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CHAPTER 1

ECOLOGIES OF RESISTANCE AND ALTERNATIVE SPATIAL PRACTICES

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1

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Alternative spaces: what is to be done and why?

Following the oppressive roles we described for architecture and the urban in the first volume – connected to challenges around violence, security, race and ideology, spectacle and data – in this second volume, we suggest that escaping the corporatized and bureaucratized orders of power, techno-managerial and consumer-oriented capitalist economic models is more urgent and necessary than ever before. If we accept that totalitarian space is contingent on interiority and dependent on passivity and subjugation, and that fascist space is active, destructive and aimed to exterminate, then neoliberal space is based on passive-aggressive capture and is immaterial and invested in profit.[1] Moreover, aesthetics play a significant role in these orders in that they are linked to those who have access to critical knowledge and are able to make informed decisions and participate in the society. Maintaining the established aesthetics assumes passivity and subjugation.

An important approach to mobilizing alternatives hinges on two questions: the first is concentrated around establishing and doing what needs to be done. The second is directed toward people, and deciding who will do what.[2] Identifying clear actors and fostering actions in response to both of these questions could give rise to ethical spaces that accommodate social justice, equity and inclusivity across multiple sectors – from race to gender – while expanding the understanding of the environment as a complex ecology beyond humans. However, the role of designers in creating such spaces can no longer be associated with the identity of a traditional architect as a singular hero or a neutral form maker. Rather, fostering new spaces of emancipation in response to the realities and crises of our century cannot happen without simultaneously questioning where the boundaries of architecture lie, and what is inside and outside the fortress.[3] Letting go of outdated and normalized definitions of the architect or architecture should not be seen as a menace to the profession; instead, it should be regarded as an unavoidable reality that must be addressed in a constructive manner.[4] Indeed, for the shift to occur, plasticity of the mind is needed given that we live in a society faced with great challenges that are no longer the responsibility of individual disciplines; rather, they spill into multidisciplinary areas spanning culture, politics and economics, and architects require critical spatial thinking and practice.[5] Given that spatial practices are tied to multiple opposing stakeholders, architecture's commitment to the social

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must also be re-evaluated.[6] In other words, redesigning the boundaries of architecture's identity necessitates active involvement, rather than simply advocating for others. That is, it entails giving those who have been excluded from participation and decision-making an opportunity to become active participants, enabling them to collectively contribute to the reproduction processes.[7]

Redefining architecture based on its social impact can help address the need to eradicate poverty, reduce social exclusion and create a more egalitarian global society. According to architectural historian Farhan Karim, in order to fulfill its function, architecture needs to be defined as a mix of praxis, altruism and activism.[8] Socially engaged architecture is not to be viewed as a binary opposition to market-driven architecture, that is, socially unengaged architecture. From a different perspective, as architectural and urban theorist Dana Cuff posits, architects and planners should embrace a collective approach, challenge traditional notions of projects and the roles of clients, consider their work as a source of innovation rather than merely focusing on finishing projects and use the practice of architecture to benefit the broader community and the commons.[9] Moreover, the connections between architecture and urban design and planning are closely tied to the understanding that viewing urban space as a stable and unchanging entity risks oversimplifying the complexity and richness found in space.[10] This challenge persists in current urban policies, irrespective of whether they have been implemented locally or internationally. Additionally, to rely solely on established theories of cities from the 19th and 20th centuries is problematic, since the conditions of contemporary cities have evolved significantly, making these older theories inadequate for addressing today's urban challenges. Indeed, the challenges of the contemporary context are immense and plentiful, yet the pressing question that remains is what is our role and course of action?

We have the tools to engage with (not solve) real-world problems

Architecture and the urban are only one element among various social, political, economic and cultural forces with limited capacity for enforcing change. This is not to undermine their importance, but rather a call to define their limit and expand or shift it if possible. For example, in the first half of the 20th century, there was a focus on incorporating elements like sunlight, air, water and nature into architectural designs as a means to promote health and hygiene – and in doing so, architecture was understood as being capable of curing diseases. Buildings such as sanatoria were designed with features like large windows and terraces open to nature for therapeutic purposes, particularly in the treatment of diseases like tuberculosis – but later proved ineffective.[11] Instead of following modernism's premise that architecture and urban environments should or could cure their inhabitants or improve their health, architects Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini suggest that we should shift from cure to care and abandon the idea that architecture is capable of curing a problem. Architectural discourse should be demedicalized and, in doing so, the problems and solutions will be situated within the field of the social, rather than the moralism of ideas around health.[12]

A similar position is also taken by Cuff, who frankly questions whether architecture possesses the capability to single-handedly address long-standing issues of injustice and whether it can effectively embody the ethics of spatial justice.[13] She problematizes the very premise that architecture and the urban are based on. If architectural practices want to pursue spatial justice, the steps forward, according to Cuff, are to "diversify the discipline's content, students, and faculty, and for those of us in education to mitigate the harm that Whiteness renders."[14] Indeed, architecture as an academic field should move away from merely serving the demands of late capitalism and avoid catering solely to self-serving interests.

If architecture and the urban cannot alone solve real-world problems, they can at least act as a "creator and facilitator of public discourse" in order to establish the necessary public sphere required for interactions between people and public institutions through which opinions can be built.[15] There is no guarantee of socially engaged architecture's success, nor should it be evaluated for its outcome; rather, it should be understood and appreciated for its capacity to stimulate individuals to engage politically and to reconfigure and reorganize their surroundings.[16] Moreover, to think of and treat social engagement as a problem-solving tool overlooks marginalized groups' diverse lived experiences. This exclusion neglects gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and lived experiences. To understand subjectivity is to help explain structural inequality, which invariably forms the political agency of architecture. In other words, categorizing a group as "low-income," "disenfranchised" or "marginalized" is insufficient because individuals in poverty are not a faceless combination of statistical data and financial resources; they are distinct communities and people with various backgrounds and personal perspectives.[17] Thus acknowledging the subjective nature of our interactions in society enables us to understand the underlying foundations of inequality, and it offers a means to establish the political influence of architecture.[18]

Critical investigation of participatory design

Distinguishing between the social and the political can offer us another perspective to critically analyze participation and participatory design. If we consider the political act to be about governance, and the right, freedom and necessity of practicing democracy, then a space helping its residents to achieve a collective identity would be its social aspect. However, if that space which has produced a social collective identity, empowers people to restructure how that community is governed, and how the land ownership is managed, then this is the field of the political. One example could be the work-unit–based urbanism (*danwei*) in Maoist China post-1949 through to the 1990s, which was a socialist model implemented by the Chinese Communist Party to manage the country's urban population post-1949 revolution. This model is also known to be an alternative both to Western capitalist and to Soviet communist urbanism. *Danwei* was a new urban form that reorganized the spatial and social configurations by integrating "workplace, residence and social facilities in close proximity within one or several walled compound(s)."[19] *Danwei* was used to integrate rural migrants into the unfamiliar urban-industrial environment. People living in the work unit rarely needed to leave it as all the facilities were provided there, such as schools, governmental offices, day-care, administrative offices and of course factories.[20] The difference to the Western model is that *danwei* created "collectivized subjects" in contrast to Western "individualized subjects."[21] Although *danwei* created a collective identity, the gated, controlled community was an efficient machine to increase production, control rural immigration and unify the population. Therefore, here we have a space that was influential in creating social relationships; however, it did not allow its populace to challenge, question or change the system of governance.

