AESTHETICS
OF THE ANTHROPOCENE
PART 1

Edited by
Pierpaolo Ascari and Andrea Borsari

Alagna, Ascari, Chinellato and Haklai,
Eghbali, Gleiter, Jakob,
Malvestio, Missiroli, Nigrelli

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EDITORIAL

Aesthetics of the Anthropocene

Pierpaolo Ascari — University of Bologna — Contact: pierpaolo.ascari@unibo.it
Andrea Borsari —University of Bologna — Contact: a.borsari@unibo.it

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the notion of Anthropocene has progressively asserted itself in literature and in public discussion, changing the way in which the past, the present condition and the future scenarios of the planet are represented. In the attempt to attribute a beginning to the geological protagonism of human beings, the scientific community has referred from time to time to the explosion of the atomic bomb, to the industrial revolution or to the "long sixteenth century", without excluding the possibility that the origins of the Anthropocene can be traced back to the time when men began to master fire. However, what is difficult to question today is the prevailing role assumed by human action, since the birth of industrial capitalism and the system of life related to it (for which we also tend to speak of Capitalocene), on the reproduction of the life cycle on earth and, through the use of fossil fuels, on the climate of the planet.

Certainly the relationship between aesthetics and the so-called Anthropocene does not only concern the last twenty years, but can also refer to the way in which philosophical reflection, literature, social formations and art history have engaged a series of problems. Only today do we start to understand the complexity of this problems in their systemic scope.

Our Call for Paper therefore intended to enter this area of problems by indicating some research perspectives. It aimed to investigate the ways in which the Anthropocene is interpreted by current artistic productions or cinematographic, television and variously narrative and performative representations. At the same time, it invited us to grasp the latencies or prefigurations of the Anthropocene in past forms of knowledge and expression, both by reflecting on the way in which to actualize the conceptual and metaphorical heritage elaborated by the philosophical-aesthetic tradition, and by placing the problem relating to the way in which to integrate or modify that same patrimony. Furthermore, it was eventually a question of understanding how the Anthropocene manifests and perceives itself in daily information on disasters linked to climate change and their increase (typhoons, desertification, burning forests), or to understand what the simulations of future scenarios that we carry out in correspondence with the debate on the climate crisis and the Anthropocene.

Finally, it seemed to us that a further and promising field of investigation was that of the new phenomena linked to the architectural-urban sphere. Among these phenomena included, for example, the transformations of the urban landscape and their perception, in the wake of the clamor aroused by the return to the city of the so-called "nature that takes back its spaces". And they could also include the spread of electric scooters and the notable increase in cycling, especially in towns and cities where it was less practiced. Other examples for this type of analysis could be provided by some of the changes in the built environment, such as buildings covered in thermal coats or the unprecedented number of construction sites and scaffolding. In this context, finally, the articles could also have explored a further transformation of the city regarding the tendency of public space, mostly in central and historical areas, to be subjected to private commercial use.

The broad spectrum of the topics indicated was matched by such a considerable number of valid proposals as to induce the directors and the editors to plan a double issues. Opening this first issue is an article in which Paolo Missiroli examines what is the meaning and what are the limits of some contemporary criticisms of the idea of the world. The importance that Missiroli attributes in its conclusions to the notion of crisis can ideally be developed in the contribution of Marco Malvestio, where the author analyzes the way in which the imagery of the catastrophe risks distorting
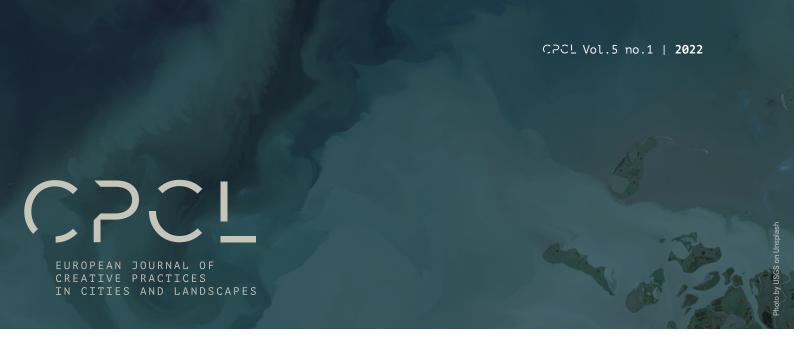
our conceptualization of the current ecological crisis. The article by Jörg Gleiter is therefore dedicated to the crisis as an opportunity to rethink the anthropological foundations of modernity and the relationship between the terrestrial environment and architecture.

