

Reconceptualising Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture:
Contested Pursuits of the Good Life in a Society Inherently Marked by Crisis



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Diplomarbeit | Master Thesis

Reconceptualising Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture:
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ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades
einer Diplom-Ingenieurin

unter der Leitung
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E285-02
Forschungsbereich Stadtkultur und öffentlicher Raum
Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space

eingereicht an der Technischen Universität Wien
Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung von

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Wien, am 25.05.2022

Abstract

The end of the twentieth century has seen the concept of utopia sidelined as imaginary and unrealistic. Societies, however, are to this day inextricably linked to utopianism, understood as the pursuit of human flourishing. Yet, at the same time, crises have not only become an inseparable part of everyday social and political reality (as constructed concepts as well as form of unsettlements), but an intrinsic condition of social being. Thus, what is architecture's position in this context? How is architecture meant to contribute to a better life in a society inherently marked by crisis? If however, the concept of crisis is such a fundamental part of society, how is architecture itself (as a discipline as well as its projects) then marked by crisis? How do society's power relations such as patriarchal, imperial, and capitalist structures play out in architecture as a heavily institutionalised system? Furthermore, in what ways do belief systems and worldviews impact the discipline and its capacity to deal with crisis? To answer these questions, this thesis explores how utopianism and crisis relate to

architecture from a metaphysical and philosophical perspective and, by further extent, how these are influenced by various other concepts, values, and (outdated) myths. The thesis explores through what ways the underlying assumptions translate into architecture and how such architecture in turn influences human experience and interpretation of space and time. Finally, after having made a critical inquiry into different forms of utopianism and ways in which crisis is being dealt with in power-induced forms of architecture today, this thesis offers various normative concepts and ways of thinking which could offer as a promising basis for a new common sense instead.

Zusammenfassung

Während die Utopie mit Ende des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts als unrealistisch abgeschrieben wurde, streben Gesellschaften nichtsdestotrotz bis heute nach dem besseren Leben und sind somit zutiefst geprägt von Utopismus. Gleichzeitig jedoch, sind Krisen nicht nur Alltag sozialer und politischer Lebensrealitäten geworden, sondern haben sich zu einem wesentlichen Bestandteil menschlichen Daseins entwickelt. Wie also positioniert sich Architektur in diesem Kontext? Wie trägt die Architektur im Streben nach dem besseren Leben in einer gänzlich von Krise geprägten Gesellschaft bei? Wenn jedoch das Konzept der Krise so einen erheblichen Teil von Gesellschaften ausmacht, wie ist dann die Architektur selbst (als Disziplin sowohl als ihre Projekte) von Krise geprägt? Wie wirken sich gesellschaftliche Machtverhältnisse wie patriarchale, imperiale und kapitalistische Strukturen auf die Architektur als einem hoch institutionalisierten System aus? Und was für Glaubenssätze und Weltanschauungen beeinflussen die Disziplin in ihrer Fähigkeit, mit

Krisen umzugehen? Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, untersucht diese Arbeit den Zusammenhang zwischen Utopismus, Krise und Architektur aus metaphysischer und philosophischer Perspektive und erforscht, welche weiteren Konzepte, Werte und (überholte) Mythen diesen zugrunde liegen. Es wird untersucht, wie diese sich auf die Architektur auswirken und wie eine von solchen Annahmen geprägte Architektur menschliche Erfahrung sowie Interpretation von Raum und Zeit beeinflusst. Zum Schluss werden nach kritischer Analyse, normative Überlegungen bezüglich alternativer Konzepte, Methoden und Denkweisen präsentiert.

Initial Motivation and Acknowledgements

When I began to consider possible research topics, I had departed from a general dissatisfaction with what I had learned in my architectural education so far. On the lookout for something more meaningful, I had soon discovered that there was much more to the field of architecture than I had realised. However, what struck me the most was: How could I be at the end of my architectural education and not be aware of all the deep-seated and inherently contested implications architecture was necessarily embedded in? Somehow, I felt that what I had learned during my architectural education was neither connected to the realities of everyday life, nor to wider socio-political questions. Writing a theoretical thesis which tackles some of these issues was an opportunity to fill the void which my education had created. Therefore, I would like to thank Sabine Knierbein for her inspiring lectures and comments which have opened my eyes to the inherently contested field of the urban landscape and through whom I have rediscovered a new passion in my field of study. I would also like to express many thanks to Oliver Schürer for

the very interesting discussions we have had and for inviting me to his critical ways of thinking, without which my thesis would not have been the same.

Utopia as Goddess

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

*yet I crown you Goddess,
for you empower to dream,
Utopia, Greek Goddess,
you change from within*

*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)

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

Explicit as well as implicit *non-pursuit* of the idea of a better society. Refers to any action resulting in insignificance and repro-

duction 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

Architecture refers to human-made structures supporting human activity. While it 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

Autonomy

thus is a *constituting* feature of society and is not to be seen as standing apart from it—“*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). Architecture is thus the material manifestation of the *social imaginary*—of who we are and who we want to be as a society.

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. 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*” (Kamin-

Care

er 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.). Neoliberalims, in contrast, promotes autonomy as a concept of individualism, independence, and self-reliance.

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 'un-caring' 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*

Crisis

are to the world around us, and what we think of as important in life” (Tronto 2016, p. 8, own insertion).

As a modernist concept, crisis describes a situation, phase, condition, or phenomenon that is defined as ‘the exception’ from how things ‘ought to be’. Crisis therefore is seen as something to undo, solve, or overcome, in order to return to how things ‘ought to be’, whether that might be returning to the pre-crisis-condition or an altered preferred state in the sense of a ‘new normal’. Within a socio-political context however, crisis as an unstable phase between two stable periods no longer seems an adequate description since 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 authori-

Eschatology

ty. Dystopias bear similarity to utopias as ideal time-spaces.

From the Greek *eschata* meaning *the doctrine of the last things*. Ancient eschatologies developed as promises of salvation and of ‘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 was heavily marked by eschatological characteristics. (See for example *tabula rasa*, this glossary).

Ideology

A set of idea(l)s, beliefs, or worldviews acting as the filter through which individuals perceive and

Presentism

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).

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. There are numerous theories which contend that globalised architecture is imbued with presentism.

Social Imaginary

Refers to the common conceptual world of human beings made out of collective stories and

Tabula Rasa

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.

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 2020, p. 12). It is furthermore tainted by an *eschatological* logic—only once the old has ceased to exist can the new come into being.

Utopia

There have been various attempts at redefining the concept ever since its coining by Thomas More in 1516. “At its broadest, *utopia* may be defined as the expression of a desire for a better way of living” (Levitas 2013a, p. 122). These expressions can take various forms. For example, 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*. Architecture has traditionally been linked to blueprint utopias.

Utopianism

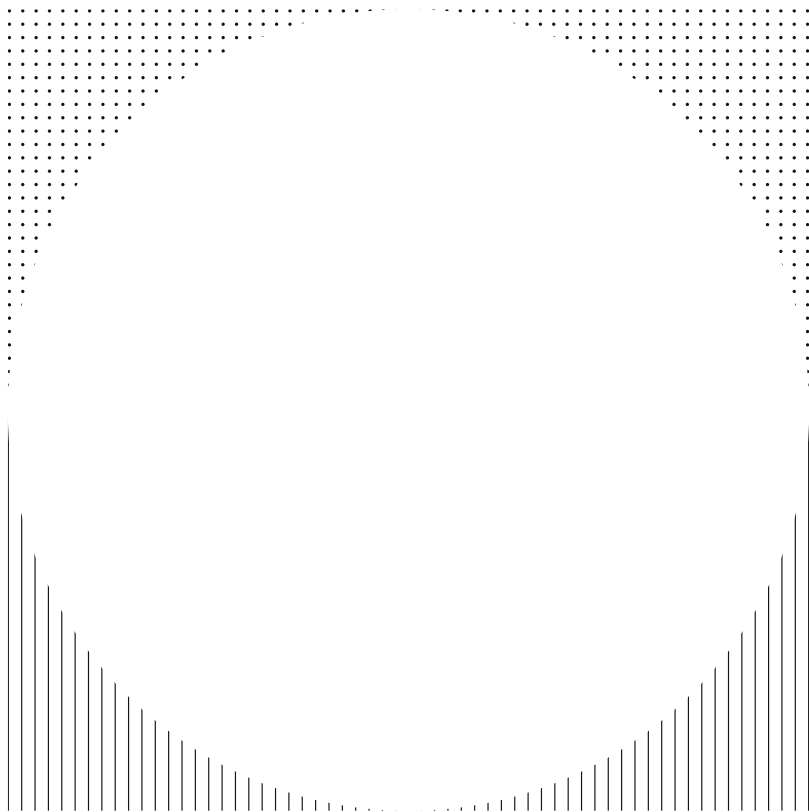
Utopianism is the general label for thinking about (theory) or pursuing (praxis) the idea of a better society on the metaphysical level. While *Utopia* originated at a particular time and place, *utopianism* has

existed in every cultural tradition and is inextricably linked to human becoming. The forms utopianism might take are therefore context dependent. 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). Today, architecture is linked to high expectations in providing a good life, if not a better future, for cities and its inhabitants. This indicates an increased inclination towards utopianism, even though any reference to it is contemporarily openly averted in the architectural discipline.

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1 Introduction



*“It is more about how utopia would feel
rather than how it would be organized.”*

1.1 Why (Utopianism of) Care?

Research Diary Entry, 4th of March 2022

As a child, I grew up being told that I was living in a world of unity and peace in which many bad things had happened in history, but which no longer mattered since now everything evil had been resolved. Throughout my childhood and teenage years I was given the impression that the world had changed for the better and that I had the freedom and opportunity to achieve anything if only I would work hard enough. I especially remember the feeling of world unity when I first started going to school (this actually reflected the global unity movements of the 1990s as I would later find out). I grew up with an international background, having a Dutch father and a Polish mother, which meant that I had received bilingual education since kindergarten. When I reached school age, I was part of the first class of the newly opened bilingual school in Donau-City, Vienna, in which children from all over the world, many of them carrying a combination of differentiating nationalities like me, soon became my friends. I remember international cooking parties, sports events, and bazars, many of them taking place on

1 'We' in this thesis stands for 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).

the premises of international organisations like the UN. Unity, internationality, freedom, and peace is all I ever knew. I continued to live this world view up until my twenties without questioning it much. It was only shortly before approaching my thesis that I had realised that I had accepted much of it as given and started to critically reflect upon it. I had realised that while Western ideals of freedom, equality, and peace had been preached since the Enlightenment, little of it had actually been accomplished. We still lived in a hugely discriminatory world in which working hard alone would not be a guarantee for a 'successful' life—whatever that meant. Nevertheless, or because of that, I saw myself determined to write a thesis 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 Corona-Virus had hit at the beginning of 2020, I had only felt more empowered and confirmed that what we¹ needed more were hope filled visions, imagination, and creative thinking. Even after almost two years of Covid-19 still being continuously and obtrusively present, leading people getting notably exhausted, I had still not given up in believing so.

Then, on the 24th of February 2022, when Russia started its military actions against Ukraine and the world of many people literally came crumbling down, so did an internal world inside me. I had now spent around 1,5 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 neo-colonial-

ism, I could not in a world where yearning for power now also meant killing for power. I had no means to comprehend it. Never before had I been so devastated about what was going on in the world. It had felt as if other people's loss had become my loss. And the more I tried to inform myself about the situation and everything that had led up to it, the more affected I became. Once I began to feel the pain of all the displaced and killed people in Ukraine, this pain was extended to people who had died and had been displaced in other places such as Palestine and Syria. Suddenly, it was as if the sum of all the world's injustices had simultaneously accumulated into one painful lump inside my body. I had the feeling that I had been living a lie my entire life and that I had learned to look the other way. The pain inside my chest was now joined by a sense of guilt. I wondered, had there ever been a moment in time where the world had been one of unity, freedom, and peace? 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 wasn't shared by those in power? Within the one week that had passed since Russia first invaded, it had seemed as if any legitimisation for my thesis had been devastatingly crushed. I struggled to see any value in it, since it and everything else, now seemed so utterly meaningless. And 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 spent thinking about for the past 1,5 years.