We believe that praise for participatory spatial practices should be revisited by taking into account the inherent limitations of bottom-up practices and their unfolding over time. Moreover, socio-economic and ecological concerns demand a shift from viewing bottom-up practices as purely liberating and top-down governance as oppressive. Recognizing that these processes inherently overlap, and embracing the friction they generate, is crucial. The architect and urbanist Teddy Cruz and political theorist Fonna Forman highlight that discounting top-down governance and spatial intervention for their corrupt bureaucracy is

counter-productive because it reinforces the neoliberal rhetoric that presumes public good is best managed by private markets rather than public institutions.[22] Indeed, the erosion of public trust in public institutions is not surprising when corporate power is driving urban development for the interest of a few, and forcing many into poverty. Cruz and Forman's advocacy is foregrounded by the need for radically reimagining democratic urban governance, through which political leaders are dedicated public servants striving to enhance effectiveness, transparency, inclusivity and cooperation within local government.[23]

Changing public cynicism about participatory democratic process, and repairing public trust in the power of "top-down governance and spatial intervention" in order to produce meaningful change is a cultural challenge, write Cruz and Forman:

> [U]rban activism should focus on increasing public knowledge, rejecting social norms that validate neglect, exploitation and dispossession in the city, igniting civic dignity, repairing public trust and restoring a belief in community agency at the neighborhood scale. Only then can top-down governance and spatial intervention.[24]

They suggest that we must focus on successful examples of democratic and collaborative forms of governance existing in the past and present to show that alternative forms of urbanization are attainable beyond the hegemony of neoliberalism – such as the 1930s US New Deal and postwar Europe where public infrastructure and social services were enhanced and fueled by a forward-looking tax system and collaborative investments.[25] They also note that "inclusive political and civic processes" across Latin America in contemporary times have resulted in the emergence of innovative approaches to urban landscape intervention, which are rooted in novel concepts (related to public housing and infrastructure and also citizenship).[26] Examples they refer to are multiple cities across Latin America, including, but not limited to, Porto Alegre and Curitiba in Brazil; Bogotá and Medellín in Colombia; La Paz and Quito in Mexico.

While the architectural theorist Albena Yaneva would argue that design is not inherently activist, transformative or transgressive in its ability to resolve the world's problems,[27] the designer and educator Matthew Wizinsky suggests that design practices "can and should enact social empowerment and build community economies."[28] Cruz and Forman suggest that the least architects and urbanists must do is to take a position against the inequalities and ethically/morally wrong practices that crises of our time have created, otherwise they lose their social relevance. For them, taking this position is related to the key role architects/urbanists can play in addressing the "crisis of the public," which is to recognize what our most pressing challenges are, despite being collectively unable to address them.[29] In *Spatializing Justice: Building Blocks*, Cruz and Forman advocate for a move from abstraction to specificity, toward which they have produced a series of pragmatic design guidelines that promise this specificity. For example, they write:

> Create agencies that curate interfaces between top-down institutions (government, universities, foundations, cultural institutions) and the creative, bottom-up intelligence and sweat equity of communities and activists [...or...] [c]hallenge the idea of public space as a manicured site of beauty and leisure, and reclaim it as site of civic activity, urban pedagogy and cultural production.[30]

It was surprising to see these recommendations under "transform housing beyond 'units'" while Cruz and Forman acknowledge that "the crisis of housing affordability is a local,

national and global problem." The authors continue that "this crisis will continue as long as housing is understood as a commodity, an object of profit, vulnerable to the fluctuation of free markets and discriminatory public policies."[31] They conclude that the design proposal for an integrated housing unit includes "community-owned Airbnb to support programming."[32] Despite the promising narrative, such a proposal ignores the destructive role Airbnb continues to play in the unaffordability of rental housing;[33] in fact, this alternative solution reinforces the oppressive system.

Participatory practices involved in do-it-yourself (DIY) urban interventions have also been criticized for reproducing the disparities they were designed to address; in fact, they could simply be an example of fleeting market-driven bureaucracy with very limited impact.[34] For example, the rise of participatory platforms in urban planning, design and architecture in the early 2000s was a (futile) return to the participatory practices of the 1960s. Not only were these platforms no longer supported by radical social movements, but they were also the victim of state retrenchment and had to compete for funding as if they were a private market entity. A truly democratic form of participatory practice outside typical institutional politics can be identified by asking who is staging the participation, who is invited to participate, how social and economic inequalities are addressed and how is the subaltern empowered.[35]

Indeed, architecture's agency can transform through the lessons of activist practices; we can envisage a future that celebrates diversity and collective creativity and challenges conventions. Achieving this entails dismantling the inherent White dominance in architecture and challenging the systems within the discipline and profession that uphold unequal power dynamics. Moreover, it requires re-evaluating traditional interpretations of architecture, clients, projects and architectural practices in a critical manner. Additionally, it requires actively exploring avenues and processes to operate independently of the inequalities driven by capital.[36] The shift toward justice would reorient architecture from a consumer-centered model to one of public goods where initiatives would involve constituencies, agonism and leveraging limited resources.

We cannot underestimate the importance and power of institutions in enforcing change – and we should not lose hope in them and shift solely toward bottom-up practices initiated by individuals or communities; institutions (top-down) and the communities (bottom-up) should be considered in parallel with each other. Institutions should not only be accountable for their work and held responsible for serving the community, but future institutions also need to operate differently from the established systems of governance vividly described by philosopher Michel Foucault in his analysis of how institutions (family, prison, clinic) operate to establish the norm.[37] Future institutions will not continually operate to normalize the alternatives by capturing them back into the system. The outside retains its potential to problematize the status quo without being reduced to a threat to the existing system.[38]

Kafkaesque society and the spectacular flawlessness of bureaucracy

The urban theorist Andy Merrifield argues that we live in a society that is Kafkaesque, where we are subject to invisible but ever-present "castles and ramparts."[39] These structures are simultaneously tangible and pervasive, yet also distant and disconnected. Moreover, the Kafkaesque world in which we live is permeated with Debordian "integrated spectacle."[40] This reality is global; it resembles a spiraling vortex, drawing everything in and merging it across different layers and divisions on a planetary scale.[41] However, addressing contemporary

challenges cannot be inspired by Kafka's approach, which aims to confront the castle within its own bureaucratic framework. Instead of trying to make sense of this vortex as acceptable and intelligible, the focus should be on denouncing this vortex altogether.[42] Essentially, the path to an alternative political reality lies not in analyzing what those in power do, but in examining what we can do within and beyond their capitalist actions.[43] Indeed, to move forward, Merrifield argues that we need a fresh perspective, a new emotional framework and a new language to expose how the controlling center of integrated spectacle has attained the status of "occult."[44]