But the Anthropocene - as Arshia Eghbali's analyzes show - is also reflected in everyday experience, understood as a dynamic system capable of absorbing the crisis, with particular reference to the relationship between the aesthetic investigation of material objects of daily use and the Covid-19 pandemic. An equally dynamic system could be said that of the metaphors with which Peter Sloterdijk describes the spaces within which the human being is born and reproduces, from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene: this is the contribution of Mirko Alagna, with particular attention to spaceship metaphor. The analysis of Bernard Stiegler's work conducted in these pages by Claudia Nigrelli is also dedicated to the intertwining between aesthetic reflection and political-philosophical reflection in the Anthropocene era.

The same relationship is investigated in a historical perspective by the article by Pierpaolo Ascari, which proposes to interpret the birth of the great nineteenth-century public parks and the relative aestheticization of nature as technologies for governing social inequalities. Through the study of conflicts in territorial planning, Fabien Jakob's article highlights the forms in which individual and collective actions qualify certain realities and thus elevate them to a common heritage. Finally, in the Practices section, we publish the results of the fictive site-specific temporary intervention conducted by Enrico Chinellato and Or Haklai on the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, intended as an exemplary Anthropocene architectural form.

Andrea Borsari is full professor of Aesthetics at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna, directs the book series "Life and Forms" (Bup) and is deputy editor of "Iride. Journal of Philosophy and Public Discussion" (Il Mulino). He has recently been a visiting professor at UCLA, ENSA-Paris La Villette, the 4 Cities Unica Euromaster in Urban Studies - University of Copenhagen and the University of Sichuan. His publications include *Mondo, cose, immagini. Sulle forme dell'esperienza estetica* [World, Things, Images. On the forms of aesthetic experience, Bup, 2018], *Mimicry. Estetica del divenire animale* [Mimicry. Aesthetics of Animal Becoming, Mimesis, 2018], together with G. Leoni, *Hypermnesia and Amnesia: Remembering (with) the Body and Post-Conflict Memorials and Architectures*, «Heritage, Memory and Conflict Journal», 2022, and, co-curated, *Temporary. Citizenship, Architecture and City* (Springer, 2022).

Pierpaolo Ascari teaches Aesthetics at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna. He received his master's degree in philosophy at the University of Bologna, and his Ph.D. at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa. He is author of *Ebola e le forme* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2017), *Attraverso i confini. Lettura, storia ed esperienza estetica in Stendhal e Flaubert* (Milan: Mimesis, 2018), *Corpi e recinti. Estetica ed economia politica del decoro* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2019) and *The Adventure of Form: Aesthetics, Nature and Society* (Delft: BK Books, 2021). He was a fellow at the Alsos Foundation in Bologna for the research program "Migrations and migrants in Italy" and he edited the volume *Oggetti contesi. Le cose nella migrazione* (Milan: Mimesis 2020).

MAIN SECTION

The Image of the World in the Anthropocene

Paolo Missiroli — University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy
Contact: paolo.missiroli@sns.it

ABSTRACT

The aim of this essay is to show the sense and the limits of some of the contemporary critiques of the idea of the world. It will be structured as follows: in a first paragraph, we will show the conceptual structure of these critiques as they take shape in Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), especially in Timothy Morton's work, *Hyperobjects*. In a second, we will focus on the two main difficulties that such critical work encounters. In a third, finally, we will show the possibilities, aesthetic and political, of a revisited concept of world.

Since its appearance, the philosophical category of 'world' has been linked to an aesthetic dimension:[1] the world is what I perceive through my senses. Phenomenology, i.e. the twentieth-century philosophical current that aims to investigate the being of entities starting from their appearance, owes an important debt to Jakob von Uexküll, an Estonian biologist who, referring to Kant, tried to demonstrate that the world (*Umwelt*) is not what the subject receives passively, but what he actively constructs through the form of his own body.[2] This idea of the world as an intermediary between a dimension of activity and passivity, between a sensitive body that constructs its surroundings and at the same time inhabits them, is unquestionably at the heart of contemporary philosophy.

It seems, however, that the recent debate on the Anthropocene[3] may mark the end of such a long and glorious history. There are some, in fact, who believe that the experience humans have in the Anthropocene can no longer be explained through this category. Space, time and the ensemble of objects in the Anthropocene would therefore no longer be a world. This entails an important series of transformations of the most central elements of the philosophical disciplines: ontology, aesthetics, politics. The aim of this essay is to show the sense and the limits of some of these contemporary critiques of the idea of the world. It will be structured as follows: in a first paragraph, we will show the conceptual structure of these critiques as they take shape in *Object Oriented Ontology* (OOO), especially in Timothy Morton's work, *Hyperobjects*. In a second, we will focus on the two main difficulties that such critical work encounters. In a third, finally, we will show the possibilities, aesthetic and political, of a revisited concept of world.