When I had shared how I felt with my supervisor, Sabine, she told me that it would be comprehensible and acceptable if I would want to change my topic. In that very moment, however, I realised that changing my topic would have meant giving in. Changing my topic would have meant that there is really nothing that can be done. Changing my topic would have meant that there is really no place for hope. Yes, I do study architecture rather than political science or law, but shouldn't all areas in society equally do their best to contribute to a better world? Didn't exactly this supposedly 'weak' attribute of architecture legitimise its withdrawal from wider socio-political responsibilities? While architecture cannot stop people from bombing the world, it might help in rebuilding it. I had realised, that through the time I had spent writing my thesis I had created an identity for myself and that changing my topic would be going against it. It is the changing of my topic that would have made my work meaningless. 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 realised that pursuing utopia is 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.”

—(Sousa Santos 1995, p. 480, original emphasis)

1.2 Thesis Structure and Research Reflections

This thesis is a theoretical exploration on the meaning of architecture in the context of human flourishing in a society inherently marked by crisis. As such, it explores how the concepts of utopianism and crisis relate to architecture on a metaphysical level. 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 thesis aims to challenge the assumptions underpinning these concepts and scrutinises the ways in which utopianism and crisis play out in architecture. Thereby, the author intends at extending the definition of architecture as well as of utopianism and crisis to broader and relational understandings. It therefore positions architecture in a multidisciplinary field, challenges its autonomous position, questions existing knowledge-claims, assumptions and methods, and offers alternative concepts and ways of thinking.

Following this endeavour, the author has chosen the method of *conceptual analysis*, a

1 <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/analytical-philosophy/v-1>, last checked on 07/04/2022.

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, own insertion, emphasis removed), the method of 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*” (Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).¹ 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 thesis has each been chosen by the author in a way that would logically guide the reader through a coherent thread of argumentation. This developed from an ongoing research process made of many reinitiated loops. These loops consisted of general inquiries into the field of interest, acquiring new knowledge through in-depth theoretical research and lectures in the field of critical urban studies (e.g. held by Sabine Knierbein at the TU Vienna), taking notes, contextualising and then de-contextualising and recontextualising, (re)sharpening research questions, holding regular presentations, incorporating supervisory feedback, and making self-critical inquiries into the research process and personal assumptions. For instance, at times the author had to be wary not to reproduce some of the negative rhetoric and dualistic ways of thinking found in media as well as research literature. This became increasingly difficult during February and March 2022, when the war in Ukraine took a big toll on the author. The texts produced in this time therefore became slightly stained by a more pessimistic undertone which the author tried to counterbalance after personal as well as research related self-reflection. Furthermore, the author had visited the

summer school ‘Grazotopia’ taking place in July 2021 in Graz, led by Ana Jeinić and guest lecturers such as Gabu Heindl. While the author had considered to integrate the summer school as an empirical focus for this thesis, she eventually decided against it due to lack of satisfactory findings and disappointment in its execution. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity to approach the topic from a different perspective and carry out informal interviews.

As for the structure of this thesis, all chapters have been written in an essay format, assembled into seven chapters consisting of three subchapters each. The thesis starts by introducing important conceptual frameworks necessary for preliminary understandings as well as contextualising the subject matter in *Imagined Worlds and Constructed Narratives*. In *Linking Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture* the author then triangulates the concepts of utopianism, crisis, and architecture and elaborates the conceptual commonalities as well as the assumptions underpinning those from a metaphysical and historical perspective. In the chapter *Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianism*, gained knowledge is brought into context of current power-induced forms of architecture, where existing spatio-temporal formations are analysed in relation to specific forms of utopianism and crisis. In *Space-Times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianism*, the author proposes possible methods and concepts, informed by normative considerations, for rethinking architecture’s definition, its education as well as its production. The final chapter, *Interpretation*, contains

the summary and analysis of the thesis as well as the 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 thesis respectively by each connecting the philosophical subject to current socio-political realities, illustrating the thesis' relevance, as well as personal reflections.

The author 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 for direct applicability 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. 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'. According to Žižek the world in the twentieth 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'. Therefore, situated in "*architecture academy [which] suffers from the 'poverty of philosophy'*" (Lahiji 2021, p. 3, own insertion), this thesis serves as an invitation for creative, imaginative, and new ways of thinking which go beyond object-oriented and "*obsessive matter-of-fact-*

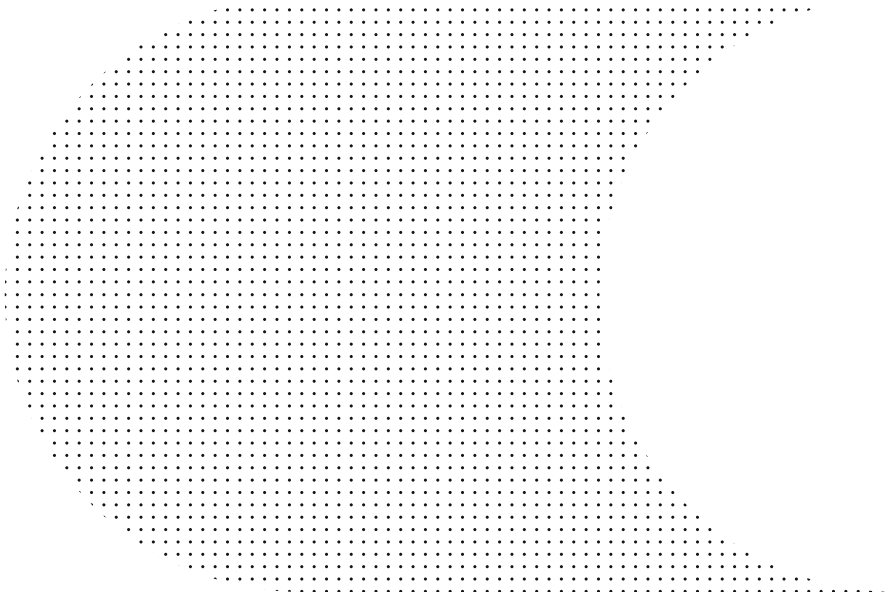
ness” (Coleman 2006, p. 6). It should serve as a source of inspiration and encouragement for (re) thinking the tasks of architecture, (re)evaluating the basis for a good life, (re)visiting togetherness and (re)considering alternative ways of being, living, thinking, and designing. Most importantly, however, it should serve as an invitation to rethink ourselves as architects.

1.3 Research Questions

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

1. How are utopianism, crisis, and architecture conceptually connected? What assumptions, values and (outdated) myths underpin these?
2. 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?
3. What normative concepts and ways of thinking could create the basis for processual 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.”

2.1 An Everyday Utopianism: Utopia as Method

The end of the twentieth century has seen the concept of utopia sidelined as imaginary and unrealistic. Societies, however, are to this day characterised by a 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, the pursuit or thought of human flourishing. Nevertheless, while the pursuit of a good life is intrinsically human, narrow-minded thinking has led to scepticism as to the possibility of its transformation in a positive direction. As a result, utopia(nism) as a mode of conceptual thinking has been pushed to the side, most notably in the discipline which until not so long used to be one of the primary loci for utopian thinking. “*Who doesn’t have a drawer overflowing with designs for an ideal city?*” said the first issue of *Éspace et Société* in the year nineteen-seventy (cited in Pinder 2013, p. 35). However, even back when the archi-

1 This equally applies to previous periods in history. However, especially the introduction of systemic architectural education in the eighteenth century 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 as such the knowledge of the architect) (Kaminer 2011). See also 6.2 *Rethinking Architectural Education*, p. 171.

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

tectural discipline was well-endowed 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, its dismissal and mistrust rests on precisely these assumptions and as such on “*a faulty and partial understanding of what utopianism might be about*” (Papastephanou 2009, p. 2).

Originating in neo-Marxist as well as feminist thought, over the past fifty 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 its material impossibility (Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Harvey 2000; Grosz 2002; Coleman 2013b, 2015; 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 an object endures. This is quite surprising given the multifarious and substantial ways in which architecture is linked to utopianism. While utopianism is (at least in democratically oriented societies) implicitly embedded in architecture, “*Jedes Bau- oder Planungsprojekt stellt implizit die Frage nach dem ‚guten Leben in einer gerechten Gesellschaft‘*“ (Kühn 2020), in architecture caring for the wellbeing of its cities’ inhabitants utopianism manifests in an explicit way: “*Everything that is necessary so humans can live as well as possible most definitely involves architecture*” (Krasny 2019,

p. 33). Nevertheless, philosophical conversations about architecture's position in the pursuit human flourishing remain largely absent, even in democratically oriented societies.

Over the past few years, however, utopia(nism) has 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, Doughnut-Economy). As such, there exists a possibility for architecture to take up on 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 Pandemic in 2020, for example, when the question of *How will we live in future cities?* became ubiquitously and globally shared. The ARCH+ issue 'Wien—Das Ende des Wohnbaus (als Typologie),' for example, took up on the discussion of redefining housing in the light of recent societal changes by addressing it through the social question (Obrist et al. 2021). The upcoming IBA 2022 Vienna, the first International Building Exhibition taking place in Austria, also seems promising in this regard. It will address the above-mentioned question through the lens of *New Social Housing* while looking at broader societal developments. On the other side of the spectrum however, architecture is often entangled in exclusionary and sometimes even dystopian future scenarios.³ Here, the future of architecture seems to rest in its technological ability to compensate for planetary ills. Thus, while visions in architecture remain abundant and deeply imbued by utopianism, a closer look reveals how

³ See chapter 5 *Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianism*, especially 5.3 *Techno-Utopias: Utopianism 'Solving' Crisis*. For more on dystopian narratives of the future see 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*.

thoroughly contested and power-induced such visions are. This points to a discrepancy between *thought (theory)* and *pursuit (praxis)* of the good society in the architectural practice and education. While utopia(nism) in architecture seems still to be actively pursued (the outspoken mistrust of utopias notwithstanding), there is little to no room neither 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 meta-level, this chapter therefore offers an examination of the updated philosophical and theoretical reconceptualisation of utopia as *philosophy*, *concept*, or *method*, or the *philosophy of utopianism*. It will be argued that the introduction of the theory of utopianism might be “a possibility for architects to engage in a kind of social and political thoughtfulness about their works” (Coleman 2014, 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 forms 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 such, utopianism might be more *implicit* (the wish to simply contribute to human flourishing) or *explicit* (the wish to guide society in a particular direction). 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 implemented? What are the underlying assumptions? How is space being produced?); 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 later in this thesis, this chapter intends to shed light on four modes of utopian thinking: *normative, critical, creative, and epistemological thinking*.⁴

(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 [...] is a defining, constitutive feature of humanity. Human being-in-the-world means being-ahead-of-the-world*” (Bauman 2003, p. 15, original emphasis)—or perhaps, as it *could* be. Normative assumptions are therefore embedded in the human way of life. For Ernst Bloch (2016 [1959]),

4 As defined by the author.

5 This is well-reflected in the German word *Entwurf*, which means not simply to *design*, *plan*, or *create*—but to *design the not-yet*.

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 *more-than*. “*We seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves*” (C.S. Lewis 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 Vogelwohl 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).⁵ For Bloch, this unfulfilled disposition is furthermore entrenched by 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 there-

fore a prerequisite for expanding imagination of what is socially possible or rendering the impossible possible (with reference to Lefebvre, Pinder 2013 as well as Chatterton 2010).⁶ 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).⁷ 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*. Critical thinking, which is defined by a sense of judgement and reflexivity (see 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*), allows questioning 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 2014, p. 56). Linked with the anticipa-

6 These two functions get 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. (The *Real* is also briefly explained in 4.1 *Crisis and Architecture: Architecture in Crisis-Society*).

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

8 Paraphrasing Roberto Unger and Cornel West, cited in Taylor 2001. See 3.3 *Transformation, Multiple Crisis, and Truth Regimes*, p. 72 for the full quote.

9 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 2012, p. 36, own insertion) as well as Walter Benjamin's 'full' conception of time (see 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*, pp. 113–115).

tory 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, (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'.⁸ The creative and critical features of utopianism furthermore offer powerful tools for the method of *estrangement*: defamiliarising 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.⁹

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 change has a changing feature: “Through changing our world, we change ourselves” (Harvey 2000, p. 234). 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).