While the "supernatural" powers of integrated spectacle have consequently facilitated the blurring of distinctions found in utopias and dystopias, its integration should not be our concern as much as the inability to imagine an alternative future.[45] The benefits of studying and exposing this spectacle are seen in the work of architects, planners and educators Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour during the 1970s. They were willing to see the space of Las Vegas with fresh eyes and realized that "a careful documentation of [Las Vegas'] physical form is as important to architects and urbanists today as were the studies of medieval Europe and ancient Rome and Greece to earlier generations."[46] By letting go of the limits of the discipline at that time, the canon of architecture was redefined; they analyzed the 'ordinariness' of the Las Vegas strip at length through the viewfinder of their car. Beyond discovering two new categories of buildings, 'ducks' and 'decorated sheds', the encounter with entertainment complexes in the form of casinos and hotels adorned with a mass of neon signs communicated the rise of consumer culture in the US and the disposition and values of a culture where private and spectacularized space wins. Taking this example as a precedent, we can investigate the 'ordinary' and normalized context of the contemporary culture found in social media or dating platforms such as Grindr or Tinder, which are changing not only social relationships but also the way in which the city is understood and navigated.[47] Forming and maintaining social relations is no longer only dependent on physical space; the digital sphere provides a new space of exchange and communication. Moreover, these platforms evoke a differently wired culture to the one encountered by Scott Brown, Venturi and Izenour during the start of consumerism in the 1970s.

Thinking otherwise to the normalized, the first step for any form of reformist practice, writes Wizinsky, is to critically analyze capitalism – for example, sustainable discourse often ignores the wide economic and socio-political implication of capitalism on design practices.[48] The creation of alternative spaces has to be situated within the critique of universal humanism, which remains Eurocentric, androcentric and exclusive. Creating the 'ideal' future, according to European humanism, has always been the role of an urbanized, heterosexual white man with an able body who speaks a standard language and is a citizen of a recognized polity.[49] However, reform cannot occur through a revolution – it requires a slow transformation. Wizinsky believes that capitalism is ending, or at least changing into something else, and we must adopt a "critical optimism" and work toward alternative postcapitalist design practices that can create "a more just, sustainable, and democratic political economy."[50] Critical optimism, he writes, is necessary to diagnose the problems, find the opportunities for alternatives and then create change. What can support this hopefulness is two-fold: first to be informed about historical alternative (or anti) design practices to the capitalist system and second to remember that capitalism was created and conceived by people as a societal and economic structure and liberation from its constraints is possible.[51] The key point to remember is that capitalism mutates, and its metamorphoses do not necessarily mean its grip will be loosened – capitalism has undergone various

creative destructions specifically to persist. Creating and providing pragmatic guidelines seems to be the preferred approach for Wizinsky. To be optimistic about these series of guidelines does not mean to take them for granted as if they can erode the capitalist system; rather, each should be put under scrutiny and test how they – as an assemblage, not as individual principles – could deliver a non-capitalist design. Although utopia is impossible, the ongoing struggle toward it is not.[52]

Re-inventing the public space through the commons

If we agree that late capitalism is now operating at a planetary scale, and that the global spread of markets and financial booms are contingent on "accumulation by dispossession" where dispossession stretches from company mergers to privatization of public assets,[53] the site in which one could resist its destructive grip needs to be social, enacted through social space, and must be politicized. While *public* space can be designed for people to act in it, *social* space – which is the product of social – was, for the philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, not designed but formed and transformed by the people. As noted by Merrifield, people do not act in space: "people become space by acting. They are space."[54] That is, in this instance space is secondary. What is of primary importance are people, their actions and agency which occur at a specific period. Indeed, recognizing the presence and the connection of social space to resistance is vital. This approach plays a crucial role in contesting the dominant neoliberal political and economic system that influences all aspects of a contemporary society.[55] This is significant given that neoliberalism has changed citizen participation from habitual involvement to performance-based engagement. Furthermore, as new democratic practices emerge worldwide, the transformation of public space becomes essential. However, this raises the question of what implications this has for space, spatial practices and urban environments.[56]

One of the ways to challenge the existing system is by engaging in urban resistance within public spaces. Participatory democracy involves citizens making decisions directly and redefining citizenship based on active participation in public political life. However, participation does not simply involve consulting the public about architectural design. Instead, architects should prioritize the reconfiguration of public spaces to facilitate direct political engagement and integrate architectural discourse into the realm of political democracy.[57] That is, architects should rethink public spaces for direct political engagement rather than focus solely on building design consultation.

The public space must be re-invented because of its two problematic features: exclusion and privatization. Designation of public space does not inherently imply accessibility for all individuals, as the so-called public nature of these spaces must be critically examined in light of their inherent limitations and exclusionary characteristics. For example, in ancient Greece, women, slaves and the general populace were denied entry to urban public space, which effectively excluded them from it.[58] Solely open to a free, privileged male citizen, this public space was in fact restricted and not fully 'public'. As the geographer Neil Smith and the anthropologist Setha Low have pointed out, the reality is that, both in ancient Greece and the contemporary Western world, genuine public spaces are rare and not the norm.[59] Moreover, with the privatization of public spaces, it is not only that public access, participation and influence have been reduced but that consumerism has enabled a perception that such privately owned spaces are the best and most suitable public spaces for our times.[60] Perhaps the term "pseudo-public space" better captures the inevitable exclusionary characteristic of public space concurrent with its handover to private interests.[61]

Operative democracies amidst techno-managerialism

If public spaces are extremely rare – if not imaginary – then how can we claim democracies are operative? We live in a time when democracy has become a topic we cannot discuss, because as the geographer Erik Swyngedouw writes, it is assumed as a given, as if it already exists. However, "Western democracies are only the political facade of economic power" within which the concept of democracy itself is off-limits. It is treated as an unquestionable dogma, like an exhibit in a museum.[62] Democracy for Swyngedouw is a tool to obscure the uneven topography of consensus-driven techno-managerial governance.[63] The hegemony is evident in the materialization of new forms of governance at various levels, both within and beyond national borders. This includes organizations ranging from urban development bodies to the World Trade Organization and gatherings such as G-20 meetings.[64] These arrangements not only reshape how institutions govern but also how they operate at different scales. The realization of these arrangements is dependent on suppressing dissent. Such a structure signifies a decline in democratic practices.[65] When the public takes to various so-called public spaces to voice their grievances and mandate changes alongside broader global efforts to redefine political norms, their presence signifies the ineffectiveness of the democratic institutions.[66]

