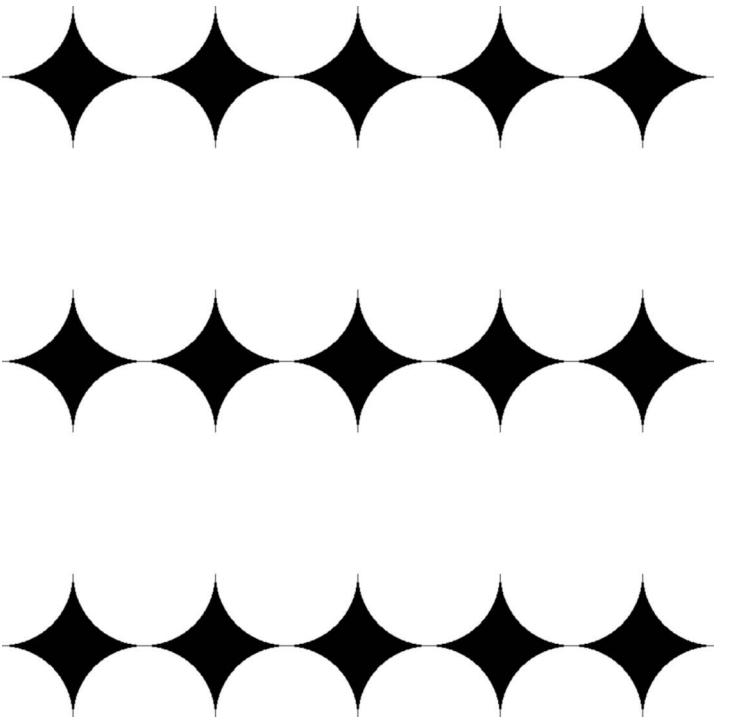
3 Constructed Narratives



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

3.1 Unfulfilled Promises of Modernity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 The Crisis Narrative

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 Transformation, Multiple Crises, and Truth Regimes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

15 See also Santos 1995.

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

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