The second aspect refers to considering utopia (in the form of feelings, affect, desire, hope and imagination) as *embodied knowledge*. Embodied knowledge not only *relates* to material reality, but as such *represents* materialised hope, desire, and imagination. 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.¹⁰ 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 Pinder 2013, Gardiner

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

2012), others as ‘everyday utopianism’ (with reference to Lefebvre, Gardiner 2012) or ‘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 theories with the intention to influence the contemporary production of the urban landscape in its material as well as (post-)political condition (such as Swyngedouw 2009; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015; Žižek 2012c; Jameson 2004, 2007; Wilson 2018) and to inform critical and emancipatory spatial practices (Lefebvre 2014 [1972]; Harvey 2000; Coleman 2012, 2015; Pinder 2002, 2013; Chatterton 2010; Karim 2018).

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 very human nature, 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 constructing blueprints for the future, it still remains important to create hope-filled visions which can be collectively shared, affecting¹¹ and informing society in a dialectic fashion.¹² 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

11 Referring to affect theory. Other than emotions, affects are generated through specific material conditions and sensed in relational ways. For more on affect see chapters 4.1 *Crisis and Architecture: Architecture in Crisis-Society* as well as 6.1 *Agency: Architecture’s Political Dimension*.

12 See why in 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*.

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 2014, p. 52). Coleman contends that utopian thinking in architecture would not only be a chance for architects to engage in social and political thoughtfulness about their works, but enable them 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 in itself, 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 emancipatory nor authoritarian to utopianism, since this is dependent on its form, intentions, and 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 can become highly contested. This means that one should be wary not to idealise utopian methodology as the new panacea, which could result in re-selling 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 thesis therefore attempts at analysing 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 thesis will therefore provide speculative and normative considerations for a different form of utopianism towards the end.

„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

As human beings, we 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 we as 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 and therefore acts as the reason or motivation for human behaviour. It establishes

1 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 for the increase in complexity over time.

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 (Harari 2015), have identified the ability of collective extensive imagination as *the* distinct human trait, distinguishing us from all other species on this planet.¹ Having the ability to create collective stories with collective intentions is believed to be the key reason for the 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. 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 nor-

maturity. 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 don’t 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 2005 [1987], p. 146). Even though these questions may not be explicitly posed, nor explicitly answered, they are always embedded in the social imaginary of every society. Answers to those questions, “*neither ‘reality,’ nor ‘rationality’ can provide*” 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 from somewhat later on 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 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, Karl Mannheim distinguished these ideas in defining the latter as ideology and the former as utopia. 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). Mannheim 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* (Langdridge 2006; Sargent 2010; Karbasioun 2018). 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), whereas 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 uto-

pia, 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's 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 preexisting social order. This society is an off-*

shoot 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 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*” (Langdrige 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, human beings shape them back in return.

Thus, through the social imaginary society defines what for a given society is possible—and therefore also what is not. While the word ‘utopic’ is very present in today’s everyday language, it is still mostly used to dismiss something as unrealistic, even by progressive intellectuals. Although, Karl Mannheim might have pointed out a correctly that “*the representatives of a given order will label utopian all conceptions of existence which from their point of view can in principle never be realised*” (Pinder 2005, p. 7, emphasis by Mannheim). What must change then, is the framework through

which they *interpret* the world. Tackling the social imaginary therefore becomes pivotal in re-writing 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. However, as mentioned above, these concepts are human made and thus they can also be unmade. As humans we have to remember that there is always a possibility of being other than what we are (Hage 2011, 2015). To be able to deconstruct such (false) beliefs, we must, however, 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 and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture” (Raban 2017 [1974], p. 10). 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 nineteen-eighties. 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 fifty 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. 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 (Stanek 2011).

While human geographers have been researching spatial imaginaries for over twenty 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 ori-

gins. Attention to the spatial further connects imaginaries to everyday life. “*Social and geographic imaginaries are mutually constitutive and intimately related to experiences and livelihoods pursued within specific historical geographic contexts*” (Leitner et al. 2007, p. 12).

Similar to 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 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*, *spatiotemporal imaginaries*, or *sociospatial imaginaries*, to name a few.

Regardless of the approach to spatial imaginaries, Watkins (2015) 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 globalization, gentrification, or deindustrialization*” (Watkins 2015, p. 512).

Accentuating these distinctions can further understanding how broader concepts are enmeshed within 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 furthermore 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 while 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, incorporating “different ideas about what has been, is, or may come” (ibid.), such as globalisation or gentrification. Doreen Massey 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*, which emphasise embodiment and material practices. Whereas spatial imaginaries as *semiotic orders* and *representational discourse* relate more to linguistic phenomena and their linguistical representation in images and text, their understanding as *worldviews* paint imaginaries as ideologies, as a shared system of ideas and beliefs. Their recent depiction as *performative discourse*, however, portrays them as a medium through which social relations are both reproduced and changed, rather than being a static representation—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 transcend language as embodied performances by peo-*

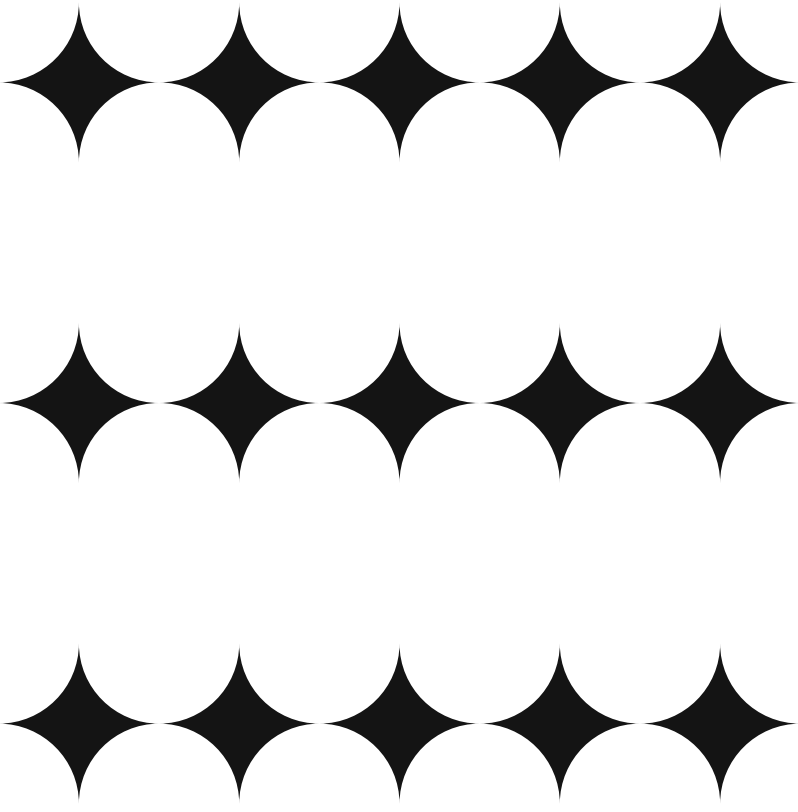
ple in the material world” (Watkins 2015, p. 509). The performative aspect places value on people acting in relation to spatial imaginaries and therefore shaping material practices and imaginaries in return. The aspect of performativity sees space as produced through performances, emphasising material aspects of discourse, which has also been advocated by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau and 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, space, and spatial practices relate to each other has been a disputed topic ever since. However, “*new (relational) approaches in urban studies have allowed the emergence of new ways of seeing change and paths for acting change*”, “*elaborating on the relations between society [...] and how (urban) space is actively produced by social agents*” (Tornaghi and Knierbein 2015a, pp. 13–14). Opening up conversation to greater transdisciplinary dialogue therefore becomes necessary to further explore the meaning between space (production) and society.

While studying the relation between meaning and space is important for enacting change, it is equally 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 re-politicising 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.”

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*

1 The over-use in ascribing various forms of ‘post’s’ has been criticised in various contexts for implying a radical break, turn, or end to something. In the context of the post-political, Kenis and 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” (ibid. 2017, p. 1766).

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 2018). Already Marx (1844) had referred to this issue by addressing the ‘Jewish question’. He had spoken out criticism on 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, 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; Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015). It is a form of representative democracy in which contrasting visions and dissi-

dence 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” (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015, p. 6).

What caused this shift was the restructuring of the state during the late nineteen-seventies and early nineteen-eighties 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 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

2 This furthermore reveals the source for the deep-seated shock caused by the Ukrainian war. 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).

thinking' (Santos 2006), as well as a “‘pragmatic’ combination of socialism for the rich and austerity for the poor” (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015, p. 8).

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, postmodernist 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.² 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 (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015; Santos 1995, 2006; Žižek 2012c). (The profound impact this shift had on architecture runs throughout this thesis).

The equation of the end of utopia with the end of communism, however, marks a very narrow, if not false, definition of utopianism and neglects the permanence of desire. It is meanwhile clear, that announcing the end of utopia is in itself ideological (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015) (in the same sense that declaring something po-

litical 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 Carl 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 we³ think and as such very human nature. This has led to a long-lasting crisis in the political imaginary of the Left 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,*” ‘experts’ have therefore come to believe that “*anything new would not work*” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 3). 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 re-claim the right to politics and the city, but to reclaim imagination and inventive utopian thought. Such approaches wish to transform social imaginaries

3 ‘We’ in this thesis stands for 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).

and urban consciousness, create new narratives, and imagine stories yet untold. In this sense, “*the right to 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, Goonewardena 2011, p. 104). First, however, it is necessary to analyse what this radically different world poses an opposition to.

3.2 The Crisis-Narrative

“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).

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, meanwhile known as ‘the worst crisis since World War II,’¹ is only another most recent example. Media have turned crises into their natural code of language for painting dystopian 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 as a whole,

1 One of the first statements of this kind has been made by the UN 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.

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

crises are also very much constructed. While this is not to say that they don't have real consequences on everyday lives, what does it mean for modern society that has turned the 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.² The word assumes a specifically political connotation in seventeenth-century Europe, when modern society begins to take a reflective 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 detonation 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 of 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 Stephen Coleman, Patrona 2018, p. 2). Interest is thus placed on crisis intervention, stabilisation, and monitoring.

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 to an actor with the resources and capacity to act with agility, 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.³ The underlying and troublesome assumptions are, on the one hand, the requirement of an “*extra-deliberative authority ‘who decides on the exception’*” (Milstein 2015, p. 156). On the other, change in modern societies has become 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

³ See next subchapter 3.3 Transformation, Multiple Crisis, and Truth Regimes as well as 5.3 Techno-Utopias: Utopianism ‘Solving’ Crisis.

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 an announced ‘permanent state of crisis’ has led to alienation and acts of defiance. In an interview sociologist Harald Welzer stated, “*Menschen, die unter 40 sind, haben noch nie etwas anderes gehört, als dass wir am Abgrund stehen und dass es fünf vor zwölf ist und die Welt zugrunde geht. Aber das bildet sich überhaupt nicht in der Alltagserfahrung ab. Die Alltagserfahrung ist:*

Flatscreens, Smartphones, Reisen, schicke Autos, tolle Gebäude“ (Decker 2019).

However, 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. By looking at it as a *reflexive concept*, it requires active participation and “*a certain capacity for crisis consciousness*” (Milstein 2015, p. 147, original emphasis). 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 call to take responsibility.

A further method to address the prevalent 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, pp. 387-388). “*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 initiatives. “The power of the modern critique of modernity resides precisely where the blackmail of bourgeois realism is refused—in other words, where utopian thought, going beyond the pressures of homology that always limit it to what already exists, is given a new constituent form” (ibid., p. 185). Such approaches are important for rethinking and re-shaping our political imaginaries, since they do not exist beyond the narratives we tell each other about such things.

3.3 Transformation, Multiple Crisis, and Truth Regimes

In recent years, the term transformation has gained increasing attention in contemporary debates regarding social-ecological processes of change. In general, it has come to stand for an umbrella term that constitutes a new political-epistemic terrain for tackling global and transdisciplinary responses to the ecological crisis, including a variety of discussions such as degrowth, resilience, and transition studies. However, despite 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, Brand 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 nineteen nineties. 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, as well as their responsibilities. This refers to an inherent constitutive tension in the (implicit as well as explicit) assumptions that meaningful change could occur within current economic and political system.

