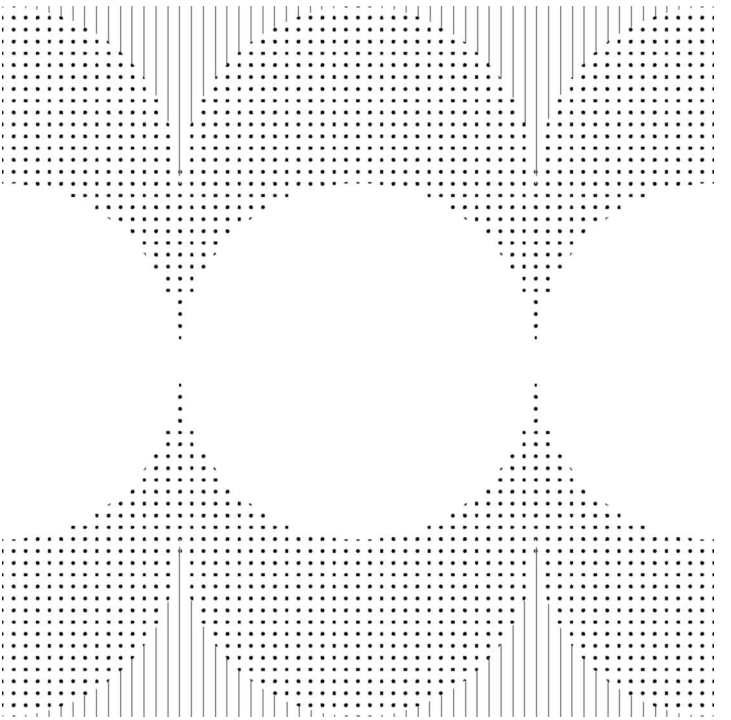
7 Interpretation



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

7.1 Summary and Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Problem-Solving Utopianisms: Utopia as Form

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Crisis in Architecture in Crisis

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

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

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

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

Question-Raising Utopianisms: Utopia as Method

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Final Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.2 Conclusion

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

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

7.3 Revisited: Why Utopianism (of Care)?

Research Diary Entry, 6th May 2022

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

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

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