The demise of democratic institutions, and the decreased agency of public space in challenging dominant politics, is manifested when the public take their frustrations onto the streets. The rise of social urban movements (including but not limited to the Yellow Vests movement in France, 2018; the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, 2014; the 2011 Egyptian revolution in Tahrir Square, 2011; Protests against the Greek Government's austerity policies, Acropolis, Greece, 2010), during the global economic crisis, is not only a symptom of the pathology of the modern markets, but more importantly it signifies society's interest in finding an alternative to the existing frameworks of the state and the market.[67] Although these movements are usually understood in relation with and as a response to prevailing global late-capitalism, their relation to space is where their emancipatory potential resides. Indeed, both philosophers Alain Badiou[68] and Jacques Ranciere[69] have situated emancipatory practices outside the tyranny of the number of voters or protestors and in doing so show that democracy can be understood beyond its representation through elections, parliament, televised speeches and diplomatic visits.[70] Participation hinges on the presence of dissent, given that "disagreement signifies the importance of radically different registers in which citizens make sense of their world and of power and authority," and which "cannot always be rectified for the sake of consensus and agreement."[71] In other words, politics moves "a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination."[72] Thus, when we speak about issues such as democracy, it is not just a matter of ticking boxes, but understanding the extent to which different knowledges can operate and coexist.[73]

That even the Left have fallen into the trap of techno-managerial consensus governance is evident in the strategies enacted by green politics, where environmental movements such as Greenpeace or parties such as the German Greens have embraced integration "into stakeholder-based arrangements aimed at delivering a negotiated policy articulated around particular technical and institutional architectures."[74] These arrangements promote highly populist narratives, where action is portrayed as being carried out on behalf of the 'people' or in the interest of 'nature,' and where solutions need to be uniformly implemented as the threat is universal.[75] The universality of this perspective is shaped by a narrative of an environmental apocalypse with a dominant hegemonic neoliberal outlook.[76] Swyngedouw argues for the need of other alternative narratives. This entails highlighting and identifying

various socio-economic futures while acknowledging "conflict, difference, and struggle over the naming and trajectories of these futures."[77] Moreover, it requires recognition that humans and nature are mutually shaped, and that the specific historical era known as capitalism has played a significant role in this co-production.[78] Moving forward on the ecological front requires understanding that we cannot avoid "producing nature."[79] Instead, it

> compels us to make choices about what socio-natural relations we wish to nurture and what terraforming worlds we wish to inhabit. It is from this particular position, therefore, that the environmental conundrum ought to be approached so that a qualitative transformation of *both* society *and* nature has to be envisaged.[80]

We argue that emancipatory and aesthetic practices must continuously persist for a democracy to operate. Conversely, the belief in having a truly liberated society can be deceptive as it hijacks social participation and encourages conformity and agreement. The materialization of public space is reliant on continuous political actions. Re-invention of public space is contingent on physical or virtual spheres that are made and remade through continuous legal negotiation, political action and acts of commoning. The space is a site yet to come that can accommodate the urban resistance necessary for ever-renewing democratic practices by keeping the state and political establishment accountable for social justice; a site of mobilization and negotiation enabling communities to interact and practice democracy and citizenship; a site accessible to the public who are participants and not just observers; and, a site through which power can be appropriated collectively but not become the sole dominated force.

Re-generating rights

Advocating for more inclusive cities can be traced back to the 19th century in the writings of philosopher Friedrich Engels who proclaimed "cities for people, not for profit" while he was analyzing the dilapidated conditions of areas occupied by working-class people in Manchester.[81] The agenda reappeared in 1960s narratives such as that of Jane Jacobs who was an activist, theorist and a journalist, as well as in the discourse of Lefebvre who continued to oppose the destructive consequence of postwar Fordist urban renewal projects.[82] Under capitalism, the city operates as a prime zone for all processes of commodification,[83] while the urban space constantly mutates to respond to the clash between profit-driven exchange value and everyday life-oriented use values.[84] Indeed, when thinking and designing cities for people now, we need to think of urban politics as being socially democratic where priority is given to redistribution over relentless growth.[85]

Although Lefebvre's notable concept of "the right to the city" is often employed to critique the perpetuation of capitalist dynamics through urbanization, his work also reveals the potential of urban spaces as places for transgressive and alternative communal initiatives.[86] However, while he viewed the right to the city as a revolutionary notion, this aspect has become less prominent due to the numerous studies that have primarily focused on how this right is denied to people. For example, the social engineering of post-Katrina New Orleans transformed the city into a developer's paradise, while vulnerable residents were forcibly displaced from their homes and distributed across US cities based on their race and income. The example clearly illustrates a population being stripped of their right to the city and, more fundamentally, their right to their own homes.[87] The implications of this for scholarship is listing how citizens are excluded from access to the resources that the city offers or being

excluded from engaging in the government of the city.[88] The underlying agenda of the "right to the city" slogan is the possibility and necessity of mobilizing and transforming cities.[89] For Lefebvre, one way in which radical democracy could be achieved is to taper the world of commodities as this would create the space to address social needs given that more resources would be directed toward addressing the needs of those in hardship.[90] A different approach, as advocated by the Marxist geographer David Harvey, would be to eradicate all aspects of privatization and private economy.[91] For him, returning to the Keynesian period of state ownership, and redirecting it to benefit the masses, would push for a more socialist model. For the lawyer and urban planner scholar Peter Marcuse, the question that remains is how those who are deprived (exploited, unemployed or discriminated against) and disrespected (unequal treatment as a result of political, sexual or religious orientation) rally against the oppression.[92] That is, how can we translate any of the proposed theoretical models into practice and attain social rights?

The ideal and practice of 'rights' may appeal to human sensibilities; however, as Merrifield argues, it is time to give up on invocations for rights – whether they are human rights or rights to the city.[93] His argument is that

> when rights are so flagrantly and frequently abused, so blatantly and brutally denied, and all done so serially and seemingly at all times, then as a lever for political engagement the 'rights' agenda stirs only the bleeding hearts of liberals; it tends to fall on the deaf ear of reactionaries.[94]

While the appeal for rights is recognized, any action concerning this from above (from governments to courts) is limited.[95] However, to abandon the rhetoric of rights is not to abandon the struggle for social justice and the possibility for such justice in public spheres. Although, the very lack of public spaces and services due to their privatization requires a re-definition of the context connected to the public realm. For Merrifield, the public realm does not revolve around collective ownership and state management, but centers on collective administration and oversight by the community, regardless of actual ownership.[96] The argument is that the "public realm must somehow be *expressive* of the people, expressive of their *common notions*, common notions that Spinoza always insisted were not universal notions or some form of universal rights."[97] Indeed, something being regarded as public is contingent on the availability of unrestricted, flexible and disputable channels for common expression.[98] These channels should be political from the perspective that they foster an encounter of different people, dialogues and disagreements.[99] The politics of this encounter is not contingent on criticizing neoliberalism; the analysis itself is in vain as it does not offer any constructive and practical frameworks on how to *act* on the knowledge that arises from the exploration.[100] In other words, we miss knowingness on "how to construct a practical politics from the standpoint of this theoretical knowledge."[101] Part of the difficulty in moving forward is informed by the belief that the economic model is *Capital*-ist – as identified in Marx's thinking which still resonates in the world today. What should occur is the emergence of new physical structures linked to fairness, liberty and solidarity.[102] Swyngedouw refers to Marx's description of communism to argue for transformation: "We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things," yet he also acknowledges that mapping the contemporary contours of change is a challenge.[103] He argues that there is a crucial necessity to re-examine and re-engage communism since it is closely tied with democracy. In this instance, democracy is not identified with various political institutions such as governments or parliaments and allied procedures around participation; rather, communism, just like the original seed of