According to Brand, the normative-strategic understanding of transformation “*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 have 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-be-

ing are rarely considered. Emancipation remains an equally absent topic. Normative-strategic accounts 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 examining systems and actors to effects on everyday life). Brand therefore stresses the neces-

sity for analytical-descriptive accounts to complement and inform the normative-strategically 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 are for example, “*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 has started with thinkers like Montesquieu in the eighteenth century. To Unger’s account, the social sciences today, however, have lost insight into how 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.). Also Ruth Levitas has criticised the social sciences, especially sociology, for neglecting the imaginative capacity, which for her reflects an 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* (see also previous subchapter 3.2 *The Crisis-Narrative*).

This has thus led to a “*scientific division of labour, which consigns the realm of (global) en-*

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 colonised (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*.

“Eine zentrale Aufgabe kritischer Analyse und progressiver Politik liegt darin, den inneren Zusammenhang der Krisen zu entschlüsseln und daraus gesellschaftspolitische Konsequenzen zu ziehen“ (Brand 2009, p. 5). Brand introduced the concept of the multiple crisis to allow for a new framing of the crisis, especially since after the financial crisis of 2008 the narrative of the (selected) crisis has been used as legitimisation for neoliberal politics. It 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 finan-

cial 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 crises through the lens of the 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. Furthermore, while the concept of multiple crisis has been criticised for depicting a homogeneous conception (see Brand 2016b, footnote on p. 23), it is meant to bring to attention the different time frames, spatialities, and non-simultaneity of crises.¹ 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).²

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 as prioritis-

1 In accordance with this critique, the plural form, multiple crises, will be used henceforth.

2 The etymological root for *corruption* comes from Latin *cum-rumpere*, meaning to break. In their theory of a new headless power, *Empire*, 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 *Junk-space: Anti-Utopianism and Omni-Crisis* for a closer examination.

ing Western concepts, disregarding other ways of knowing, only perceiving the natural sciences as ‘real’ science, etc.). “*Science is not wrong because it’s science. It’s wrong because it claims to be the only legitimate form of knowledge*” (Santos 2012).

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 neo-colonial 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 transforma-

tion. 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.³

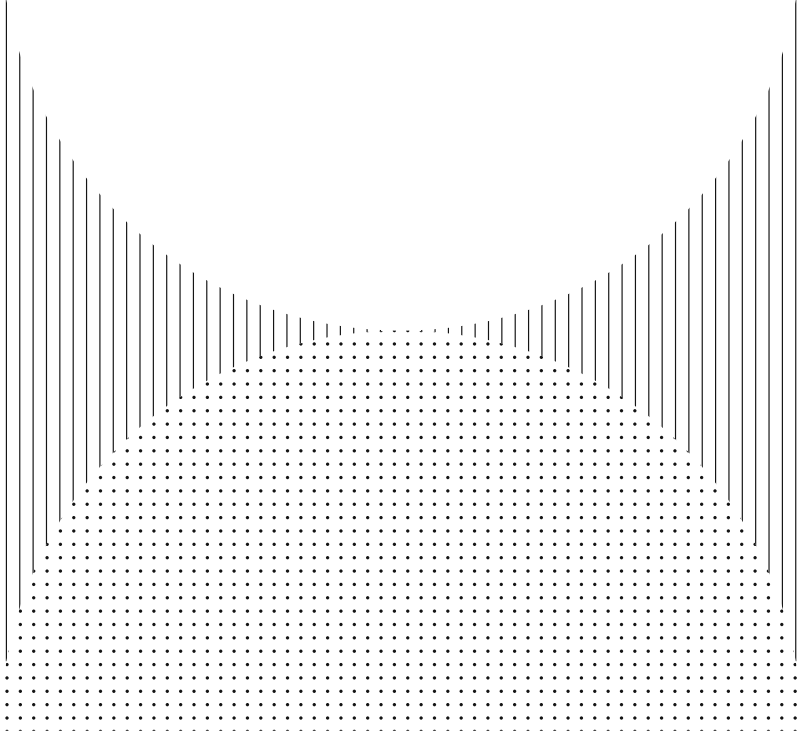
Essentially, this is also where the crux of any transformative utopianism lies. In the words of Roberto Unger and Cornel West: *“It is easy to be a realist when you accept everything. It is easy to be a visionary when you confront nothing. To accept little and confront much and to do so on the basis of an informed vision of piecemeal but cumulative change, is the way and the solution”* (Taylor 2001). 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 re-unite 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 utopianism therefore has to be a *continuous movement* made out of analytical as well

3 One important aspect, for example, is the notion of *future-turing*, 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 6.3 *Techo-Utopias: Utopianism ‘Solving’ Crisis*, p. 150-151.

as creative thinkers, lay people as well as professionals, from various and differentiating fields, as well as different parts of the world. They need to exchange, (un)learn from each other, built 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.“

4.1 Crisis and Architecture: 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 the exploration on the meta-level 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

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

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?

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 institutions¹ and practices. If society is crisis-ridden and architecture is made out of social practices, how do society's power relations 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 architecture in the context of multiple crises. How do crises influence architectural design explicitly as well as implicitly? How does architecture react or present itself as a response to specific crises?

The first inquiry into the relation between crisis and architecture, *Architecture in Crisis-Society*, will be part of this chapter, while the second, *Crisis in Architecture*, will be addressed throughout this thesis. 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 thesis explores architecture in relation to both crisis *and* utopianism, crisis architecture therefore is not part of this thesis.

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 needed gothic cathedrals for their way of life, human beings of the twentieth 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 society 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:

„Architektur geht als gegenständliche Äußerung aus konkreten Tätigkeiten und Lebensverhältnissen hervor: diese drücken sich in ihr aus. Umgekehrt werden Lebensverhältnisse und Handeln durch Architektur beeinflusst und erhalten durch sie einen Teil ihres Sinns. Die Wechselwirkung ist eingebettet in kulturelle Paradigmen, die Veränderungen unterworfen sind. Auch dort, wo Architektur autonom erscheint im Bereich von Gestalt, Typus und Tektonik, ist sie anthropologisch und kulturell bedingt“ (Janson cited in Schäfers 2012, p. 365).

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 therefore 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 some 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 (Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005; Adam 2006).²

The focus on representation however 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

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

3 There is an interesting aspect regarding symbolism today, in that architecture critics have noticed the celebrated comeback of ornament. Ornament is back “but only on condition: ornament must function” (Levit 2008, p. 71). Furthermore, its recent revival often simulates organic structures, reflecting a tendency of reconciling architecture with nature (see 5.3 *Techno-Utopianism: Utopianism ‘Solving’ Crisis* for more).

symbolism. An ornament free architecture, without any references to pre-existent knowledge or social hierarchy, would enable a classless society (Kaminer 2017). By the nineteen seventies 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 symbolic content. The attempt at its reduction to pure function therefore had but created new symbolism. Simultaneously, however, “while the understanding of the diverse factors and forces that shape society was widening, in architectural circles it was narrowing” (ibid., p. 10). At the time when scholars like Althusser, Lefebvre, and Foucault widened the conception about the shaping of society, postmodernist architects denied architecture any kind of agency and thus its effects on society—even whilst deliberately returning to symbolism (with the justification being that symbols and signs were only a self-referential system).³

Meaning making in architecture thus remained reduced to representation and the visual experience, a trend that continued to intensify alongside mediated consumer culture. This has led many to argue that the modern built environment has in fact contributed to alienation and crisis instead of 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 architecture enacting all our bodily senses.

While the phenomenological approach shifts attention in the definition and task of architecture from the visual alone to its 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 (Jormakka 2011a; Fischer 2012; Verschaffel 2012). While bodily senses are indeed subjective experiences, they are however equally socially and historically constructed (Schurr and Strüver 2016). Feelings and affect created through sensory experiences such as light and sound are therefore no individual and primitive traits but contain societal and political value (Picon 2020). They are relational phenomena, embedded in a network of human and non-human artefacts 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 explore theories of affect which compliment rep-

representational theories (Schurr and Strüver 2016). Such *wider-than-representational* theories as put forward by Schurr and Strüver seek to position the physical body within power structures, extending textual and visual representation with 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 2009, p. 13), limiting ideology to representation alone has previously portrayed ideology as a mere illusion or distorted reality. Following Jameson (2013 [1983]) and Žižek (2012 [1994]), ideology is however far more complex and equally lies beyond the representational. To explain this, Žižek (ibid., see 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 antagonism,⁴ as 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

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

analysis 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 chaos. Essentially, however, *architecture is 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 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 insists upon the mask*” (with reference to Žižek, 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.*).

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 re-institute 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 us a sense of order in the

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

6 See 6.1 *Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension*.

arrangement of the world, then the demands have become quite high in a society intrinsically marked by crisis, disorientation, and alienation. As has been mentioned, architecture in fact often contributes to a feeling of unease instead of eliminating it.⁵ While there is no ready-made formula for how architecture could achieve a sense of wellbeing and belonging, it is clear, however, that the question of what it 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 exchange value of the building. However, any architecture going after this quest in a more meaningful way, will most probably be architecture firmly positioned in society's context(s), political and social, cultural and historical, geographical and temporal.

However, if architecture has a 'task,' then this is essentially about what architecture can 'do'. Asserting architecture *agency*⁶ 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* is thus limited to creating atmosphere, orienting action, enabling situations, and structuring places for inhabitation and co-habitation. 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).⁷ In this sense, in society that has made crisis and integral part of social being and 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.

7 For Jacques Rancière, the ‘distribution of the sensible’ refers to a re-politicised 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 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation* for a closer examination).

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 2020, p. 2). Throughout history, architecture and utopia have undoubtedly shared an intimate connection. When Thomas More famously coined the term *Utopia* in 1516, he had but given a name to something that had already existed in mankind. In Western thought, the first modern utopia is dating 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”* (ibid.).

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 nineteen seventies, 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 twentieth 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 eighteenth 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, 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 2019, 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 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 *some-where else*. A closer look at the circumstances of More's time reveal the roots for this conviction: voyages of the fifteenth and sixteenth 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, it simply illustrated a fictional story functioning 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 seventeenth and eighteenth 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 nineteenth century on 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 re-making the world along the lines of abstract plans of symmetry, formal order and perfection*” (with reference to Bauman, Gardiner 2012, p. 7). Further-

more, modernist endeavours of (re)making the city were haunted by the concept of *tabula rasa*—only once the old has ceased to exist can the new come into being. This is indebted to the fact that modernist projects (of political, social, as well as spatial kind) were largely induced by eschatological¹ 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’ (ibid., with reference to Lefebvre, p. 26). “[T]he logic of a pseudo-scientific rationalism has overwhelmed the traditional city” (Coleman 2005, p. 2).

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). Dikeç furthermore 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).

1 For the definition of eschatology, check glossary. See next subchapter 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation* for a closer examination of eschatological influences in modernist utopianism.

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 "*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 thus only represents an inherent characteristic of *traditional* utopias. Thus, what it does show is that traditional/ 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 that the spatial is political [...], but rather that 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 ar-

chitecture failed 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 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).²

However, even if modernist architecture was never truly utopian 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 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*.^{3,4} 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

2 Here utopian is understood not in its traditional sense, but as a conceptual category engaging critical and creative modes of thinking as elaborated in 2.1 *An Everyday Utopianism: Utopia as Method*. Coleman furthermore states that “one must be left to wonder on what basis [modernist projects] could be identified with Utopia” (ibid., 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 Franco Borsi, ibid.).

3 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 rather to the inherent character of the architectural practice of turning immaterial ideas into material projects. As Ana Jeinić states, “it somehow went unnoticed, that the notion of *projective architecture* [...] was, in fact, a pleonasm” (with reference to Somol and Whiting, Jeinić 2019, p. 128, original emphasis). Furthermore, Somol and Whiting’s definition implies the existence of a ‘non-projective’ practice, suggesting that a practice could be either projective or critical.

4 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*.