Morton. The end of the world

The central thesis of Morton's successful book, *Hyperobjects*, is that climate change on a planetary scale has made evident the idealistic vice of much of Western philosophy: conceiving reality on the basis of experience, thus structuring it as a world and not as a set of autonomous objects, irreducible to each other and to experience itself.[4] According to Morton, "the world is an aesthetic effect based on a blurriness and aesthetic distance."[5] In other words, the world it is neither an object, such as the Earth or climate change, nor a space in which we move, but rather the effect of imagining that we live against a relatively calm and orderly background. It is a space of meaning that the perceiving subject creates when what

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1   Marco Russo, *Il mondo. Profilo di un'idea*, (Milano: Mimesis, 2018).

2   Jakob Von Uexküll, *Theoretical Biology*, (New York: Nabu Press, 2011).

3   Paolo Missiroli, *Teoria critica dell'Antropocene. Vivere dopo la Terra, vivere nella Terra*, (Milano: Mimesis, 2022).

4   Timothy Morton, *Hyperbojects. Philosophy and Ecology at the End of the World*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 6-7.

5   *Ibid.*, 126.

is around is harmonized according to aesthetic criteria: for Morton, just listening to a melody that is not coherent with a scene in a film is enough to break the world that the vision, at first, had created.[6]

This conception of the world as a harmonious space, which Morton calls "hobbit aesthetics,"[7] shatters in the Anthropocene. This is because, in this geological epoch, it is no longer possible to live in a nature conceived as a background to human action. On the contrary, in the Anthropocene we are constitutively in close contact with an infinite series of objects and hyperobjects that, far from constituting some form of order or horizon to inhabit, are rather what dis-order the existence of humanity as a species. Climate change, for example, is a hyperobject of which the various local ecological crises are merely particular manifestations: there is no longer stable soil, but an infinity of objects, hyperobjects and their concrete manifestations that imply that to speak of the world is to prevent ourselves from understanding our historical condition. There is a more radical reason why the category of world is now unserviceable and harmful, for Morton: not only is that stability characteristic of the Holocene now lacking, but also, and above all, technical-scientific progress that makes it possible to relate immediately, albeit only one at a time, to all the various objects/hyperobjects in the world. There is background, therefore world, only where there is a series of things that the subject cannot see, that remain latent and can never be made explicit:

"Worlds need horizons and horizons need backgrounds, which need foregrounds. When we can see everywhere (when I can use Google Earth to see the fish in my mom's pond in her garden in London), the world—as a significant, bounded, horizoning entity—disappears. We have no world because the objects that functioned as invisible scenery have dissolved."[8]

The blurriness and aesthetic distance we were talking about consists exactly in this: in the inability to see, at least potentially, all objects. The absence of the world, in the Anthropocene, derives precisely from the fact that, on the one hand, we now have the possibility of confronting all objects and that, on the other hand, they show us a condition that is anything but harmonious. Moreover, it is with the discovery of the hyperobject Anthropocene/Climate change that, in Morton's opinion, we fall into a world in which there are only objects. With these objects, and this is the core of the ontological realism proposed by the American philosopher, we are immediately in contact; we simply see them, although not entirely and not all at the same time. We are in a relationship with them that Morton calls "intimacy":

"What is left if we aren't the world? Intimacy. We have lost the world but gained a soul—the entities that coexist with us obtrude on our

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6   *Ibid.*, 105.

7   *Ibid.*, 104.

8   *Ibid.*, 104.

awareness with greater and greater urgency. Three cheers for the so-called end of the world, then, since this moment is the beginning of history, the end of the human dream that reality is significant for them alone. We now have the prospect of forging new alliances between humans and nonhumans alike, now that we have stepped out of the cocoon of world."[9]

According to Morton, all this has crucial aesthetic/practical implications. In general, it is a question for him of escaping from any (falsely) harmonic dimension to embrace this network of humans and non-humans that we constantly encounter in our relationship with the world. The confrontation with this quasi-chaotic dimension is plastically manifested, in his opinion, in the music of Pierre Boulez, who in *Répons* evokes "the sound of a vaster word"[10] which invades the realm that the artist has to deal with. For Morton, attention to the real means, essentially, looking at a chaoticness that is irreducible to the ordering gaze of the human; realism is every thought and every art form capable of relating to this absolute multiplicity. In his opinion, however, it is in architecture that the discoveries of OOO can be fruitfully applied. In contrast to the "hobbit aesthetics" of above, an architecture in the age of hyperobjects would no longer aim at beauty and harmony, i.e. it would no longer be an architecture in a world, but an architecture in contact with a set of toxic objects, which it would be able to collect and manage. Morton gives the example of the *Dusty Relief* designed in Bangkok in 2002 by the architectural firm R&Sie, an electrostatic building in Bangkok that would collect the dirt around it, rather than try to shuffle it somewhere else[11]. These architectural forms take their meaning, then, from manifesting our intimacy with certain objects and our abandonment, to stay with the Tolkenian metaphor, of the Holocene Shire.