democracy, is founded upon "equality of each and every one qua speaking – and hence political – beings."[104] For Rancière, democratization occurs when those who do not have a voice (such as a homeless person, a refugee, or a factory worker) are not only given a voice but are granted the means to rupture and re-distribute the arrangement of power and ultimately the temporality of history. The rupture shifts the otherwise "hierarchical distribution of forms of life,"[105] the distribution that orders who can partake in the world and the extent of that partaking. This ordering is built on a structure of exploitation and domination, which leads to two categories of human being: one who can master time and one who is imprisoned in the time of the everyday.[106] To interrupt such ordering of history is to recapture time and inhabit it in a different way. One example in which marginalized groups can do that is through urban protests and the creation of alternative temporalties, as argued by Rancière. Such an alternative community situates itself in a "space-time of secession" and redefines a shared way of life through experimentation, liberating it from hierarchical constraints.[107] Interrupting the hierarchy of dominant time and recapturing time in a different way is aligned with the call for inclusive cities.

Re-claiming the commons

Opposing the hierarchical constraints has shaped the resurgence of struggles that seek to re-claim the commons. The commons are constantly being threatened by neoliberalism through deregulation and privatization (of knowledge, of seeds, of public services, of all the public and the common good), which has resulted in new waves of enclosure, such as gentrification and gating/patenting.[108] Urban activism is one way to confront the creative metamorphosis of capitalism that is hijacking the right to the city – through the re-discovery of the *commons* as the way forward in resisting/avoiding the Anthropocene crisis, as noted by the philosopher Lieven De Cauter.[109] Commons, the social scientist and activist Brigitte Kratzwald writes, can be interpreted as unconventional activities taking place in spaces that promote emancipation. These activities result in the development of new methods of social connections. The spaces signify zones of creative resistance where alternatives to capitalism can be tangibly explored and incorporated into everyday life.[110] Critical of Marxist theory, anarchists warn us that commons are not inherently anti-capitalist, and one must analyze them with caution and through a 'class-sensitive lens.' For De Cauter, activist self-organized communities who govern "common pool resources" can be a model at a global scale for a future beyond state and market.[111] For example, in the 1980s, urban activists in Brussels stopped the demolition of the housing block of the Hotel Central located in the center of the city (and its replacement with a postmodern apartment block which locals disdained) by squatting, occupation and street parties.[112] It was during a time when Belgium was transitioning from an industrial to post-industrial era, and as a result Brussels was falling into decay due to the 'urban exodus' caused by the rapid suburbanization of Belgium. In 2002, however, the corporate Marriot Hotel was built in the area – not what activists imagined.[113] Another example of urban activism/civil disobedience occupation in Brussels occurred in 2012 in the same neighborhood as the Hotel Central, when 2000 picnickers responded to a call to action by economist and philosopher Philippe Van Parijs' opinion piece in a newspaper. They occupied the Beursplein square in Brussels to remind the city council of their long pending promise (ten years) of a car-free zone – eventually leading to pedestrianization of the area.[114] Commons can be understood as resistance to the commercialization of public space in an era dominated by "corporate-led urban development."[115]

The commons should be understood as a practice and process, not a resource. The commons "are something to be produced, not reached."[116] Common spaces are formed through the establishment of innovative, indefinite and potentially conflicting institutions focused on communal activities.[117] This means that common spaces go beyond reclaiming existing small open areas. Some, however, see the value of self-initiated temporal and low-budget small-scale spatial interventions in their being experimental and assisting people in reimagining the potential of open areas and understanding who controls, reserves and manages spaces around them, and for whom they are intended.[118] For example, the guerrilla urban intervention of San Francisco-based design-art-activist group Rebar transformed parking lots into small temporary parks, an idea that spread worldwide through "open-source production of urban commons" which was based on peer-contributions, with a transparent code of use, promoting societal change.[119] However, an anti-capitalist approach highlights that commons are not about possessing a territory, but rather about re-creating and re-imagining a group's territory, leading to new "territorial subjectivities."[120] It is not about capturing what already exists; it is about creating something different that cannot be captured by the market or state. For example, following Argentina's economic crisis of 2001 – which is a notable precedent for the political Left because of its incredibly effective anti-state and anti-capitalist resistance – the unemployed workers produced collective resources/commons in their neighborhood in addition to creating new identities (beyond being known as unemployed).[121]

Spaces of care and repair

Critical care in architecture and urbanism refers to a starting point from which to address pressing issues. It means not giving up on the future and is likened to medicine where "critical care is a specialized branch of medicine dedicated to diagnosing and treating life-threatening conditions."[122] However, the cultural theorist and curator Angelika Fitz and architectural, urban and cultural theorist Elke Krasny pose a cautionary note that the term 'care' was traditionally associated with women's labor and has gained attention due to neoliberal governance and social movements. That is, when welfare programs were taken apart, it triggered conversations about issues affecting health to housing; however, care also "became a matter of neoliberal governance, including the rhetoric of self-care and capitalist market economies, as well as its informalized shadow economies."[123] More recent evidence of this can be seen during the Covid-19 pandemic when the racial disparities, dangers and risks faced by essential workers in health care, food and agriculture, along with pervasive economic inequalities, were addressed architecturally through privileged solutions.[124] That is, instead of

> focusing on these critical concerns, by June of 2020 architecture firms and journals were broadcasting touchless office design for tech workers, acoustic separation for at-home Zoom sessions, ways that cities could accommodate fitness training, and private indoor and outdoor 'safe' spaces.[125]

For the architectural profession to show care, architects could start by showing and repairing the harm their discipline and profession have caused. For example, in their 2019 exhibition "Fringe Cities," MASS Design Group explored the impact of the 1949–1974 federal government *Urban Renewal* program in four US cities and found they were adversely affected by a billion-dollar urban project brought to fruition through a series of planning, demolition and construction programs.[126] Originally framed as anti-poverty initiatives, the *Urban Renewal*

program worsened the existing problems of segregation, including constructing highways through downtown areas and breaking apart the communities. In fact, designers and architects were very influential in promoting and selling the idea of renewal by presenting diagrams and illustrations of potential futures, most of which remained unrealized.[127] The visions were directed toward cities struggling to recover from previous destructive interventions. Recognizing these struggling cities, and subscribing to the idea that "architects have a duty to work not only in the metropoles where there is a market for design, but also within smaller communities where it has yet to emerge,"[128] MASS adopted a grassroots approach by partnering with local groups in order to establish the foundation for community-led initiatives aimed at revitalizing the city.[129] This approach stands as an alternative to the conventional model of practice that dominated mid-20th century urban renewal.[130]

Privileged legacies

The re-design of the architectural discipline must include addressing privileged models in architectural education and practice, which are built on various forms of exclusion. Failing to address these will not only perpetuate the oppressive history associated with the exclusion of women and certain racial groups but will also conceal the ways in which capitalism is entangled in this history.