5 A preliminary answer to this question was given in 2.1 *An Everyday Utopianism: Utopia as Method*.

to its existing form, whereas others might be of greater projective and visionary character. What then, however, makes architecture truly utopian?⁵ 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* for the reasons mentioned above. “All these forms of Utopia can be characterized as ‘Utopias of spatial form’ 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 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 imagination). Since they are only concerned with the final state and don’t 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 utopias. They produce architectures of direct control and

political inflexibility. However, Harvey's definition 'utopias of spatial form' is misleading 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 utopias, models, concrete ideals, but instead to embark on the process of endless questioning*” (Grosz 2002, p. 277). 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 Tahl 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, interestingly, presents itself as fixed

and final; more on that in the following chapters, especially 5 *Space-Times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopiansism*). “*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 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 then does utopianism 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 such, crisis is inextricably linked with the philosophy of history and therefore conceptually interdependent with progress, renewal, and contingency—and as such with ideas about *time* and *temporality* (Koselleck 2006 [1972–97]; Rao et al. 2014; Milstein 2015; Cuttica et al. 2021). 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). Still, to this day, it is *the* fundamental category to make sense of daily experiences. 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 modernity¹ was too naïve, oversimplified, and too disconnected from history as it really was. Others have characterised modernity “by what has been called *Machbarkeitswahn*, 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” (ibid., p. 2, original emphasis). Indeed, modernity up to the first half of the twentieth 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

1 A “near-synonym” of the Enlightenment (Cuttica et al. 2021, p. 15).

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

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 = iudicium*), 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 eighteenth century, while the theological aspect assumed a secular meaning –depicting the revolution as salvatory, inevitable, and all-encompassing.² “At all times the concept 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, content or form, 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. 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 (by exaggeration, dissolution, or estrangement) and/or acts 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 therefore are unequivocally permeated by society's ideas on time. Again: uto-

pia 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 the experience of time and temporal movements is universal, their interpretation 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). Besides on 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 financial 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” (Adams 2006, 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). It furthermore fits right into the standard discourse of neoliberalism which renders winners and losers of the system as a matter of pure luck and thus pins utopianism on hopes in ‘winning the lottery’. “*This very primitive form of Utopian dreaming depends on changing one’s position within the system, rather than changing the system*” (ibid.).

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 con-

tested 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 knowing in climate change debates (Brace and Geoghegan 2011).

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, 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—“the industrial extension into the future is characterized by parasitical *borrowing* from the future” (Adam 2006, p. 155, own emphasis)—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 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 2018). 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 fifty 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 an-

3 As of February 2022, “the threat of total destruction has yet again become tangible” in light of nuclear threats following the War in Ukraine (Frank et al. 2023, Open Access, Going to Press Shortly).

4 See also 3.3 Transformation, Multiple Crisis, and Truth Regimes.

anything left at all. Furthermore, it will be humanity itself responsible for its own demise.³

For these reasons, indeed many theories postulate a changed experience and perception of time as an elongated and extended present. Examples of such theories 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, however, in “*the chronotope of the broad present*” (ibid., p. 34) 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 however, lies in the changed nature of 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 multifaceted, omnipresent, and systemic.⁴

As for the theories postulating a changed

experience of time, these are indebted to post-modernist theories of the nineteen seventies and eighties, 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 predicting the future of human affairs based on the past*” (reference to Popper, *ibid.*, p. 76), on “*the illegitimacy of knowledge-claims about the future*” as well as the past (reference to Danto, *ibid.*) and an “*incredulity towards metanarratives*” (citing Vattimo, *ibid.*). In short, post-modernist theories have argued for the abolishment of the philosophy of history, which came to be known as the proclamation of the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama 1989). However, in so doing they have but 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 (2019) has shown 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 ecological or technological sort). Simon

5 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.

6 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 since they contribute to knowledge-production and therefore influence conceptualisations on time.

argues that such an *evental temporality* would be a philosophy of history, nevertheless.⁵

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 theories⁶ such as Lorey's are not entirely apolitical, in fact, their intentions are *predominantly to politicise*, focusing *solely* on politicising the 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 Kenis and Mathijs (ibid.), who have analysed 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 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 insertion). 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 2018, p. 278).

To conclude, this chapter 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 chapter 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).

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 the development of utopianism. A few mentioned historical forms utopianism has taken where utopias (from fixed and ideal to more open accounts; set in the future as well as the present), revolution, progress, and emancipation. In contrast to traditional utopias, 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 utopianism in contemporary movements tends to be associated with processual and partial emancipation, a tendency that has started with utopian feminist thought in the nineteen seventies. 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-*

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

filled political actions that range in scale from the small performative act to the politics of grand revolutions" (Knierbein and Viderman 2018, p. 278). Hopeful visions and imaginaries set in multiple futures are therefore necessary to affect⁷ 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.

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 2013, p.123). This way of thinking thus creates a form of problem-solving utopianism, utopianism close to reality as it exists and working within the present system.

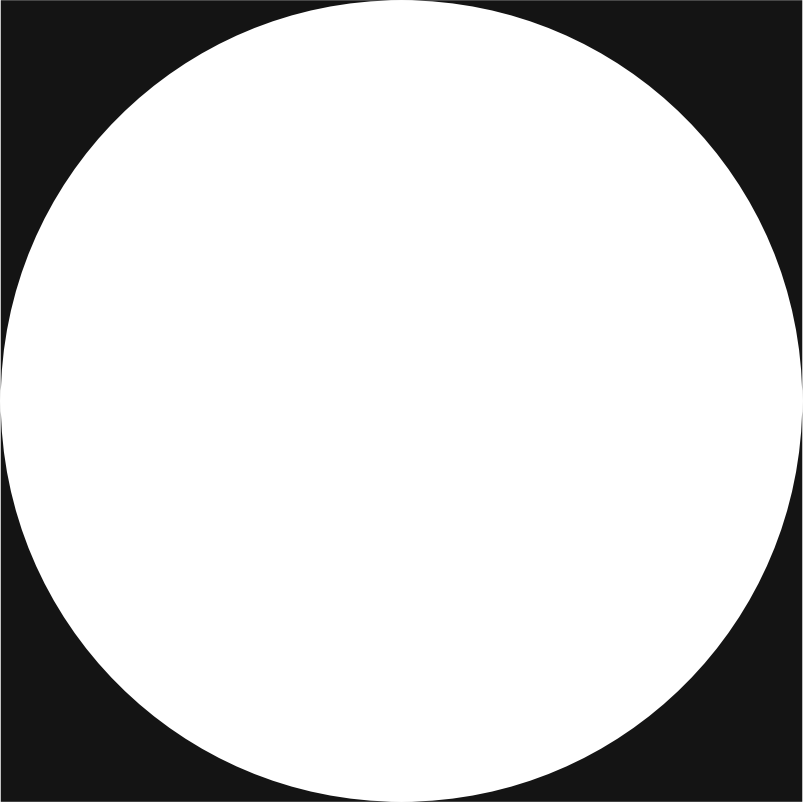
We thus live in a complex world in which the past no longer makes the future comprehen-

sible 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-time⁸ and about our position therein are necessary. However, as mentioned in the last few chapters, 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. Furthermore, architecture contributes to the experience of time and space, while simultaneously being a *product* of its interpretation. Therefore, the next few chapters explore the forms utopianism takes in architecture today and what role architecture plays in the experience and production of time-space orders as a result.

8 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).

5 *Space-Times of Control: Problem- Solving Utopianism*



“Strong architecture for strong men.”

5.1 Degenerate Utopias: Utopianism and 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, is set 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 twentieth 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 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 disruptive 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 precarisation 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 neo-colonial 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 for shrinking democracies.

These developments were supported by an ongoing intellectual shift in architectural critical thought (or intended resignation thereof) starting at the end of the twentieth century. Architects since allegedly abandon any pretensions to change the world (exemplified in Rem Koolhaas’ ‘realist cynicism’) and intend to connect architecture with the ‘real trends’ of its time instead— “[t]o ‘solve’, not to ‘problematize’” (Fischer 2012, p. 58). Architectural practice hence transformed into an ideology of realism, pragmatism, and an “obsessive matter-of-factness, or a non-critical embrace of global capitalism” (Coleman 2006, 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 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 fully extended onto buildings and elevated architects to starchitects. Enforced by a rising significance of the visual in mediated 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” (Neil 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” such as, for example, parametrics (Awan et. al. 2011, p. 29).

Through this uncritical embrace of globalised neoliberalism, architectural design and the building industry have become fully incorporated into the global competitive market. Architects, now 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 be-

fore 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 alterity 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, surveilled, controlled, 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 place 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, superpower, 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). As a rupture to everyday life, they banalise and infantilise us, alienating us from meaningful cohabitation.

A further means of control and alienation is created by a sensory addiction to a compen-

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).

3 Anti-utopianism in this thesis is defined as the philosophy of deliberate as well as non-deliberate *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.

satory 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 sensorium*” (Andreotti and Lahiji 2017, p. 144). To Andreotti and Lahiji, the spectacle however has further increased in technical manipulation which marks the shift to *phantasmagorias*. These mark “*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). As illusionary appearances they 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.³ The possibility of a different future is foreclosed, which means that no other time and space than that of the celebrated present is possible. But this, in fact, makes it entirely utopian 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).

Utopianism that produces (this sort of) iconic architecture is thus in no way anti-utopian, *it actively pursues it*. Even though the vision of the better society is simply an intensified version of the present, it is a pursuit of a better life, nevertheless. While uncritical architects depict themselves as 'realist cynics,' the only thing they are *really* cynical about, is architecture as a tool for *actual* (social, political) change—not, however, architecture as a tool for improving life. The production of such spectacular architecture is therefore not motivated by money alone. The transformation of starchitects from persons to personages is a further indication of this.

"[Utopia] is the dirty secret of all architecture, even the most debased: deep down all architecture, no matter how naïve and implausible, claims to make the world a better place.... More than anyone, that architect is in an impossible situation vis-à-vis Utopia. Without reference to Utopia, his work cannot have real value, but associated with Utopia it will almost certainly be complicit with more or less serious crimes" (Koolhaas cited in Karbasioun 2018, p. 168).

For the sake of his argument Koolhaas curiously applies two different definitions of utopia here: at first, he equates utopia with *utopianism*, meaning the pursuit of a *better* life. At the end of his quote, however, utopia stands in for an authoritarian *ideal* by which he equates it to the *historical* failures of *modernist* utopias. This allows him to justify a non-critical engagement and distance himself from social and political endeavours. It however also marks a contradiction in his argument: If his work *would not* include utopian elements, it would be of no *real* value for society. Instead, “[t]o make architecture is to take part in—to imitate and compete, or to emulate—this endeavour of making perfect work” (Verschaffel 2012, p. 166). (See also 6.2 *Rethinking Architectural Education*). Therefore, any production of iconic architecture can be seen as a motivated effort in making a significant contribution to society and therefore must ultimately be informed by some kind of utopianism. What has changed, however, is the outlook on *how* this should be achieved. It is not that utopianism has disappeared; it is more that it has *changed*.

This marks a noteworthy shift in society at large. Human flourishing is no longer set in the realm of the political or social, but in *culture*—and 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’s the building, its form, its visual appearance, that is given as the answer to human flourishing—most notably, through the help of technology. Social issues are hence ren-

dered as ‘problems’ to be ‘solved’ which in architecture is rendered by the *finished building*. For this reason, this thesis refers to this kind of thinking as *problem-solving utopianism*. Ultimately, this must also be the reason for the architect’s stardom: it is (s)he who bring this better life upon us.

This way of thinking not only informs the materialisation of capitalist utopias but extends to any form of architecture production aiming at commodified mythmaking. It can include any form of media, visual and text, but is also very much performed, such as through the behaviour of architects or events and festivals. Architecture critic Davide T. Ferrando (2016), 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 where buildings are conjured out of nothing, construction elements floating in mid-air, magically assembling themselves into spectacular sculptures.⁴ Not only is this a very direct and double form of Disneyfication (resembling Disney movies such as *Frozen*, where castles are instantaneously built out of snow and ice by magic), 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, if “*contemporary icons impose standard formal solutions with little regard for local conditions, because it is these solutions that constitute the architect’s signature*” (Awan et. al. 2011, p.

4 In his article he refers to a video project in which he compiled such animated visualisations. 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.

