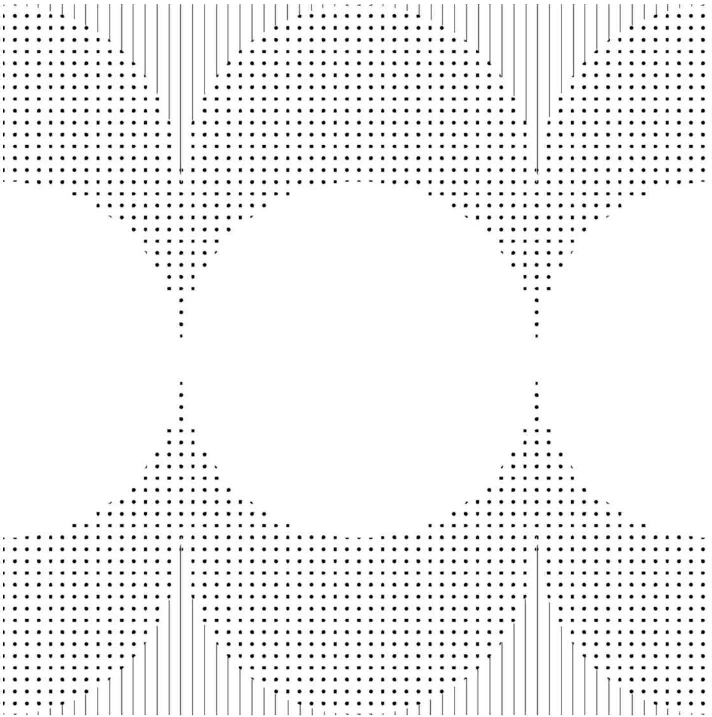
12 The four modes of utopian thinking as defined in 2.1 *Transformative Utopianisms: Utopia as Method*.

educate, refusing to extend diagnoses too widely or too deeply." (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 8) J.K. Gibson-Graham emphasise "to foster a 'love of the world', as Arendt says, rather than masterful knowing, or melancholy or moralistic detachment." (ibid., p. 6) By stressing the incorporation of playfulness, unpredictability, contingency, and experimentation in intellectual thought, they therefore implicitly encourage a combination of care and utopianism as stated above.

Yet, as mentioned, since utopianism and care are imbued by normativity, they need to be subject to continuous critical scrutiny, since many claims to them can fall short by being limited in scope, inconsistent in delivery, utilitarian in intention, or co-opted by narrow interests (Madanipour 2022). As has been stated elsewhere, "crisis is an existential part of the process of capitalism [and therefore] critical gestures are internalized, recycled and exploited as formal novelty and comment" (Fischer 2012, p. 67, own insertion).

Nevertheless, exemplary projects reveal what is possible when people from differentiating areas form alliances, assume their simultaneous roles as activists and inhabitants, and act in context-specific ways. "Crucially, it is precisely the political, historical and social specificity of such [architectural projects containing a utopian dimension] that lend them transformational potential." (Coleman 2014a, p. 54, own insertion) Thus, while Tafuri shared "a peculiarly frustrating position" (Jameson 2005 [1997], p. 246) announcing that nothing can be changed "until we are in a position to change everything" (ibid., p. 251), such projects reveal that an *other* form of architecture *is* possible under the current conditions. "In short, before architecture can change, the world must change, and for the world to change, we must change (by changing it)" (Coleman 2013a, p. 163).

7 Interpretation



"Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it".
(André Gide)

7.1 Summary and Analysis

This book emphasised that social life is inextricably linked to the imagination. Looking into the imaginary as a complex system of concepts, and into space beyond its physical contours, brought to the fore the interdependency of imagined worlds with material reality. Beginning with this idea in some ways indicated where the rest of this book would head to: emphasising the importance philosophy plays, or *could* play, for the material (re)production and experience of architecture and stressing the body as a crucial location for transformation.

In addition, this idea demonstrated that radical imagination is crucial for the reinstitution of societies. Scholars have stressed how, especially in times of crises, new imaginaries and narratives take on a more heightened sense of urgency (Hwang 2013; Kaika 2010). However, narrow-minded 'rational' thinking has structurally and successively intervened in social imaginaries over the past decades. This has diminished creative imagination, rendered any thinking beyond the neoliberal consensus incredible, systematically depoliticised representative democracies, and led to a political realism limited to present arrangements.

Within the architectural discipline, this has led to significant scepticism that architecture itself could have any transformative agency and as such legitimised its retreat from social responsibilities. Hence, imagination within architecture has become limited to the creation of objects and the manipulation of form. As a result of this decrease in creative imaginative thought, it has thus become far easier to imagine what the future might *look* like, rather than what it might *feel* like. It is essential not to forget, however, that the city of the future is always also made of people and social practices and therefore we should first and foremost extend imagination to what might be possible socially. It has therefore been stressed, that the reinvention of socio-political possibilities is not only the first necessary step for initiating urban transformation processes, but is also essentially a political act.

Central to this book was the inquiry as to what role architecture plays in and for the pursuit(s) of the good life, especially in the context of the increasingly complex crisis-ridden structure of society. As such, the ways

in which utopianism, crisis, and architecture interrelate from a metaphysical perspective have been a key point of analysis. Understanding their conceptual communalities and historical developments has been elaborated on as essential for understanding current ways of thinking about architecture's values, tasks, and responsibilities. In the following, the summary will therefore revisit some of the most important aspects in triangulating utopianism, crisis, and architecture.

Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture: Society, Space, and Time

It has been disclosed that utopianism has first and foremost been conceptualised in *spatial* terms, rather than in temporal ones: initially, the utopian society did not live in the future, but *somewhere else*. For this reason, utopias up to the late 20th century were mostly envisioned with specific, mostly enclosed, spatial contours (such as the walled city, a faraway island, or any kind of isolated space). Furthermore, for a very long time, from ancient Greece to modernity, space was believed to be static, and time spaceless. Indebted to dualistic and positivist ways of thinking, assumptions about space therefore were of absolute nature and believed to (mostly implicitly) freeze and control time (Adam 2006; Davoudi 2018; Massey 2005). In addition, utopian thought up to the 1970s was linked to utopia as an *ideal* and therefore a *perfect, fixed,* and *ultimate* state. In combination with absolute understandings of space, this meant that time in traditional utopias was rendered final and society would no longer be able change (also described as the 'utopian paradox'). Space was hence assumed to freeze, control, and shape social processes, seen as the dimension which set different societies apart, and which would create the utopian society in a spatially determined way. This way of thinking profoundly shaped the Western socio-spatial landscape up to the late 20th century.

Crisis, on the other hand, has from early on been profoundly linked to *time* (Cuttica et al. 2021; Koselleck 2006 [1972–97]). It developed during the Enlightenment period as a conceptual tool which invoked moral demands (and as such containing a normative dimension) to differentiate between the past, present, and future and as such was inscribed into

the philosophy of history. Pivotal for its development were society's discovery as a self-reflective entity capable of change and the discovery of the future as a malleable object. Both the possibility for utopia and the overcoming of crisis were since placed in the mundane world and with their secularisation in the 19th century assumed their modern conceptualisation. With a sudden understanding for the teleological development of society, tied to the idea of linear progress, it was then that utopianism assumed a *temporal* dimension: the utopian society now lived in the (possible) future (Adam and Groves 2007). Modernity was therefore marked by a huge optimism towards the time ahead, which was interpreted as up for the taking and subject to human controllability. The pursuit of control and stability therefore profoundly shaped socio-political developments during modernity, where crisis stood in as a signifier for chance and contingency, as an unstable period between two stable ones, or as an undesirable condition disrupting the way things 'ought' to be. Crisis therefore served as a tool for recalibrating the past into a prognosis for the future. Furthermore, optimism towards the future led to attempts at changing society being fast-paced, large-scaled and over-simplified. Modernist projects up to the 20th century therefore remained over-eager to create a better world with little understanding of existing social realities.

Since then, however, daily life has not only dramatically changed but also the awareness of its contested nature has advanced. The consequences of large-scale modernisations, as well as of exploitative and destructive human behaviour on a global scale (of which architecture continues to play a large role) are well-researched (especially regarding patriarchal, neocolonial, and capitalist power structures). For these reasons, crisis can no longer be understood as a singular event occasionally disrupting the status quo, but as an inextricable part of the way society is organised and as such inherently systemic (Brand 2016b; Knierbein and Viderman 2018a). As a consequence of these profound changes, human conceptualisations of time and temporality have entirely shifted as well. For example, while in orthodox modernity the future seemed open and promising; today, the past is conceptually being extended into the future, rendering it exploited, borrowed from, and already decided

for (Adam 2006). This renders the future increasingly pessimistic. While apocalyptic narratives are anything but new and have been linked to crisis since the Greek Testament, today however, the apocalypse is no longer believed to serve as the entrance into a better world – if there should be anything left at all. Simultaneously, the past no longer makes the future comprehensible, yet the future is brought into a calculative relation to the present, rendering problems set in the faraway future harmless and thereby downplaying the necessity for action needed now to address future events (Adam and Groves 2007; with reference to Beck, Levitas 2013a). The past has thus ceased to offer any orientation for the future, while the future is being made present through anticipation. In addition, society today is marked by simultaneity, immediacy, interconnectivity, and a 24/7 flow of information. These developments have led scholars (Gumbrecht 2014; Hartog 2017) to argue that societies today are marked by an *extended present* or *presentism* – an ahistorical conceptualisation of time in which the present is transformed into an infinite continuum "surrounded by a future we can no longer see, access, or choose and a past that we are not able to leave behind." (Gumbrecht 2014, p. 20) However, even within presentism the belief in progress remains ingrained in socio-political developments which render time in a determinist fashion (of acceleration and forward movement) and space thereby into a temporal sequence (Marquardt and Delina 2021). Such understandings furthermore lead to foreclosure, disregard the particular, and increasingly homogenise space (Massey 2005).

How the past, present, and future are interpreted and brought into relation therefore has inescapable effects on social reality. Equally decisive are the underlying assumptions about space and its relation to time.

The examination of the ways in which utopianism, crisis, and architecture interconnect has thus brought to the fore the following: the extent to which ideas about these are *conceptually interdependent and shaped by assumptions on* ***society, space, and time***; the extent to which these are *relational* and *contingent*; the extent to which these are *thoroughly intertwined with knowledge-production and knowledge-claims* and as such *profoundly power-induced and contested*; and finally, the extent to which all these concepts are *significant for the constitution and development of societies*.

In fact, „[a]ll major social changes are ultimately characterized by *a transformation of space and time in the human experience.*" (Castells 2010, p. xxxi, original emphasis) Since space and time are relational, social "[p]rocesses do not operate *in* but *actively construct* space and time and in so doing define distinctive scales for their development." (Harvey in Davoudi 2018, p. 17, emphasis by Harvey) While this largely deviates from the way in which time and space have historically been conceptualised, this means that space and time mutually presuppose each other: space always develops in time and time always in space. Rather than conceptualising them separately, speaking of space-time or time-space therefore depicts both dimensions more accurately, since human life develops in and is bound to space and time equally. As such, the development of societies is dependent on both: the dimensions of time and space, as well as the *specific assumptions about these*. Quite interestingly, both aspects are reflected in architecture. Architecture is not only the result of *ideas* about society, space, and time, but architecture itself is always conceptualised in spatial, temporal, and social terms. On the one hand, this means that architecture and the ideas which shape it mutually influence each other. It also means, that because the architectural project is always the spatial, projective, and social project *at once*, *architecture has an inherent utopian dimension*.