As we now know, the presence of women architects is limited globally, and their achievements are even less present within and outside the profession, invariably affecting the rise of female role models.[131] Despite women architects not being featured in research until the 1970s, their presence in the field of architecture is notably longer and extends beyond the common belief that this presence can be traced to the late 19th century in Europe and the US with the emergence of architecture schools and professional associations.[132] That architects of the Italian Renaissance were able to "train in any craft that taught them the skill of disegno," evidenced by 14th-century Filippo Brunelleschi who trained as a goldsmith, and 15th-century Francesco di Giorgio and 16th-century Michelangelo who trained as sculptors and painters,[133] provides us with a frame against which to address the unacknowledged archives of women architects. One of these women is 17th-century Plautilla Bricci, who was not only trained in *disegno* (design and drawings) and had access to various architectural theses but also supervised the construction of all her drawn structures.[134] It is only by engaging with the archives and documentation found in letters to building accounts that we can expand the opus and timeline of female architects.[135]

The topic of race has largely been avoided in 20th-century architecture, despite the history of industrialization being closely connected to slavery and colonization.[136] Moreover, colonial violence and slavery are intimately connected with capitalism,[137] including that industrial capitalism had intricate connections with slavery and various forms of forced labor.[138] When the topic of race was, for example, addressed in terms of 20th-century modern architecture, it predominantly focused on nationalism or ethnography, without making a direct link to race. That architecture played a significant role in the construction of a racialized epistemology is evident through its practice of classification.[139] The architect and architectural historian Sir Banister Fletcher's coveted "Tree of Architecture" diagram presents the history of architecture with the styles found in Europe associated with the highest outgrowth, stemming from the "Greek to the Roman and Romanesque, while the lower boughs of Chinese, Indian, Saracenic, and other styles of architecture are shown terminating without further development."[140] To spearhead change, we should not only include methods that were left out but also scrutinize established and normalized principles

and monoliths.[141] In fact it is not simply a matter of reinserting 'forgotten' objects and architects into the history of architecture; rather, for the architectural scholars Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II and Mabel O. Wilson, it is important to dissect and come to grips with the way in which slavery and colonialism were intertwined in the rhetoric of advancement.[142] One of the examples David uses is cotton, and the way it "was successively sourced from French, Portuguese and British slavery-based colonies, and then in the nineteenth century was imported overwhelmingly from US plantations using enslaved labour."[143] This is despite Britain supposedly ending the slave trade in 1807. Moreover, for Harvey, the British textile industry is intimately and exploitatively connected to the cotton industry given that it was "the primary driver of the unprecedented expansion of cotton slavery in the US."[144]

Attempts to embrace difference were seen in the 20th century with modern architecture being configured by classifying what was *not* modern with the label 'vernacular' or 'primitive.' Yet even the differences found in regionalism were "subsumed in the broader ideology of internationalism and color-blindness embodied by modernism's white walls."[145] Highlighting the significance of situated knowledge and histories, African American history is another means of opening up and expanding architectural knowledge. By identifying that the history of architecture is the history of representation, Wilson has argued that new ways of working will be made possible through understanding the histories and limits of representational techniques.[146]

Although Cuff acknowledges that schools of architecture are re-evaluating the "established" histories and commitments to equity,[147] what is also posited is that with architecture sitting at the intersection of economy and culture, it is likely that it is the last remaining imperial stronghold.[148] Indeed, architecture's association with esthetic production has meant that it is regarded as being separate from politics.[149] For example, an unacknowledged aspect of Le Corbusier's plan for Chandigarh – designed as a government center – is that it tends to be admired for its formal beauty and association with democratic ideals. However, Cuff argues that the development of settlements as well as residents' resistance to the transformation envisaged by Le Corbusier's residential plan is not only overlooked in architectural history but also evidences the continuation of colonial legacy.[150] That the revision of architectural history as well as some of its celebrated modernist 'fathers' is necessary is made evident in the argument posited by the architectural theorist Simone Brott who suggests that Le Corbusier not only "held racist views" but was also "a passionate antisemite."[151] Moreover, Le Corbusier contributed to various fascist newspapers in the 1930s such as *Prélude*,[152] and was also a co-founding member and editor of *Plans* in 1931, along with the fascist François de Pierrefeu who was an engineer and urban planner.[153]

Privileged architectural knowledge is indebted to imperialism and fascism. Moreover, according to Wizinsky, the current historical model of social and economic organization is considered to have run its course and it now requires intentional shifts in production and investment for broader social benefits. The future is made in the present. His position is that there are ongoing energies invested in shifting away from the Western/European concept of modernity,[154] arguing that these systems of knowledge are grounded in exploitation and imperialism both at the physical and symbolic levels.[155] Indeed, we need to acknowledge that neoliberal concepts dominate academia, leading universities to operate as companies.[156] For Foucault, universities serve as part of the control apparatus, normalizing people into compliant bodies within industrial capitalist societies.[157] Thus, education and pedagogy can be deployed as a political tool to maintain or change the discourse, along with associated knowledge and power. It should be the function of universities to foster an environment that promotes critical thinking and experimentation to explore alternative approaches to neoliberalism.[158]

Human rights

We argue that architects and urbanists have a role to play in terms of human rights violation, because they are implicated in its production; consequently, architectural education should enable students to establish robust forward-oriented reference points.

According to architect and scholar Adrian Lahoud, architects are not agents of healing trauma; instead, they are part of its creation.[159] They should undertake an unsentimental, pragmatic examination of the circumstances before us, which does not include leaning on history as a definite guide for the future. Historical precedents become unreliable because any crisis is trauma-producing, which expels one from anything familiar into an unfamiliar landscape.[160] Trauma emerges at the juncture between the dismantling of our vision of the future and the introduction of its replacement; as such, it is important to find one's bearings and establish forward resilient coordinates. Resiliency does not mean going back to the established old ways but creatively exploring and trialing new ways of stability.[161]

Consider the case of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which highlighted the inadequacy of architectural proficiency.[162] In total, 21 renowned architects from various parts of the world were commissioned by actor and architecture enthusiast Brad Pitt to design 150 cost-effective, novel green houses.[163] However, not only were very few of these houses ultimately constructed, but the fundamental problem that contributed to the disaster – the lack of proper flood control measures – remains unresolved to this day. Additionally, costs were not taken into consideration, with each replacement house estimated to cost around US$3,000–4,000, while the majority of Haitians only earn US$660 a year.[164] One could argue that in this case architecture was being used to support the foreign aid/crisis industry and contributing to the Western economy rather than resolving the problem of non-Western societies grappling with extreme weather events and climate disasters.[165]