29) and if this is further supported by the general trend of globalisation which is marked by a process of homogenisation in which furthermore no true novelty is created, then this presents us with a rather paradoxical situation. „Bereits Koolhaas stellte damit dar, dass der Prozess der Identitätskonstruktion ebenso zur Stadt ohne Eigenschaften führt wie der globale Wettbewerb der neue hipen ‚Welt-Architektur.‘ [...] ‚Die Städte werden unterscheidbar auf eine gleichzeitig nach innen nivellierende Weise““ (citing Martina Löw, Meier 2011, p. 63). For Manuel Castells this means creating architecture so neutral, clean, and transparent that it actually doesn't stand for anything specific, but stays open to various coded interpretations (Castells 2017). However, isn't then any attempt at individualisation eventually amounting to homogenisation? Doesn't then all the above lead to the absorption of any uniqueness in the totality of eternally present, universalised space?

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*.¹ 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) 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, 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 be-

1 Note that it is not necessarily dystopian or worse than the present. See glossary.

2 There is an often cited saying going “When you’re 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*).

tween 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’ve got (or, at 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,² or because they want to perpetuate their supremacy. While, in the latter case, they would no longer pursue utopianism in the context 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 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 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 increasingly

spend their time. “[S]paces 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 temporarily shared and in fact marked by identity-loss and role-playing, and therefore does not create 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

3 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.).

commodified individuals. To Koolhaas, “[c]hange has been divorced from the idea of improvement. There is no progress” (Koolhaas 2002, p. 178). *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.³ 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. „*Inzwischen scheint es [...] ,eine elementare Gedankenfigur moderner Subjektphilosophie, dass ästhetisch gestimmte Subjektivität einer Negation entspringt, die man [...] als «Aufhebung des (anthropologischen) Ortes» beschreiben könnte*“ (citing Ralph Ubl, Meier 2011, p. 56). Interestingly, this is also reflected in the German translation of Koolhaas’ *The Generic City* into *Die Stadt ohne Eigenschaften* (Koolhaas 1996), *The City without Qualities*, heavily reminding one of Robert Musil’s novel *The Man without Qualities*. Also Hardt and 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.

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. Two scholars who have updated such analysis through a Marxist lens are Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri with their definition 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 is thus boundless and universal while time is permanent and eternal. Because *Empire* has no spatial and temporal boundaries, governing the totality of time and space, it furthermore 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 through 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,” “the practice of *Empire* is continually bathed in blood” (ibid., p. xv). This then might be *Empire*’s biggest paradox: As has been mentioned, it’s the absence of crisis that would bring about the presence of utopia—in *Empire*, however, crisis is omnipresent. Crisis therefore becomes internalised and naturalised in the age of the *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 nonconflictual. 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 exist between *Junkspace* and *Empire*, 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 spec-

tacular 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 by contributing 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 fixed 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, p. xliv). Furthermore, places and non-places are not strictly separable 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 paradoxical combinations of seemingly exclusive opposites such as celebrated individuality versus homogeneity, or novelty versus the endless reproduction of the same. Nevertheless, both problem-solving utopianism and anti-utopianism ultimately produce spaces of control. While authority can act contingent and invisible, it can also act as a visibly controlled fixity. Both forms of problem-solving 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 twenty-first 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 thesis 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 utopianism. 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 a frozen snapshot in time. Architecture here is offered as a 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, this way of problem-oriented thinking seems to come to a head in future-oriented projects in the context of multiple crises, namely *Techno-Utopias*.

What largely separates *Techno-Utopias*

from the previous two spatio-temporal formations is the relation to crisis: 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, reflect architecture's *engagement* with crisis. They represent an *architectural response* to specific (multiple) crises. Furthermore, while the aspect of technology plays an important role as the name indicates, it does so in a double way. Similar to *Degenerate Utopias* and *Junkspace*, *technoaesthetics* are an important, if not even more 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 to *climate* change and viewed as a *problem to be solved*, best with technocratic bureaucracy and technology. To demonstrate their future-orientedness, such projects are accompanied by buzzwords such as *resilience*, *innovation*, *smart*, *sustainability*, and *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. Grossi and Pianezzi (2017) 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 in fact view 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, their inclination towards buzzwords is of monetary value. For example, there exist city rankings that measure the ‘smartness’ of cities as well as of countries: “*A ‘smarter’ country is worth up to 10 points in GDP annually*” (citing ABB, *ibid.*, p. 81).

Smart city concepts are a good example of the broader culture of techno-managerialism, a result of 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 Brand (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 itself*” (Levitas 2013, p.123). Managerial, problem-solving utopianism is therefore restricted to known territory, tools, and institutions. This means that crisis gets ‘managed’ by authorities who decide on ‘the exception’ (see

3.2 *The Crisis-Narrative*), often benefitting private interests. 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 technocratic, 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 in his case, 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” (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. 73). Since culture is being equated to lifestyle today, architecture plays an important role in the creation of sustainable identities. This means that, in contradiction to the rationale of pure pragmatism, the need for symbolism in architecture has increased. Beyond simply providing 'sustainable' projects as a means of energy reduction, it is as if "*architecture was particularly apt to convey essential aspects of the urban future*" (Picon 2020, p. 279).

Therefore, nature 'as thing to be saved' becomes a reoccurring element in future-oriented architectural 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). By making architecture 'natural' again, "[o]ur sense of individual self is changed. The individual is treated as a variable member of a larger field" (ibid.). As Kaika and Swyngedouw have shown, 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 a 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*

1 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).

2 See 6.2 *Rethinking Architectural Education*, p. 171.

Nature that needs, demands, or requires sustaining" (ibid., original emphasis).

Quite striking is that the salvific aspect, especially in apocalyptically painted futures, is a quite vivid example of how eschatological assumptions are still present to this day. Equally striking is its portrayal of the survival of the ancient-old demiurgic instinct to save the world. Some particularly dystopian *Techno-Utopias* indeed portray a world where nature has become, or is on the verge of becoming, extinct. In these 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.¹ While such visions are abundant in paper architecture, this way of thinking does extend onto a broader culture which emphasises architecture as an ideal object and as a product of the mind.² While they may offer striking designs, their visionary aspect is debatable since these projects work within the *existing* social framework, which is simply being extrapolated into a future. They envision a future under the circumstances 'if present trends continue' instead of offering solutions 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.³ They are built on a scarcity mentality couched in the jargon of ‘sustainability’ and, as mentioned, ensure that in fact nothing has to change to tackle the crisis—all that is needed is the *right design*. This reveals how „*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 apocalyptic overtones are used to spread fear and “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 a result of narrow-minded, stereotypical, and deterministic thinking, a trend that has been defined as *noir urban scholarship* (Pow 2015). Other projects in contrast are embedded in optimistic and celebratory rhetoric to promote their realisability (Grosi and Pianezzi 2017). This visualises (in addition to the aspects mentioned in 4.3 *Utopianism and Crisis: Time and Emancipation*) how the contested concept of the future outplays in architecture and urbanism in various ways and how its narrative is constructed to sustain differentiating interests. It reflects the notion of *futuring*, “an enormously power-driven process (who has the resources to

3 Ironically, the project mentioned above is placed in front of the coast of Monaco.

develop sophisticated scenarios?) [...] In that sense, futuring means to capture and interpret futures, to envision them and, therefore, to make them to an object of *current* (non-)decision and (non-)action” (Brand 2016a, p. 518, original emphasis). Futuring and the notion of extrapolating the present into the future reveals once more how much even ideas on the future today are heavily marked by presentism, either because the future has become too difficult to imagine or because its imagination is not rendered important.

In addition, paper architecture is not entirely unimportant in architectural debates, especially when produced as part of the competition culture which celebrates them as prestige projects. “Every competition remains a world of possibilities: an intermediary space-time locus for the search for *excellence in architecture*” (citing Chupin et al., Till 2018, p. 161, own emphasis). As architectural competitions furthermore heavily rely on representation, portrayed “as a timeless entity beyond the reach of social processes” (Till 2018, p. 162), it is often argued that “competition projects *function like utopias*” (citing Chupin et al., *ibid.*, p. 161, original emphasis). This, however, again reveals to what extent architecture is reduced to representation, as this is not restricted to the field of competitions alone. “It 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 in-

creasingly relies on representation as a mediation of cultural codes. Furthermore, the technological aspect increases, which is increasingly seen as culture in its own right. “Thus we find ‘culture’ as something separated from everyday life through a particular regime of representation (such as art), and following on this separation comes the rising importance of specialist knowledge (the official, legitimized interpreters), and then a subsequent fragmentation of knowledge as a result of challenges to claims to expertise” (Harvey 1996, p. 14). If anything, this is exemplary of an expert driven society: “While human activities multiply, becoming diversified and omnipresent, decisions about where and how they should take place are increasingly concentrated in the spheres of economic, bureaucratic and technological power” (Carlo 2009, p. 13).

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 applies to their spatial as well as intellectual conceptualisations (especially since, these too, cannot be strictly separated). For example, *Techno-Utopias* can simultaneously contain elements that make out *Degenerate Utopias* and vice versa. This is especially the case when crises to be ‘solved’ by *Techno-Utopias* are only superficially addressed and in fact primarily serve capital accumulation. Similarly fluid is the idea of *Junkspace*, which according to Koolhaas, as well as Hardt and Negri, anyway seems to be surrounding us everywhere.

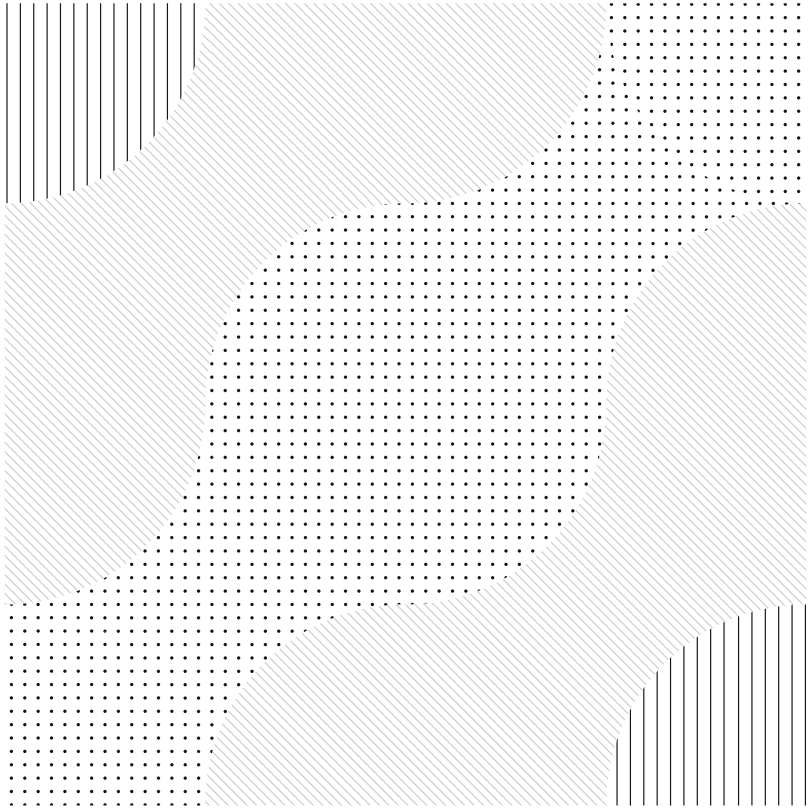
4 This message appeared in the documentary film *Carbon and Captivity* by Oliver Ressler, 2020.

Finally, it is important to stress that this thesis 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. The climate crisis is not the only crisis. Superficial attempts at ‘solving’ crisis therefore disregard the inherent contradictions of globalised neoliberalism induced by patriarchal, imperial and neo-colonial 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.”*⁴ 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 to, 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 ever, or should ever, be seen as 'the solution' to human needs. If it's not the answer we ought to look for, what are the questions we ought to pose then?

6 Space-Times of Care: Question- Raising Utopianism



“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.”

6.1 Agency: Architecture's Political Dimension

Ascribing political efficacy to architecture and defining its role towards society has been a disputed topic ever since the understandings of the shaping of society started to widen. 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, where 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 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 simultaneous 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’”* (Doucet and Cupers 2009, p. 1).

“Was die große Qualität der Architektur ausmacht—diese Unschärfe—, ist zugleich ihre Schwäche, vor allem mit dem Aufkommen der exakten Wissenschaften und dem Klassifikationswahn, denn die Architektur lässt sich eben nicht eindeutig zuordnen“ (Gerber 2014, p. 39). Nevertheless, architecture is still often divided into two polar ex-

tremes, 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 its contacts with social transformations"* (Carlo 2009, 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 underlying assumptions, value is either placed on architecture's 'purity' or its social aspects, function or symbolism, autonomy or participation, apoliticality or agency, its hierarchical organisation, or on the call for its de-professionalisation. As such, architecture has had to legitimise its position since modernity.¹ (See also next chapter on architecture's need for legitimisation).