Furthermore, because social life unfolds not only *in* but *through* space and time, they play "an active role in the constitution and reproduction of social identities" (Valentine 2014, p. 7). This means that architecture not only represents a mirrored materialisation of the tension between utopianism and crisis, and in this sense of the social imaginary, but that architecture is essential for society to (re)constitute itself. Consequently, "space is not a reflection of society, it is its expression. [...] space is not a photocopy of society, it is society." (Castells 2010, p. 441) This reveals the extremely interesting position architecture assumes, not only in and for society, but specifically in regards to human flourishing. If space is society's expression and space is a constituting feature of society, then society *needs* space to be able to flourish. This means that *the pursuit of the good life not only* ***manifests in*** *architecture –* ***architecture enables it****.*

Problem-Solving Utopianisms: Utopia as Form

With this in mind, the summary will address the specific ways in which utopianism and crisis mutually interact with contemporary architecture today.

Following the processes of modernisation in which cities compete for capital on a global scale, architecture serves as an important tool for capital accumulation by making cities more attractive for visitors, tourists, and investors. In this context, architecture is marked by iconicity and intended at manufacturing commodified desire. Increasingly owned and maintained privately, globalised, capitalised space hence assumes very specific characteristics. It presents itself as decontextualised, well-ordered, non-conflictual, ahistorical, inward-focused, sanitised, secure, controlled, under surveillance, and tied to consumption and property rights. These spaces appear as supposedly harmonious, superficially happy environments, disavowing any reference to crisis. Since these spaces bear striking resemblance to materialised forms of traditional utopias (as fixed, controlled, and idealised time-spaces) they have been termed *Degenerate Utopias*, following Marin's analysis of Disneyland (Marin 1984). As such, these spaces represent glamorous material manifestations of globalised society, creating identity-forming experiences for cities and their consumers. Here, architecture contributes to human flourishing on a *cultural level*, creating the glossy cultural backdrop for highly modernised, technologized, and individualised society. Utopianism in *Degenerate Utopias* is thus manifested in the form of static materialisations, in which time and space are fixed for as long as capital can be extracted, which for Zygmunt Bauman means creating commodified fantasies of 'endless new beginnings' (Bauman 2003).

Simultaneously however, society is dependent on spaces which provide the necessary infrastructure for modern life, such as railway stations, airports, hotels, convention centres, and shopping malls. These are increasingly marked by identity-loss, solitude, and similitude, as defined by Marc Augé's *non-places* (Augé 1995). Bearing similarity to Rem Koolhaas' *Junkspace* (Koolhaas 2002), time and space here merge into an

eternal present, emptied out of history, context, or memory, infinitely reproducing the ahistorical presentist experience. *Junkspace* is continuously rebuilt to stay essentially the same. It represents an infinite interior continuum, with no end and no beginning, and is conceptualised as encompassing the 'totality' of globalised space (more on this below). It therefore can be described as the spatio-temporal manifestation of the headless biopolitical authority governing the modern social world, defined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2003) as *Empire*. While on the outside *Empire* presents itself as an actually existing utopia dedicated to eternal and universal peace, on the inside it continually feeds on crisis. Under the assumption that "this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be" (Hardt and Negri 2003, p. xiv), *Empire* reflects the unquestioned acceptance of the current state of affairs with no motivation to improve them 'for the greater good'. *Junkspace* is thus the space of *anti-utopianism*, where any action results in insignificance rather than human flourishing. For these reasons, *Junkspace* represents the unmotivated by-product of capitalist globalisation, while iconic *Degenerate Utopias* represent the affirmative celebration of it. However, even though *Degenerate Utopias* are marked by iconicity, celebrated individuality, and seemingly radical novelty, they too amount to homogenisation in the totality of globalised space, since any novelty from within the existing system "is a mere difference in time that signals the eternal return of the same." (Thompson 1982, p. 620) Furthermore, many of the abovementioned spaces typically defined as *Junkspace* have meanwhile become the central projects for iconic architecture.

The third spatio-temporal formation marking an interesting tension between utopianism and crisis has been labelled *Techno-Utopias*, which substantially varies from the previous two in its relation to crisis. While in *Degenerate Utopias* any reference to crisis is *avoided*, creating superficial harmonious crisis-free places, in *Junkspace* crisis is so omnipresent that it dissolves and becomes *naturalised* and *internalised*. *Techno-Utopias*, however, represent a specific architectural *response* to crisis. Here, problem-oriented thinking comes to a head, reducing and abstracting multiple crises to one single crisis, to be 'solved' through design. *Techno-Utopias* therefore tend to lack critical assessments of the underlying

systemic issues and do not tackle crisis at its roots. While marketing visionary future-oriented designs, even *Techno-Utopias* are heavily stained by presentism since the present is simply being extrapolated into the future under the circumstances 'if present trends continue'. By working within the existing social framework rather than offering solutions to prevent these trends from happening in the first place, true projective and critical thinking remains absent. Furthermore, these projects pick up on debates regarding social and environmental issues, while failing to address these in a cohesive way. They therefore represent technocratic quick fixes, ensuring that "the world as we know it stays fundamentally the same" (with reference to Žižek, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2014, p. 7). They propel the idea that in fact nothing needs to change to confront crisis – all that is needed is the *right design*. *Techno-Utopias* are therefore often accompanied by buzzwords such as *smart, resilient, sustainable*, or *the future*, which however represent monetary value. Furthermore, all three varying spatio-temporal formations reveal the close link between crisis and capital in each: while in *Degenerate Utopias*, capital is extracted through the disavowal of crisis and the creation of commodified fantasies, *Junkspace* generates the infinite cash-cow, endlessly reproducing itself by feeding on crisis. *Techno-Utopias*, in contrast, appear "as the summit of an authoritarian management of socioecological systems needed to provide conditions for intact accumulation of capital in the era of ecological crisis." (Jeinić 2013, p. 71)