Here we are not advocating for an approach that remains restricted within endless pessimistic criticisms of the status quo; rather, we argue that one should take a position on the violent acts that architecture and urbanism are entangled with. In doing so, they can reclaim their agency. For example, any praise of alternative practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or Qatar should also take into account the massive violation of human rights and the exploitation of migrant workers in construction industries in Persian Gulf countries. Architects and urbanists should not remain neutral. To decide whether an individual, small-scale residential house in UAE or Qatar was built ethically, a critical analysis is required to show that the construction was not reliant on the exploitation of migrant workers in countries with a socio-economic model dependent on "hypertrophic real-estate markets" and the "super-profits of the international oil trade."[166] We now know about the forced labor behind the construction of the Qatar World Cup stadium. Upon arrival, workers had their passports taken away, and they were forced into long hours of labor during the life-threatening hot summer months, leading to the increased unexplained deaths of migrant workers in countries where autopsies are not performed and dead bodies are sent back home in a box.[167] Similarity in the UAE, trade unions and collective bargaining are illegal – nor are there any elections or opposition parties.[168] Such violence against workers could be reduced if architects took some level of responsibility. In the case of the Qatar stadium, for example, starchitects could have used their influence to improve the treatment of construction workers, but they did not. Gulf countries have employed such architects because of their brand – and it is the power of their brand that means architects (from Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel to Albert Speer Jr.) have the negotiation power to set expectations for the treatment of the labor that build their projects. However, so far, architects have claimed no responsibility for

human rights abuses, and with wilful ignorance they have turned a blind eye to the deaths of tens of thousands of people (mostly young men) who have died constructing their projects.[169]

Not only do we need new ways of thinking and designing care, but architects and urbanists should also see themselves as an integral part of a Mutual Aid system. Mutual Aid is distinct from charity (with its origins in Christian European practices of buying a way to heaven), which often maintains existing power imbalances, sustains the elites' moral image and does not address the root causes of issues.[170] Mutual Aid involves people coming together to create systems of care based on generosity in order to address harm and promote well-being as a response to the systems that have fostered some form of crisis (for example, Mutual Aid can include raising money for those engaged in strike action, setting up ride-sharing during boycotts, and placing water in the desert for migrants who are crossing a border).[171]

Climate tales

Environmental problems are integral to the capitalist project. Making minor adaptations to the present circumstances only prolongs the status quo characterized by neoliberal capitalism, all in the belief that significant transformation is attainable without fundamentally altering the underlying framework of capitalist ecological progress. Indeed, ecological crisis and climate change inevitably engage with the sustainability discourse. In this instance, sustainability works as "part of an apparatus that is dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo, ultimately supporting the maintenance of a wasteful, consumption-intensive economic superstructure."[172] What is even more paradoxical is that the elites are attempting to convince the world to believe in the power of capitalism through twisted double-speak. They claim that capitalism can address climate challenges as well as reshape them by undoing the environmental damage capitalism has contributed to for centuries through a combination of technological and supposed ecological fixes.[173] Consequently, any practice that claims to be ecologically conscious should outline how it alters capitalist ecological development.[174]

We live in a time when "carbon modernity" is still alive, despite the death of modernism as a cultural ideology.[175] Even if the built environment has a carbon footprint, the origin of the climate crisis sits within the prevailing structures of politics, economics and spatial organizations that produced this built environment in the first place.[176] The key concern is that any issue, including challenges of an ecological nature, is far too complex to be resolved rationally through solely technological means. Here we need to remember that proclaiming science and technology as our saviors, carrying us toward a flawless society beyond the influence of historical and political factors, is in fact a constructed rhetoric.[177] We also need to question the connections between technology and 'green architecture.' Incorporating technological solutions without examining the broader implications and worldview upon which they hinge is not forward-thinking.[178] The alternative cannot be found in quasi-alternatives realized through utopian technologies and exemplified by floating islands and hydroponic facades. Future techno-utopia promises are based on technological intervention and a "business as usual" dictum where nature is still a means of extraction – suggesting that we are somehow separate from nature.[179] To be able to distinguish between *business-as-usual practices disguised under greenwashing dictums* and *truly ecological thinking based on conservation and regeneration*, one could start with the question of who and what owns this green/sustainable future.[180] The answer to this would enable us to identify whether popular urban labeling of 'smart' or 'green' can truly "intervene in the interconnected fields of urban class politics, gender politics, geo-politics, and eco-politics"[181] or whether they only reproduce the same/old socio-spatial power relations.

Addressing climate change through the lens of 'sustainability' is exemplified by Grimshaw's Heathrow Terminal Five – hailed as carbon-neutral. We also see a similar rhetoric in Foster and Partners' 'eco-freindly' branding of their design for a hyper-luxury resort in Saudi Arabia.[182] The word play is not only absurd but also conceals a culture of greenwashing. Moreover, achieving true 'sustainability' does not sit within the current framework of boundless growth and consumption. Architecture must overhaul its value systems, symbolized by the architecture boom in the 20th century.[183] However, a constructive response to climate challenges through the assemblage of poetic tectonics and meaningful consideration of the context is limited as merely reaffirms the established architectural canon: architecture is a tectonic and esthetic practice removed from the political and economic challenges we are confronted with.[184]

Challenging conventional spatial practices requires intervention in existing systems, as one can clearly see in practices called "artivism."[185] For example, artist-activist John Jordan being opposed to the fossil-fuel industry's practice of greenwashing through art sponsorship was successful in removing British Petroleum (BP) from its 26 years of sponsorship of the Tate.[186] One example of such art activism was the unauthorized performance of "Human Cost" in 2011 at Tate Britain (on the anniversary of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico), in which a nude member of the collective covered in oil-like fluid lay down on the floor of an exhibition of BP Art Displays.

Reduction of carbon emissions through architectural production is not possible without lifestyle and behavioral changes in consumer society. A truly sustainable architecture needs to transcend being a mere combination of energy-reducing technologies cloaked in an attractive esthetic wrapping and refuse to be pulled into the sphere of the esthetic economy.[187] Progressive methods of achieving sustainability need to unsettle consumer sovereignty by interrupting the capitalist system.[188] Agency resides in changing the existing arrangements of society-environment interactions,[189] and refusing to accept the premise that simply changing the way in which we relate to nature will resolve our ecological problems.

In the words of psychoanalyst Felix Guattari, we need a new way of thinking about ecology that re-invents the complex interconnection between the three registers of the environment, social relations and human subjectivity/psyche.[190] For Guattari, the new ecosophy will be a dynamic movement that creates a "collective and individual subjectivity that completely exceeds the limits of individualization, stagnation, [nd] identificatory closure."[191] For example, the people of the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri Nation in Southern Australia hold a traditional philosophy of ecological interconnected well-being which strives for "self-governance of their social, economic and environmental affairs, and is exercised transversally in the three interactive ecologies of self, society and nature."[192] Ngarrindjeri practices are based on interconnectivity, meaning, for example, that their existence and well-being is inseparable from the wellness of their environment, land and waters. For the people of the Ngarrindjeri Nation, caring for their ancestral Country involved undertaking landmark negotiations with the settler-colonial states to include "Indigenous perspectives in natural resource management" amidst a severe drought.[193] They mobilized as a Nation to safeguard their territories, waters and diverse ecosystems. In doing so, they spoke as a Country, a Nation, which is intrinsically more-than-human, and relies on the continuous interconnectedness of all life forms.[194]

(Slow) political revolution

The transformation of the self and society spurred by ecological philosophy is indeed a "slow political revolution."[195] To fundamentally re-think and re-formulate morality, politics and human identity along ecological lines cannot occur overnight. With this current

ecological crisis, a new humanity will need to emerge. The transformative process requires overcoming short-term selfish interests[196] – the new ecological humans embody humility and recognize their interconnectedness with the world.[197] For the philosopher and human and environmental activist Adam Riggio, this transformation requires a political revolution – not a forced one, but rather a slow one that profoundly changes our lives and inspires us to change.