Significant for current discussions around the agency of architecture is the development of

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 *Gesamtkunstwerk*, whereas Adolf Loos famously countered with his manifesto *Ornament und Verbrechen* in 1931. They are indicative of Gerber's comment on the compulsory need for classification.

neoliberalism as the predominant form of governmentality and the post-political condition as one of its consequences (as mentioned in chapter 3.1 *Unfulfilled Promises of Modernity*). Opposing any kind of social responsibility or political agency within architecture has justified the deliberate move towards stylistic and formal aspects. While the postmodernist attempts at satisfying the client in order to remain 'neutral' therefore might have emptied architecture of its previous ideological values, this shift has replaced those through new unfeasible ones instead. Denying architecture its social role has allowed for 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 to wonder “*how is it 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 architecture’s users? This then leads to the question *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 and involves 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 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. “*In basic terms, an analysis of the social project of architecture today can no longer remain within the realms of intent, form, or*

representation but needs to tie these to consequence and effect” (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 trace the real in the ongoing construction of networks of agents in the making of architecture,*” “*such a strategy fails to take into account the imaginary and the symbolic in shaping a particular constellation of agents*” (Doucet and Cupers, p. 3, original emphasis) 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). 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). However, since such attempts have often revolved around starchitecture and consequently, despite their ambitions, returned to the concepts of authorship and intentionality, Doucet and Cupers stress that the notion of meaning should not be done away with altogether (Doucet and Cupers 2009).

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 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, 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"* 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 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) and reflects the aforementioned central debate within 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. "[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 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 ap-*

pears 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 multifaced 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. “Architektur ist immer Synthese, [...] sie symbolisiert damit jene theoretischen und philosophischen Modelle, die gerade für die heutige Zeit von der Gleichzeitigkeit von Gegensätzen als maßgebende Qualität sprechen“ (Gerber 2014, p. 43). This means that architecture of the twenty-first century has to be measured by aspects beyond form, while sustainability alone, on the other hand, cannot legitimise the existence of buildings that don’t need to be built in the first place. While this is not to say that societal and politically engaged architecture cannot engage in debates around materiality, it rather means, that architecture today has to simultaneously account for a wide range of different aspects and responsibilities. In light of today’s circumstances, architecture has become an even more demanding task in which interdisci-

plinary approaches seem unavoidable in addressing society's complex problems. Overcoming traditional dogmas and myths are necessary steps in such direction. *“Die Architektur der Extreme ist also nichts anderes als eine Flucht vor der Natur der Disziplin und der unmöglichen Koexistenz dieser Extreme. Indem [architektonische Projekte] bewusst autonom oder engagiert sind, flüchten sie vor der notwendigen Gratwanderung, die Architektur ausmacht”* (Gerber 2014, p. 43, own insertion). *“Das zu erkennen scheint ihr aber verwehrt zu bleiben“* (ibid., p. 40).

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”, 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 of March 2022 in Vienna.¹ 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, 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 ideo-*

1 Recording available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O-qqSOPlxaU>. Also check <https://www.claimingspaces.org/>. (both checked 02/04/2022).

2 See last footnote, min. 1:05:30, study by Gender Taskforce, TU Graz.

3 Ibid., min. 1:13:30.

logical” (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.² To Petra Petersson, practicing 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 don’t even get to do the iconic projects. To paraphrase, ‘why do women design housing and not the big museums?’³

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 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 Peggy Deamer, Till 2018, p. 164).

The roots for this conviction were set in stone in antiquity when Vitruvius, the founding father of architecture, set architecture apart from nature and situated in culture in his influential Ten Books on Architecture written 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 fifteenth 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 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 de-

vise, 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” (Leon Battista Alberti cited in ibid., p. 36).

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 eighteenth 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 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 twentieth 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).⁴ 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 the diffused picture of architects in their self-assessment situated 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 architectural practice evading social reality*” (Fischer 2012, p. 63). As the conditions of society are changing and an increas-

4 This however refers especially to the international context and larger offices, less so in the Austrian architecture scene.

ing amount of scholarship tries to widen architecture's definition, architecture thus has difficulties to adapt, clinging onto its familiar methods. Gender studies, postcolonial 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 no longer seem adequate for today's challenges, the discipline nevertheless still remains entrenched 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 2019). 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, 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. The assumption in architecture remains "*that space can be shown by means of space itself*" (ibid., p. 96).

The architecture student thus remains trained in manipulating space and form, con-

trolling 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 2009, 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, creating representations fixes social relations in space and time, creating spaces of control rather than spaces where life can unfold in meaningful and convivial ways (Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Massey 2005; Adam 2006). 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 instituted system has difficulties to widen its definition, open-up to other disciplines, rethink its position as well as methods and continuously tries to perpetuate architecture as an autonomous discipline instead. What the discipline needs, in fact, are entire new ways of looking at its innermost problems: What should be the identity and tasks of the architect? What is architecture? What should architecture do? These questions relate to the many ways in which architecture con-

nects to utopianism and crisis of which several have been discussed in this thesis thus far.

Since utopianism can act as a tool of *estrangement*, offering an ‘other’ way of understanding (see 2.1 *An Everyday Utopianism: Utopia as Method*), its introduction to architectural education could offer promising ways for rethinking architecture’s inherent (crisis-ridden) contradictions. As mentioned, utopianism is a form of dialectical forward-oriented what-if way of thinking, also 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 genius and preparing students more accurately for the reality of the profession through for example negotiation tactics, critical inquiries into the financialisation 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 abstrac-

tion, students should learn that space has many other dimensions beyond its fixed measurements. In addition, students learn early on to depict illustrations as inviting as possible, which often leads to renderings not depicting reality accurately. Yarina (2017) has shown 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 is no longer need for experts, it implies reduced independence and artistic freedom. *“It asks the profession to be part of the networks of others, and in this confronts it with its very worst fear, that of being normal”* (citing Jeremy Till, Schneider 2011, p. 326). Essentially, *“agency is about the architect as an anti-hero”* (ibid., 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 cautiously planning tends to lead to predefined outcomes and foreclosure. Instead,

5 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.

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 educating⁵ 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 eighteenth century, this only applied to white male bourgeois citizens (with reference to Ulrich Pfammater, Krasny 2019). Architectural education was thus from its very beginning exclusionary. Even once women were accepted into the academy in the nineteenth-century 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 within the discipline, in professional practices, as well as education, still continues to this day. While female students meanwhile amount to more than half in total numbers at the beginning of bachelor programmes (such as the ones at TU Vienna), their amount decrease 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 the Technical University of Vienna. 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 in self-confidence of female students. They felt not capable and insufficiently prepared for technically affiliated courses which shows that the bachelor programme was not able to breach this gender gap properly.⁶ (It should be mentioned, however, that there exists a second side to the coin, in that male students should equally be opened-up to commonly female-read topics such as housing and care). 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. The gender gap furthermore existed within speaking times during final presentations.⁷ In addition, students still encounter discriminatory remarks attributed to their gender, ethnicity and/or further visual appearances on a regular basis.

A further study reflected on the fact that while architecture psychology teaches the effects space has on creative processes and wellbeing, these considerations are not met sufficiently in the own university spaces. The study expressed a need for spaces which, beyond diversity and inclusion, allow for retreat as well as such which would enable meaningful exchange.⁸ This alarming con-

6 Ibid., min. 33:50

7 Ibid., min. 19:15

8 Ibid., min. 27:20

temporary situation at the very premises of the university show that the discipline is desperately in need to critically reflect upon, if not reinvent 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, is perhaps a good place to start, with the hope that changes in other institutions and practices would follow.

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/things, 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.

Since utopian speculation furthermore emphasises temporality and processuality, its introduction into architecture could bare fruitful in a further way. Utopia as a method shifts attention to relational considerations such as use and inhabitation rather than objects and images alone.

Therefore, “[u]topia as method helps architects to shift their horizons [and could provide them] with tools to subvert the deforming economic and commercial limitations imposed on the built environment by developers and planners” (Coleman 2020, p. 217, own insertion).

To conclude, the architectural discipline in its contemporary form is heavily permeated by society’s crisis-ridden power-structures. Furthermore, notwithstanding the wide-ranging changes of societal arrangements taking place in the past decades, architecture still clings onto its orthodox methods and ways of thinking. As such, it remains an entirely problem-solving discipline, thinking in individual projects. This means that contemporary architectural education does not adequately prepare its students for the complex and demanding challenges of the twenty-first century.

Architecture as an inherently projective discipline (see 4.2 *Architecture and Utopia: Space and Projectivity*) however carries huge potential for rethinking social ways of life, whether through housing, public space, schools, or work. What would be possible if the discipline’s creative energy would be used for more than just creating objects? Perhaps, however, it becomes equally important to introduce new voices into the discipline, since “architecture has become too important to be left to architects” (Carlo 2009, p. 13). 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).

Lastly, some mentioned considerations are reflected in the following question posed by the deputy dean of studies architecture of the TU Vienna, Christian Kühn: *„Wie kann die Vision einer Architektur aussehen, die dieser neuen Ära angemessen ist? Sie wird den Charakter des Vorläufigen, Suspendierten haben müssen, geplant von Menschen, die gelernt haben, die Präzision von Raumfahrtingenieuren mit der Geduld von Gärtnern zu kombinieren“ (Kühn 2020).*

6.3 Caring Architecture

*“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 the contemporary Left has fallen back into a reactionary defence mechanism, with limited imagination and only capable of analysing and saying what it wants not (Santos 1995; Žižek 2012c; Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015; Nagle 2018), 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 (Knierbein 2020, unpublished; Brand 2016b; Coleman 2012). Visions marked by creativity, conviviality, and care therefore might be a good starting point to counter urban realities marked by control, alienation, and a ‘pseudo’ scientific rationale (Lefebvre 1997 [1974]; Casto-

riadis 2005 [1987]; Coleman 2005; Unger 2014).

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, caring 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 postcolonial (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 2019, p. 7) or “*form the [very] basis of a new common sense*” (McKinnon et al. 2022, p. 26, own insertion). How could a utopianism of care thus inform architecture and ultimately result in *caring architecture*?

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 however can 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 thus 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 2016, p. 8, own insertion).

Since the nineteen seventies feminist scholars have tried to untie care from being predominantly perceived as a feminine trait and practice (see Gabauer et al. 2022b for a short 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 suggests 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 care giving practiced 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 therefore would 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 Ana 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 thesis so 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, as has been mentioned, shifting buildings from independent entities to the product of relations, in architecture *“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 care giving and 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 don't 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 on 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 multi-layered 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, however, 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 an everyday utopianism.

As has been mentioned in 2.1 *An Everyday Utopianism: 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).

An everyday utopianism 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, an everyday utopianism 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).

An everyday utopianism of care therefore portrays 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 hopeful utopian thinking could thus nurture imagination for creative, hopeful 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).