To summarise, these three spatio-temporal formations have revealed three distinctly different ways in which utopianism and crisis manifest in power-induced forms of architecture today. While they each show contrasting ways of dealing with crisis, all of them are closely tied to the accumulation of capital and furthermore underpinned by very similar assumptions. Amongst others, the idea of growth-oriented progress, scientism, positivism, capitalism, solution-oriented thinking as well as deterministic understandings of time and space have been addressed as essential aspects in comprising the underlying assumptions in *problem-solving utopianisms*. Architecture here is offered as a final solution to social as well as environmental problems, which leads to the reduction of architecture to aesthetics, function, and form. Since space

and time are controlled by an authority (in a contingent biopolitical and/or visibly fixed way) these spatio-temporal formations in architecture have been subsumed as *space-times of control*. Power-induced forms of architecture therefore act as a means of social control, additionally supported by increasing reliance on *technoaesthetics*, an advanced form of technicity and illusion creating sensory addiction to a compensatory reality (Andreotti and Lahiji 2017). These examples indicate the significance that space continues to play for society, even in an increasingly virtual world. They disclose that abstract systems of power still need very physical places to attract real human beings (Castells 2017) and that these therefore will continue to be informed by symbolism, culture, and meaning, and thus ultimately by some kind of utopianism.

This of course stands in stark contrast to the dismissal of utopianism in architecture and its alleged preoccupation with 'realistic' and 'neutral' tasks. Several contradictions within such allegations have been addressed. First, Žižek (2012 [1994]) has shown that society today is in fact far from being post-ideological. While society very well knows that it is structured by an unconscious illusion, it still insists upon overlooking the fantasy that masks social reality: "even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them*." (Žižek in Andreotti and Lahiji 2017, p. 35, emphasis by Žižek) Secondly, it has been pointed out that human life is marked by a constant unfulfilled desire, making human becoming an intrinsic condition of social being. Therefore, outspoken rejection or not, the pursuit of the good life remains deeply inscribed into any society. In fact, the announced death of utopia not only mistakes the permanence of desire, but is in itself ideological (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015a). In addition, space not only remains important for the constitution of society but is in fact contemporarily bound to great expectations in providing a good life, if not a better future, for cities and their inhabitants. It is as if "architecture was particularly apt to convey essential aspects of the urban future." (Picon 2020, p. 279) These aspects thus reveal not that utopianism no longer exists, but rather that it has *changed*. As such, the profound shift which has taken place in the pursuit of the good life, is that *human flourishing is no longer set in the realm of the political, but in purposely non-conflictual* ***cul-***

ture. It points to the 'smooth' space of *Empire*, in which boundaries and differences are set aside, welcoming everyone into the imperial space of consensus (Hardt and Negri 2003). It runs parallel to the depoliticisation of governments in which inclusion remains symbolic but does not translate into redistributive equity (Miraftab 2009; Knierbein and Viderman 2018a). Set in the realm of culture, power-induced forms of utopian pursuits today therefore are no longer motivated by improving material socio-political conditions (as was the case in the 20th century), but by improving life *through aesthetics*. It is the building, its form, its visual appearance, that is supposed to contribute to human flourishing.

This thus points to the third contradiction in the announced death of utopia: if the discipline remains focused on creating perfect objects which are presented as final and thus frozen snapshots in time, then this renders architecture surprisingly similar to the definition of utopia in its traditional sense. To recollect:

> Utopias are not marked by multiplicities of time and space for they are representations of an ideal and ultimate time and space, achieved once and for all. Utopia [...] 'is not the fairyland where all wishes are fulfilled. Utopia fulfils only *one* wish: the wish of seeing things and people identical to their concept' (partially citing Rancière, Dikeç 2012, p. 671, emphasis by Rancière).

The contemporary rejection of utopias in the architectural discipline is thus not a rejection of ***form****, it is a rejection of* ***content***. Power-induced forms of architecture to this day produce utopias in the sense of ideal and fixed time-spaces and therefore as a tool of closure and control of social processes.

Consequently, in power-induced forms of architecture, *architecture represents a* ***formal solution*** *to human flourishing*. Since, however, utopianism is inextricably linked to crisis, and their tension integral to the constitution of societies, architecture simultaneously *represents* ***a formal solution*** *to (being-in-)crisis* (no matter if it makes reference to it or purposely negates it). In this sense, architecture is not meant to actually *solve* crisis, but in fact only meant to give a '*proper appearance*' to the

social contradictions which are beyond solving (Žižek with reference to Jameson, Lahiji 2011, p. 220).

Crisis in Architecture in Crisis

Even though the social sciences have profoundly advanced understandings of relational constructions of social identities, space, and time, it has been elaborated on that architecture nevertheless is stained by orthodox assumptions, myths, methods, and ways of thinking. In addition to the supremacy of the natural sciences to knowledge-claims, this points to architecture's consistent perpetuation of its autonomy. As such, it "has a 'weak identity' and is in constant need of *legitimization*." (Verschaffel 2012, p. 165, original emphasis) Insisting on its 'true essence' and autonomy is however nothing but a "fallback position of architectural practice evading social reality" (Fischer 2012, p. 63).