The slow revolution can perhaps be found in the middle ground of extremes. For the urbanist and political geographer Edward Soja, it is important to find the in-between extremities as well as to consider possibilities that avoid rigid ideological stances.[198] Moreover, he argues that capitalism is not the sole cause of inequality and injustice: the way in which we think about collective action is also responsible. That is, we need to create coalitions and collectivity that fragment the polarizations set along class lines.[199] Indeed, 'after capitalism' is not about centralization or centralized socialism; rather, the aim is for broader democratic participation in production and investment. We need to move beyond the current structure, fostering novel economic and social relations, and develop new principles and ethics "for existing together on a crowded and warming planet."[200]

The slow revolution creates a collective exceeding the limits of individualization and, more importantly, it fosters collaboration. But do we have the knowledge or skills to work with each other, even at the human-to-human level? Sociologist Richard Sennett suggests that, in Euro-American societies, cooperative interactions are in decline because people have been de-skilled in practicing cooperation.[201] With the modern division of labor and increased inequality, people are experiencing more transient employments, leading to shallower social relations and greater anxiety about the other.[202] The result is the rise of 'tribalism' through which people are losing the desire and the skills to communicate and work with someone who is different from them – politically, religiously, culturally or racially.[203] For a complex society to work, people need the skill of cooperation. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic uncovered and changed the contemporary unconscious. This unconscious differs from the unconscious posited by early 20th-century founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud who considered it to be a passive depository. It also differs from the unconscious posited by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Guattari who at the end of the 20th century described it as a laboratory that produces the compulsion to consume and compete.[204] For the philosopher Franco Berardi, our current *third unconscious* "emerged with the arrival of coronavirus in the space of our collective awareness," encompassing a form of autism that seeks distance from others and is unable to sympathize with these others or understand or perceive their emotions.[205]

To co-exist together is also to recognize that interdependency is central to the continuation of life for various beings.[206] The development of such interdependencies should be considered an ethical responsibility of architects and urbanists. Braidotti's expansive philosophical view on ethics centers on the premise that ethics goes beyond the domains of justice, law and rights and is instead intimately linked with questions around political action and ways of negotiating power.[207] Fundamentally, ethics is contingent on moving away from the idea of a universal moral code[208] while acknowledging that forward-looking models should not ignore previous sufferings, as these can be used prospectively to adapt to the present.[209]

Some of the pressing concerns that require urgent attention, and that intersect with accepted contemporary architectural challenges (from aging and health, social justice and ethics, to virtual worlds, smart cities and re-use), are to do with environmental concerns on land pressure, food insecurity, air quality and clean energy. All these concerns need to be ethically scrutinized alongside equity and inclusivity. Even with the impetus for electric

transport, we need to scrutinize the processes of production, as the oppressive legacies of imperialism and colonialism may take a different form in the 21st century, disguised by the veil of sustainability. In the drive to save our planet, we may forget to consider the processes of how sustainability comes about. For example, the push for e-transport often neglects to mention that car parts are produced in so-called Global South countries, where the youth engaged to produce these parts not only live in extreme poverty but are exposed to life-threatening chemicals in factories. Of course we need clean energy and we need to consider climate impact, but we cannot forget the bigger picture. Inequality in the impact of climate change is highlighted by the disproportionate burden on poor countries and individuals who are the victims of higher emissions by rich countries and individuals.[210]

Water-related issues such as access, pollution, flooding and rising sea levels, alongside land issues like gentrification, are central factors adding to our currently broken planet. Moreover, we need to think about how urban expansion is approached. Historically, Los Angeles (LA) in the 1960/1970s was a major agricultural center, but it saw its farmland being taken over by new development, both on the outskirts and within the city.[211] More recently, rapid development and opulent luxury of cities like Dubai in the UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council and population growth has meant that energy and water consumption per capita has surged, indicating environmental stress from urbanization in the Gulf region.[212]

In *The Battle for Paradise*, the social activist and filmmaker Naomi Klein suggests that local microgrids for sustainable energy are a desirable choice as they could avoid the monopolies that are currently dominating the market. For example, the 2018 California fires were the result of malpractice by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company.[213] However, the government of California financially assisted the company while failing to support the displaced. Challenging the monopolies could remove infrastructural injustices inherent in food, energy to health care.[214] Architecturally, we see an attempt to address some of these challenges in MVRDV's entry in the 2000 World Expo in Hannover. Titled 'Holland Creates Space,' MVRDV addressed the role of independent eco-systems in dialog with cultural sustainability and technology.

Architecture and urbanism must consider the interdependence of planetary habitation and livability. For María Puig de la Bellacasa – an interdisciplinary scholar who works with science and technology studies, cultural geographies, feminist theory, the environmental humanities and political ecology – interdependency "is not a contract, nor a moral ideal - it is a *condition*. Care is therefore concomitant to the continuation of life for many living beings in more than human entanglements."[215] Recent movements like Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Rights movements emphasize the interdependence of social and environmental justice since "precarious bodies and precarious land" are in need of care.[216] Moreover, responding to the interconnectedness of economics, ecology and labor requires interdisciplinary collaboration and the involvement of various knowledge agents (from urban researchers and accountants, to educators, engineers, technicians, environmentalists, lawyers and policy researchers and artists etc.).[217] Such alliances can foster transformative practices that could counteract exploitative and extractive models of the Anthropocene-Capitalocene condition.[218]

Concluding remarks

We must re-claim the agency of architecture and urbanism, and spatial practices in general, in their capacity to address (not solve) the challenges of our century. That agency has a wide range, from acknowledging the harm caused by these disciplines to identifying the unique tools they hold which can create inclusive, collective, emancipatory and aesthetic

practices. To reclaim that agency also involves re-visiting and re-inventing certain ideas such as public space, democratic urban governance and participatory design that for so long have been emptied of their meanings. It is also essential to scrutinize the highly praised design approaches claiming to be sustainable, green, participatory or reformist – given the invasive nature of global capitalism and the extensive spread of ecological crisis. We propose that architecture and the urban cannot be liberatory within the existing economic, social and political landscapes. However, they are key to the development of a slow revolution that will establish a new humanity with new ways of ethical, collective and ecological living.

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