Furthermore, since care as a relational concept ideally makes use of situated understandings, and utopianism, on the other hand, is a possibility for critical and creative engagement with the contingent arrangements of society, combining utopian thinking (as method/ form) with the concept of care (as content) could offer a fruitful basis for going beyond stereotypical, fixed and one-dimensional views of architecture and the city. As such, the combination of utopianism and care could be helpful for tackling the recent increase in noir urban scholarship and stories of urban dystopia in decline (Pow 2015), as well as depictions of capitalism or biopolitical power as

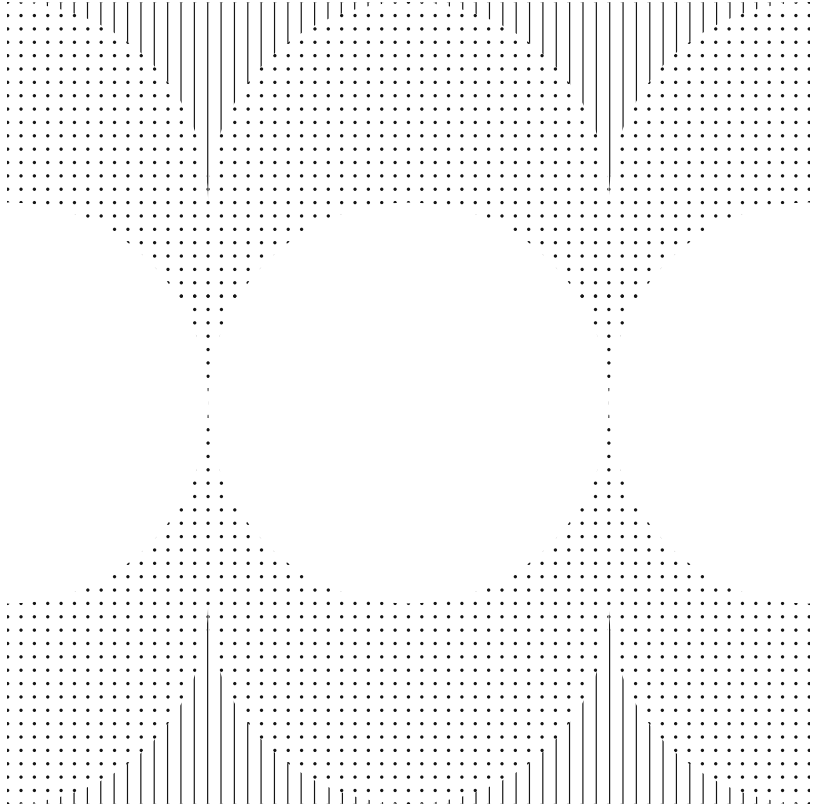
all-encompassing. As Negri himself has stressed, “[t]he greater the critique of the city and its fading horizon, the more the metropolis becomes an endless horizon, the more this junkspace [...] takes on an extraordinary physicality” (Negri 2009, p. 48). Thus, the more such spaces get conceptualised 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 educate, refusing to extend diagnoses too widely or too deeply” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 8). 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 incorpora-

tion 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, the exemplary projects of caring architecture 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 2014, p. 54, own insertions). 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, source unknown)

7.1 Summary and Analysis

Before examining the contemporary socio-political context and what considerations the discipline could benefit from, this thesis offered a historical perspective on the development of utopianism, crisis, and architecture. It offered an analysis by working out the commonalities between each—crisis and architecture, architecture and utopianism, utopianism and crisis. The following summary will start by revisiting some of the most important aspects.

Linking Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture

It has been disclosed that utopianism was first and foremost conceptualised in *spatial* terms, rather than in temporal ones: the utopian society did not live in the future, but *somewhere else*. For this reason, utopias (of any kind) up to the late twentieth 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. In addition, utopian thought up to the nineteen-seventies 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 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 utopian society in a spatially determined sense. This way of thinking profoundly shaped the Western socio-spatial landscape up to the late twentieth century.

Crisis, on the other hand, has from the beginning onwards, profoundly been linked to *time*. As a modern concept, it developed during the Enlightenment period, as a conceptual tool evoking moral demands (and as such containing a normative dimension) for a difference between the past, present, and future and thereby 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. In the nineteenth century, utopianism and crisis became secularised and assumed their modern conceptualisation: both the possibility for utopia and the overcoming of crisis were since placed in the mundane world. With a

sudden understanding for the teleological development of society, tied to the idea of progress, it was then that utopianism assumed a *temporal* dimension: utopian society now lived in the (possible) future. 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 the development of society 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 twentieth century therefore remained over-eager to create a better world with little understanding for existing social realities.

Meanwhile, however, daily life has dramatically changed, and research given insight into better understandings for the constitution and shaping of societies. The consequences of large-scale modernisations, as well as of exploitative and destructive human behaviour on a global scale (of which architecture plays and has played a large part) are well-researched (especially regarding patriarchal, neo-colonial, and capitalist power-structures). For these reasons, crisis is no longer 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. As a consequence of these profound changes, human conceptualisations of time and temporality have entirely shifted. 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, already decided for and therefore often largely dystopian. 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 future harmless and downplaying the necessity for action needed now to address future events. In addition to the past having ceased to offer any orientation for the future, and the future being made present through anticipation, society today is marked by simultaneity, immediacy, interconnectivity, and a 24/7 flow of information. These developments have led many scholars 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 in presentism the belief in progress remains ingrained in processes of globalisation which ren-

der time in a determinist fashion (of acceleration and forward movement) and space thereby into a temporal sequence. Such understandings furthermore lead to foreclosure, disregard the particular, and increasingly homogenise space.

These trends are heavily attributed to the development of globalised neoliberalism, which presents itself as the only viable and ‘neutral’ form of governmentality following the ‘big battles’ of the twentieth century. Its mantra of ‘there is no alternative’ has rendered its politico-economic order as the final and ultimate state for humanity, with no room for change beyond the neoliberal framework (heavily evoking similarity to the traditional understanding of utopia in the sense of an ideal space-time; further outlined below). In addition, the failings of modernist projects have been (falsely) attributed to their utopian aspirations (rather than their positivist and determinist assumptions), creating a hostile environment for utopian thinking. This mentality has led to a long-lasting crisis in political imagination in which fundamental social change has become entirely difficult to imagine. This is backed-up by a ‘truth regime’ led by the natural sciences in which ‘experts’ decide on the nature and urgency of problems (and thus also crisis) as well as being the only legitimate authority to knowledge-claims. A combination of realism, pragmatism, and scientism has thus structurally and successively intervened in the social imaginary, diminished creative imagination, rendered any thinking beyond the neoliberal consensus incredible, successively depoliticised representative democracies, and turned them

into forms of technocratic management instead. In architecture, the restructuring of societies along such principles has led to an ideological shift towards similarly ‘pragmatic’ and ‘realistic’ tasks, and an outspoken aversion to utopian endeavours. Legitimised by past shortcomings, this resulted in a superficial retreat to aesthetics and form, the denouncement of socio-political responsibilities, as well as of any kind of agency to architecture.

These developments thus set the socio-political framework pivotal for understanding the ways in which utopianism and crisis affect architecture today. The summary will now turn to the analysis of the specific ways in which pursuits of the good life in a society inherently marked by crisis manifest contemporarily in power-induced forms of architecture.

Space-times of Control: Problem-Solving Utopianism

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 these 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, surveilled, controlled, 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 space-times) 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 Bauman meant 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, shopping malls, etc. These are increasingly marked by identity-loss, solitude, and similitude, as defined by Marc Augé's *non-places* (Augé 1995). Bearing similarity to 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 constantly rebuilt to stay essentially the same, an infinite interior continuum, with no end and no beginning, and encom-

passing the totality of globalised space. It therefore reflects 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 above mentioned spaces typically defined as *Junkspace* meanwhile have 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 the 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 solve 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 revealed three distinctly different ways in which utopianism and crisis manifest in power-induced forms of architecture today. While they each reveal distinguished 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 utopianism. 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 *tech-*

noaesthetics, 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 and that these therefore will continue to be informed by symbolism, culture, and meaning, and thus ultimately by some kind of utopianism.

Quite interesting in the contemporary context of utopianism and architecture, is that the discipline *openly averts* any pursuit of utopia in favour of staying ‘neutral’ by pursuing market needs alone. There are, however, several contradictions within these sorts of allegations. Firstly, 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 and ironical distance, we are still doing them*” (Žižek cited 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 (Swyngedouw and Wilson 2015). In addition, space not only re-

mains 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 its 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 nonconflictual culture*. 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). Set in the realm of culture, power-induced forms of utopian pursuits today therefore are no longer concerned with improving material socio-political conditions (as was the case in the twentieth century), but by improving life *through aesthetics*. It’s 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 still remain centred on creating and pursuing utopias as ideal and fixed time-spaces, controlling social processes.

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

The examination of the ways in which utopianism, crisis, and architecture relate 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). 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 2019, p. 17, emphasis by Harvey). While this largely deviates from the way time and space have historically been conceptualised, this means that space and time are mutually imbricated: 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 both dimensions equally and is bound to both in the same way. 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 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. Therefore, *the architectural project is always the spatial, projective, and social project at once*. This means that architecture is the result of ideas about society, space, and time while profoundly influencing these in return.

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.*

It follows that 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 avoids it). In this sense, architecture is not meant to actually solve crisis, but give a ‘*proper appearance*’ to 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 revealed that architecture nevertheless remains entrenched on 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 are deeply ingrained in its history. The discipline is rooted on dogmas dating as far back as ancient Greece (such as the nature/culture divide; 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 rational and functional logic of modernism ("*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]). Furthermore, when systemic architectural education was introduced in the eighteenth century as the motor for improving 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 nineteen-seventies 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 struc-

tures of society and as such a direct reflection of society's inherently contested nature: male-centered, power-driven, and Western-focused. As any social undertaking, “*architecture 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. Gender studies, postcolonial theories, and vernacular movements, for example, have frequently spoken out against the very notion of the canon (teaching architecture through object-centered 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 obscures 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 thesis 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 utopianism* to which the summary and analysis will turn now.

Space-times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianism

First and foremost, this thesis 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 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 thesis 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 (Schurr and Strüver 2016; Picon 2020). 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.

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 affectionate society in the long run and can, in

fact, have demobilising effects. To nurture political imagination and break out of the reactionary defence mechanism in which intellectuals seem 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 2019, 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 thesis has therefore considered to combine utopia as method with the concept of care, as in *utopianism 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. An everyday utopianism 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, Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny 2019a) 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 *Space-Times of Care: Question-Raising Utopianism* heavily draws on neo-Marxist 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 at creating 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(n-ism), and crisis—which are not perceived as objects but rather as *social practices*. While such understandings are common in the social sciences, the thesis argues for their introduction into architecture as a way to evade autonomy. Once again, this shift privileges the actual *doing* and materiality of everyday life, draws attention to their performative character, 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 thesis has opposed male-centred with feminist ways of producing architecture, it did not mean to point out that these radically exclude each other, 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 do not reproduce an A/not-A-logic. Furthermore, as has been mentioned, since attempts subsumed under *question-raising utopianism* 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 thesis has scrutinised narrow-minded, dualistic, and determinist ways of thinking still present in the architectural discipline and called for more nuanced and processual understandings. It has put forward alternative ways of thinking and “*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 as disruptive, it can also bare the possibility for change; and while utopianism bares emancipatory potential, it can equally be induced 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.

“Now, 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).

This means that the *pressure for a different kind of architecture ultimately must come from the public*. 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 by society making demands for such. 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. *“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).*

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 relate. 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 (Watkins 2015; Tornaghi and Knierbein 2015b) 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 2013, p.123). Consequently, proposals that are distant to 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 ascendancy 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 thesis 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 of human flourishing in a society inherently marked by crisis. 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 society, space, and time and the significance these 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 understand-

ings 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, the thesis has given insight into the strong correspondence between pursuit(s) of the good life and the 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 our position therein are necessary. Most importantly, this thesis has stressed that architecture as the social, spatial, and temporal project at once plays a crucial role 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. The thesis has therefore proposed various concepts and ways of thinking which could offer 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 of May 2022

“Darf ein Architekt Gefängnisse bauen? Meilenlange Mauern zu Mexiko? Oder olympische Stadien für die chinesische Regierung, die es mit den Menschenrechten nicht so ernst nimmt und in Sachen Pressefreiheit den viertletzten Platz auf der weltweiten Rangliste belegt?” (Czaja 2020, p. 25). These are the opening words of a printed article of *Der Standard*, reflecting on ethical considerations in architecture, which has laid on my desk since the end of 2020. 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 realised on the 2014 annexed Krim. Back when I had read the article, I had added it to my pile of research related books and texts because I had felt it connected to my topic, yet without having fully grasped how so. Little had I known that more than a year later, not only the relevance of this article would be re-ignited with such intensity, but the extent of which both the findings of my research topic and the debate this article represented would

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

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' 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 doesn't matter who finances it. *"In fact, architects often get their most spectacular commissions from leaders who need not consult democratically elected committees or heed to conservative planning regulations. 'The more centralised the power, the less compromises need to be made in 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). Yet, will we continue to teach 'progressive' architecture as the holy grail? Will Coop Himmelb(l)au's building on the annexed Krim 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 construction sites in Qatar, where more than 6.500 workers have died so far for unexplainable reasons (Pattison and McIntyre 2021)? 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 thinking? But most of all, (when) will we care?

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