An analysis of the discipline's development has disclosed the extent to which dualistic, deterministic, and positivist ways of thinking have a long history within architecture. The discipline is rooted in dogmas dating as far back as ancient Greece (such as the nature/culture divide or assumptions about space), which had further developed during the Renaissance period (creating the myth of the single artistic genius) and then brought to new intensity under the rational and functional logic of modernism. Furthermore, when systemic architectural education was introduced in the 18th century as the motor for improving the general welfare of free and equal citizens, this only applied to white male bourgeois citizens. Even once women were accepted into the academy in the 1970s and entered the profession, a divide remained in which women were assumed to design the hidden-reproductive spaces and men the public-productive ones. As a heavily institutionalised system, architecture is thus not only a well-established discipline, but was from the very beginning closely tied to the crisis-ridden structures of society and as such a direct reflection of society's inherently contested nature: male-centred, power-driven, and Western-focused. "[A]rchitecture itself is therefore ideological" (Verschaffel 2012, p. 168).

As the conditions of society are changing and an increasing amount of scholarship tries to widen architecture's definition, architecture thus has difficulties to adapt, clinging onto its familiar methods. (Intersectional) gender studies, post-colonial theories, and vernacular movements, for example, have frequently spoken out against the very notion of the canon (teaching architecture through object-centred iconicity), as well as established forms of knowledge-claims and knowledge-production, and tried to extend the definition of architecture to the social production of space. While problem-oriented and building-driven thinking alone no longer seem adequate for today's challenges, the discipline nevertheless still remains fixed on its orthodox modi operandi. Architecture thus obfuscates its potential weakness as an autonomous discipline and continues to train students by pushing the creation of buildings and iconicity.

On the outlook for a different form of architecture, this book has subsequently explored possible alternative methods, concepts, and ways of thinking which could form the basis for a new common sense. These have been subsumed under *question-raising utopianisms* to which the summary and analysis will turn now.

Question-Raising Utopianisms: Utopia as Method

First and foremost, this book has called for a redefinition of utopianism going beyond its historical and traditional conceptualisation. It has stressed utopianism as a *way of thinking* and therefore utopia as a *method, concept,* or *philosophy*, entailing four dimensions: *normative, critical, creative,* and *epistemological thinking*. This has emphasised utopia's provisionality, its imaginative and epistemic capacity, its potential for *estrangement*, and its embodiment. Utopia as method therefore is about bringing theory and praxis into closer alignment, locating utopianism within the body and the material conditions of everyday life, and attributing it to fleeting, contingent, and incomplete conceptions, "in the full knowledge that perfection or completion is deferred endlessly, and thankfully so" (Gardiner 2012, p. 10). Its redefinition therefore operates under the assumption that utopia(nism) is both a social activity and

thought process, located in the here-and-now, and with the capacity to influence spatial practices. It therefore opposes the static, abstract, total, and perfect visions of utopia in which reality is fixed and instead locates utopia(nism) in the innovative forces of everyday life. This book has highlighted that an introduction of utopia as method in architectural practices and education therefore would essentially be about 'spatial question-raising' (Grosz 2002).

Another concept that has been highlighted is *agency*, architecture's political dimension which claims political efficacy by situating architecture in its socio-political context. As a multifarious concept it can apply to the agency of the building, spatial practices, or the users. It shifts the focus from representation to performativity, from buildings to processes, from objects to relationships and as such shakes the very foundations of architecture. It questions the architect as the independent artistic genius and architecture as the 'endeavour of making perfect work' (Verschaffel 2012). Indeed, scholars have stressed that agency in architecture is about the architect as 'anti-hero' (Schneider 2011) and would imply a reduction of individual artistic freedom (Kaminer 2017). Affiliated theories (such as wider-than-representational theories) stress the inscription of the political dimension not only in the materiality of architecture, but also in bodily senses (such as feelings and affect created through light and sound) and therefore emphasise the body as a 'hinge' between corporeality and discursive power structures (Picon 2020; Schurr and Strüver 2016). Essentially, these theories raise the question of how spatial structures can create a sense of belonging in a society marked by crisis.

However, while politicising is an important aspect in the context of depoliticised politics – "to fight for an alternative vision of society, one must first fight against post-politics" (Kenis and Mathijs 2014, p. 155) – it has been stressed, that politicising for the sake of politicisation is not enough to affect society in the long run and can, in fact, have demobilising effects. To nurture radical imagination and break out of the reactionary defence mechanism in which political thought seems to be trapped, it is therefore necessary to counter analysis of exploitative and exclusionary ways of life with "contemporary hope-filled visions

that shape a more egalitarian urban present" (Knierbein 2020, unpublished, p. 470). Therefore, the concept of care has been introduced as a normative concept for re-envisioning and reinventing human relationships. As a political concept, placing the relationality and reciprocal neediness of human beings at its centre, it "indeed might be a basis for how our democracy imagines a 'good citizen'." (Tronto 2015, p. 7) Care as a multifarious concept can therefore be applied to any possible social interaction and as such to various social scales (e.g. informal care work, institutions, governments, global relationships), spatial scales (e.g. transitory spaces, threshold spaces, third spaces, work spaces, national and international geographies) and temporal scales (e.g. daily rhythms, commodified clock-time, trajectories and processes of globalisation, memories of the past, anticipations of the future). As such, care has a lot to offer in working against space-times of control and alienation on various levels. This book has therefore considered combining utopia as method (as *form*) with the concept of care (as *content*), as in *utopianisms of care:* grounded in the material reality of everyday life, while equally engaging in the urban (im)possible and inventing new paths and stories for a caring society in multifarious ways. *Embodied utopianisms of care* as the basis for caring spatial practices, would therefore not only focus on repairing and fixing current 'ills', but on fighting for the (yet) untold stories of the city.

While this is indeed difficult in architecture, which is dependent on large amounts of money, scholars have stressed that there nevertheless *do* exist possibilities for different kinds of architecture by making use of diverse economy practices (with reference to Gibson-Graham, Fitz and Krasny 2019b) as well as of situated knowledges. What appears to be the most crucial aspect for architecture to be able to affect socio-political realities in meaningful ways, is the *forming of alliances which cut across disciplinary and professional barriers and acting in specific, context-dependent ways*.

To summarise, what has been put forward in *6 Space-Times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianisms* heavily draws on neo-Mmes arxist and feminist thought which opposes decontextualised ways of object-making with attention to processes, practices, relationality, and performativity. In architecture, this has led to practice-based approaches which intend

to create a sense of place, making these more accessible and inclusive, while targeting de-alienation. In these approaches the meaning of theory "has shifted from a tool of analysis to a mode of practice in its own right" (Rendell 2012, p. 91) which is performative and embodied, and works in a "speculative manner – which combines critique and invention" (ibid.). Such practices therefore are "self-critical and desirous of social change" (ibid.) and imply architects assuming their simultaneous role as practitioners and inhabitants (if not activists).

Such approaches therefore stress entirely different understandings of architecture, utopia(nism), and crisis – which are not perceived as objects but rather as ***social practices***. While such understandings are common in the social sciences, the book argues for their introduction into architecture to tackle the many issues that have been put forward here. Once again, this shift privileges the actual doing and materiality of everyday life, draws attention to the performative character of each (utopianism, crisis, and architecture), makes use of situated understandings, and views each as a participatory process that calls to take responsibility. As such, even the headless all-encompassing authority of *Empire* as well as globalised neoliberalism can be deconstructed into smaller acts, performed by real human beings. Furthermore, feminist notions stress movement, contingency, and undefined gaps rather than pinning down social reality to fixed idea(l)s. However, while this book has opposed male-centred approaches with feminist ways of producing architecture, it did not mean to do so in a mutually exclusive way. It does not mean that power-induced forms cannot create a sense of belonging, or that feminist approaches are inherently emancipatory. The labels *problem-solving* versus *question-raising* purposely intend to not reproduce an A/not-A-logic. Furthermore, as has been mentioned, since attempts subsumed under *question-raising utopianisms* are imbued by normativity, they need to be subject to continuous critical scrutiny, should not be idealised or superficially approached, and must be wary of possible co-optation by capitalist forces.

Final Notes

In general, this book has scrutinised narrow-minded, dualistic, and determinist ways of thinking and called for more nuanced, processual, and situated understandings. Essentially, these ideas intend at "disposing of the clear-cut distinction between architecture as a producer of projects and philosophy as the producer of concepts." (Stanek 2011, p. 169) As for crisis and utopianism, this means that while crisis acts disruptive, it can also bare the possibility for change; and while utopianism bares emancipatory potential, it can equally be co-opted by power-induced forces. In a similar vein, the various spatio-temporal formations which have been analysed are not meant as clear-cut distinctions but can overlap and merge.

Furthermore, it has been emphasised that while architecture itself cannot be emancipatory, utopian, or democratic, it can, however, act as the stage in which egalitarian actions take place; where human beings can become affected in ways that enhance the feeling of collectivity, belonging, and care; and where human life and action is ultimately rendered meaningful. As Kanishka Goonewardena reminds us:

> it would be unwise to expect an insight to be of much interest to those planners, architect, or urban planners who have made their professional or academic peace with the 'capitalist parliamentarianism' at the 'end of history'. Fortunately for cities and citizens, the prospects of urban-revolutionary change rely not so much on such experts, but on radical-popular political movements (Goonewardena 2011, p. 106).

The pressure for a different kind of architecture hence ultimately must come from the public sphere. It further implies that *architecture as well as utopianism need to become part of a bigger conversation in society*. If architecture is to render social life egalitarian, it will have to start with society making demands for such a way of living. It is thus society who will give architecture its utopian dimension, but it will be through this kind of architecture that society has the possibility to (re-)institute itself as an egalitarian society. As mentioned, "before architecture can change,

the world must change, and for the world to change, we must change (by changing it)" (Coleman 2013a, p. 163).

However, precisely because architecture historically has not been about processes and relationality, deeper understanding into the relationship between spatiality, temporality, and social practices has yet to follow. More research is therefore needed on the multiple ways in which these interrelate. To name but a few examples, scholars have stressed for more explicit engagement with concepts that deal with questions of time and temporality (Marquardt and Delina 2021), analysing the return of the symbolic repressed (Picon 2013b), linking architecture to contemporary ideology critique (Lahiji 2011), studying the relation between meaning and space as a way for enacting change (Tornaghi and Knierbein 2015b; Watkins 2015) as well as the potential of caring practices (Gabauer et al. 2022b).

Finally, more openness is needed towards contingency and the unknown. This however often seems too big a task in times of uncertainty, where one is inclined to hold on to the world as one knows it. We thus find ourselves trapped in a situation where change is desperately needed, but from which change evidently cannot emerge out of the present or past experience in any continuous way. Therefore, any claim for constructive change gives the impression of a radical break, which again is rendered too extreme by those in power. "[W]here change seems difficult, utopia is either impossible to imagine, or becomes collapsed into the analysis of the present itself" (Levitas 2013a, p.123). Consequently, proposals that are distant from what exists are labelled 'utopian' while proposals that are close to something that exists are called 'feasible but trivial' (Unger 2014). For Roberto Unger this intellectual bankruptcy or disorientation arises from a misunderstanding of the nature of a programmatic argument. He therefore calls for an association of the explanation of what exists with the imagination of transformative opportunity "to explain the ascendency of the present arrangements and the present assumptions in a way that dissociates explaining them from vindicating their necessity or authority." (ibid.) Most importantly, however, "[i]t's not about blueprints, it's about successions; it's not architecture, it's music." (ibid.)

7.2 Conclusion

This book was about the close interconnections between utopianism, crisis, and architecture from a metaphysical and philosophical perspective. It not only revealed how deeply utopianism and crisis are entrenched in architecture, but the significant role architecture plays in and for the pursuit(s) of human flourishing. The analysis gave insight into the multifarious, complex, power-ridden, and therefore thoroughly contested assumptions underpinning utopianism and crisis and how these decisively shape presumptions and expectations about architecture's responsibilities. This brought to the fore the conceptual interdependence of utopianism, crisis, and architecture with assumptions about social reality, space, and time and the significance these therefore have for the development of societies. It furthermore disclosed the extent to which assumptions about these are, until this day, heavily stained by positivist, determinist, and dualistic ways of thinking in the architectural discipline. This not only leads to narrow understandings of the concepts that shape society but decidedly influences architecture's development as a problem-solving discipline and a powerful tool for capital accumulation. Subsequently, this book has given insight into the strong correspondence between ideas on the good life and the material experience of architecture. Furthermore, it has been stressed that any attempt at changing social reality ultimately implies a shift in the interpretation and experience of space and time. This means that for utopianism, crisis, and architecture to be transformative, entirely new ways of thinking about time-space and space-time, and about society's position therein are necessary. Most importantly, this book has stressed that architecture as the social, spatial, and temporal project at once offers huge potential for the transformation of material realities. Given increasing alienation and unsettlement in today's societies, caused by a growing interference and control of social space-times, these reflections therefore appear crucial for more meaningful and convivial ways of life. This book has therefore proposed various concepts, ways of thinking, and an own method which could be offered as a promising basis. While largely theoretical, the author asserted that an in-depth examination

would nevertheless have a lot to offer, not only for the discipline itself, but for the very people who would experience architecture – and ultimately live 'the good life'.

7.3 Revisited: Why Utopianism (of Care)?

Research Diary Entry, 6th May 2022

Should architects be allowed to build prisons, walls at the Mexican border, or stadiums for a Chinese government that does not take freedom of the press seriously? (Czaja 2020) These are the opening questions of a printed article in Der Standard, reflecting on the ethical considerations in architecture. It was published in light of three spectacular complexes to be built by Austrian architecture firm Coop Himmelb(l)au, commissioned by Putin – one of which should be located on the 2014-annexed Crimea. Little had I known that more than a year later, not only the relevance of this article would be reignited with such intensity, but the extent of which this book and the debate this article represented would overlap. Both point to architecture's disengagement from socio-political contexts, prioritising aesthetics over ethics, confusing professional ethics with social ethics, rejecting utopia as a critical mode of thinking while embracing materialised utopian fantasies, averting philosophical and normative questions, and, indeed, focusing on problem-solving rather than question-raising. Prix's[1] attitude, which remained unchanged even after Russia started its war against Ukraine, is exemplary of positions which advertise spectacular object-making as the architect's calling and their iconicity so fantastic that it does not matter who finances it. "In fact, architects often get their most spectacular commissions from leaders who need not consult democratically elected committees or [heed] conservative planning regulations. 'The more centralised the power, the [fewer] compromises need to be made in

1 Wolf D. Prix is the founder of the Austrian architecture firm Coop Himmelb(l)au.

architecture', explains Peter Eisenman. As a result, our most progressive architecture is often sponsored by either private enterprises or countries with repressive regimes." (Jormakka 2011b, p. 74, own insertions) Yet, will we continue to teach 'progressive' architecture as the holy grail? Will Coop Himmelb(l)au's building on the annexed Crimea join the exemplary architectural canon taught at schools? Will we talk about the implications of building for dictators? Will we talk about the inhumane working conditions at the FIFA World Cup 2022 construction sites in Qatar? Will lectures on architecture's societal embeddedness continue to remain absent? Or will we grant designing a moment of pause and fill it with critical and truly imaginative thought? But most of all, (when) will we care?

Glossary

Agency	Refers to action as well as deliberate non-action of individuals as opposed to the overarching structures in society. In architecture the debate of agency is concerned with what architecture can 'do' (as a discipline, practice, or project), meaning what effects it can have on society. It is mostly part of debates calling for architecture to (re)claim its social and political responsibility.
Anti-utopianism	Refers to explicit as well as implicit *non-pursuit* of the idea of a better society, meaning any action resulting in insignificance and reproduction of the existing rather than contributing to human flourishing. A philosophy that uncritically accepts the present as the final state of affairs, either because betterment is not rendered possible or because it is already rendered ideal. Related to cynicism, nihilism, and an end of history logic. Results in spaces of insignificance.

Architecture	Refers to human-made structures supporting human activity. While architecture is part of the built environment, it sets itself apart "when it begins to say something about the world" (Goldberger 2009, p. ix). Beyond offering simple protection, architecture frames, expresses, and simultaneously defines human situatedness in time and in space. It is through architecture that society (re)defines itself in history and geography. Architecture thus has a constituting feature of society and is not to be seen as standing apart from it. "[S]pace is not a reflection of society, it is its expression. [...] space is not a photocopy of society, it is society." (Castells 2010, p. 441) Architecture is thus the material manifestation of the social imaginary—of who we are and who we want to be as a society.
Autonomy	As a philosophical concept, the idea of autonomy was born during Enlightenment and tied to the ideal of freedom from authority to make one's own choices. (See also Cornelius Castoriadis' understanding of autonomy as outlined in subchapter *2.2 Social Imaginaries*). In architecture, however, it translates into various meanings. Architectural autonomy is often referred to as an argument for artistic freedom evading social reality, leading to a "focus on its own features, such as type, form, composition or materiality" (Kaminer 2017, p. 10). (Other meanings, for example, are a level of freedom from society's structure [especially for Italian neorationalists, led by Rossi], or as the refusal of consumer culture [for Eisenman and American East Coast architects]) (ibid.). Neoliberalism, in contrast, promotes autonomy as a concept of individualism, independence, and self-reliance.
Care	A political concept for rethinking human relationships, putting the reciprocal neediness between people and other beings at its centre. As an analytical concept, it can shed light on 'uncaring' relationships underpinning social and political life. As a normative concept, it includes moral commitments and ethical considerations, "shap[ing] what we pay attention to, how we think about responsibility, what we do, how responsive we are to the world around us, and what we think of as important in life." (Tronto 2015, p. 8, own insertion)

Crisis As a modernist concept, crisis describes a situation, phase, condition, or phenomenon that is defined as 'the exception' from how things 'ought to be'. In this sense, crisis is seen as something to undo, solve, or overcome, in order to return to 'normality', whether that might be returning to the pre-crisis-condition or an altered state in the sense of a 'new normal'. Within today's socio-political context, however, crisis as an unstable phase between two stable periods no longer seems an adequate description. Meanwhile an expression of systemic contradictions, crisis has developed into an intrinsic condition of social being and "the mode of existence of modern societies on a world scale." (Lefebvre cited in Gabauer et al. 2022b, p. 11)

Dystopia The general understanding of dystopia is a vision of society that is worse than its present condition. This broad definition however means that one person's utopia can easily be defined as another person's dystopia. For Jan Robert Bloch (the son of Ernst Bloch) what differentiates dystopia from utopia, is that while utopias are *made for people*, in a dystopia *people are made for it*. This means that a repressive collective gets constructed in which no individuality is possible (Bloch 1997). This thus defines dystopia as a nihilistic vision in which human beings cannot or should not live as a free society. It refers to oppressive social control and the illusion of a perfect society through a bureaucratic authority.

Eschatology From the Greek *eschata* meaning *the doctrine of the last things*. Ancient eschatologies developed as promises of salvation and 'a new world order' which would emerge on the ruins of the old one. In contrast to utopias, eschatologies do not illustrate alternative societies and the worlds they inhabit, only 'the end' and salvation 'after all things'. Since theological eschatologies became secularised upon the spring of modernity, a large amount of spatial, political, and social projects were heavily marked by eschatological characteristics. Such projects furthermore were often closely linked to the idea of the *tabula rasa* (see this glossary).

Ideology	A set of idea(l)s, beliefs, or worldview acting as the filter through which individuals perceive and interpret reality. Ideology therefore not only mediates between the lived experience and the structure of society but is also involved in the identity formation and socialisation of individuals and groups. It is therefore a key aspect of the political (Kaminer 2017).
Presentism	An ahistorical understanding of time in which historical time is limited to a conceptualisation of the present to the extent that the past and the future are rendered meaningless. It transforms the present into an infinite continuum and is induced by an end of history logic. This book contends that globalised architecture is imbued with presentism, while simultaneously reinforcing it.
Social Imaginary	Refers to the common conceptual world of human beings made of collective stories and meaning. Anything human beings have created is a result of a shared symbolic world. It defines that which for any given society appears as 'real' and therefore what is possible—and what is not. It is the framework through which human beings interpret the world and to which their existence is inescapably tied to.
Tabula Rasa	Literally translates from Latin into *blank slate* and refers to the modernist and colonial attitude of flattening existing spatial structures before new projects could be built. It reflects the modernist claim that context would not matter. "The future was built on the annihilation of the existing." (Krasny 2019, p. 12) It is furthermore tainted by an eschatological mindset—only once the old has ceased to exist can the new come into being.

Utopia — The biggest challenge in tackling the topic of utopia is that there exists no fixed definition and as such there have been various attempts at redefining the concept ever since its coining by Thomas More in 1516 (More 2009 [1516]). Whereas traditional/ modernist/ blueprint utopias refer to an ideal and ultimate vision of society, processual understandings (e.g., utopia as *philosophy*, *concept*, or *method*) refer to utopia as a path rather than a goal. Most importantly, there is nothing intrinsically emancipatory, nor authoritarian to utopia(nism), since this is entirely dependent on the three dimensions of *function*, *form*, and *content*, which are all context-dependent. Architecture has traditionally been linked to blueprint utopias.

Utopianism — Utopianism is the general label for thinking about (theory) or pursuing (praxis) the idea of a better society on the metaphysical level. While the term *utopia* originated at a particular time and place, *utopianism* has existed in every cultural tradition and is inextricably linked to human becoming. Utopianism is deeply entrenched in architecture, since any 'good' architecture can be seen as an answer to the question of what implies a good life. While utopianism tends to be implicitly embedded in architecture (as in the wish to contribute to human flourishing), it can also be explicitly so (wishing to guide society in a particular direction). While utopianism as a critical mode of thinking receives little attention within the discipline, the high expectations for contemporary architecture in providing a good life, if not a better future, for cities and their inhabitants indicate an increased inclination towards utopian fantasies.

Acknowledgements

As a young woman who went through her architecture studies feeling like something was missing, I would like to thank Sabine Knierbein for opening my eyes to the hidden layers of the urban context that have yet to find their way into mainstream architecture education. I would like to thank her not only for her contagious passion with which she addresses the complexity of the urban landscape, but for her support and words of encouragement. I would equally like to express many thanks to Oliver Schürer for the interesting discussions we have had and for inviting me into his critical ways of thinking. Without either one of you this book would not have been the same.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the many people who similarly put their trust in me and who helped me make this publication possible. Thank you to Anne C., Anne M., Arja, Carla L., Carla S., Caro, Cata, Daniel, David, Didi, Ervin, Esther, Flo, Gunnar, Huub, Irina, Ivana, Jana, John, Josef, Julio, Kurt, Laura, Lisa, Lisa-Marie, Martin R., Mona, my parents, Nadine, Niki, Olivera, Olivia, Oswin, Rita, Romana, Sebi, Simon, Sophie B., Sophie H., Srdjan, Toni, Theo, Tiphaine, Tony and Zach. Your support means a lot to me.

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