Rediscovering mediation

This perspective, fascinating as it is, seems to present essentially two kinds of problems. Firstly, one wonders whether this position that there are only absolutely unique objects, "sparkling unicities; quantized units that are irreducible to their parts or to some larger whole,"12 does not bring OOO too close to a classical form of empiricism, whereby reality is composed of irreducible parts to which we have immediate access. In fact, it is by no means certain that what is revealed to us in the Anthropocene is a set of objects that manifest themselves to us in all evidence. Planet Earth itself, for example, is increasingly revealing itself as a homeostatic system

9   *Ibid.*, 108.

10   *Ibid.*

11   *Ibid.*, 110.

12   *Ibid.*, 120.

regulated by retroactive processes.[13] The infinite complexity that characterizes our planet means that any mechanistic model cannot explain any of the most significant processes taking place on our planet.[14] The Earth is "a unitary reverberating system, consisting of feedback loops and tipping points that we cannot predict, as well as thresholds that we cross at our peril."[15] The planet we live on does not appear to be a collection of objects all clearly available to our view, but something very similar to an unlit horizon, a space pervaded by obscurity[16]. On the other hand, it is curious that in rejecting this concept of the world Morton almost forgets one of the most interesting ontological theses, in our opinion, of his work. It is reported in this way by Morton himself: "there is an essence, and it's right here, in the object resplendent with its sensual qualities yet withdrawn."[17] Of course, in this passage Morton reiterates the sparkling uniqueness of individual objects. Yet he notes a movement of continuous retraction, of indefinite elusiveness, of these objects themselves. Is it not precisely by virtue of this partial visibility that there is a world? In other words: is not the world as horizon, as the atmosphere of a life, precisely this sagittal of negatives? According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the world, and more generally Nature, is precisely what emerges for us insofar as there is an irreducible margin of invisibility in our experience: "nature is an enigmatic object, an object that is not an object at all; it is not really set out in front of us. It is our soil -not what is in front of us, facing us, but rather. that which carries us."[18] We are in a world as a space of sense because of the fact that the ground on which we walk is always, in part, negative and invisible. We cannot but look at it from a certain point of view, to make 'cuts' (symbolic, imaginative, and technical) of reality itself. This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he argues that we are «condemned to sense."[19] Every human being is in a world that has its own sense, which he receives passively, but at the same time produces by turning in one direction rather than another. This does not result, of course, from a supposed, original, separation from reality: Morton is undoubtedly right about this. We have always been in contact with a reality that is in front of us. What Morton fails to emphasize fully, however, is that we do not see everything that is in front of us, because reality is too complex, too deep, too 'layered' to be available to us. The world is, for us, our perspective on that reality.

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13   Marten Scheffer, Victor Brovkin, and Peter M Cox, *"Positive Feedback between Global Warming and Atmospheric CO2 Concentration Inferred from Past Climate Change," Geophysical Research Letters 33, no. 10 (2006).*

14   Julia Adeney Thomas, Mark William and Jan Zalaziewicz, *The Anthropocene. A Multidisciplinary Approach* (New York: Polity Press, 2018), 27.

15   *Ibid.,* 3.

16   Fréderic Neyrat, *The Unconstructable Earth. An Ecology of Separation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

17   Morton, *Hyperojbects,* 159.

18   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collége de France,* trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 2003), 4.

19   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon-on-Tames: Routledge, 2010), 29.

It is a cut through that level of adversity[20] with which we are in contact. Secondly, removing the margin of negativity of reality in this way has an extremely dangerous political feedback. Claiming that there is an immediate contact between the subject and the totality of objects risks deluding us into thinking that, in order to elaborate a genuinely transformative political position, it is enough to look at an entirely clear and illuminated world that shows us a path without shadows. This is, after all, a form of scientism not dissimilar to that which Merleau-Ponty criticised in *The Adventures of Dialectics*: if one perceives reality as inert and without shadows, one is condemned to a kind of blind determinism.[21] In other words, it is believed that in order to make ethical and political choices it is sufficient to look at objects from time to time, ignoring that very obscurity, that excess of the space in which we are, which in fact means that, from time to time, we can only operate in the realm of the probable. In this way, all space for critique, understood as an evaluation of the contradictory nature of the real and an attempt to bring out from it elements capable of transforming that real, is removed: for Morton, it is simply a matter of noting what objects are or are not in the world and acting as they dictate to us. This theme of obscurity cannot be overestimated. It is by virtue of this that every determinist policy is in effect overturned into absolute voluntarism[22]. Since reality is not at all the objective thing that Morton seems, at times, to expect, any action that purports to be inspired by it is in fact a completely arbitrary cut in that real plane. On the contrary, true action, as well as aesthetic choice (e.g. Cézanne's painting) according to Merleau-Ponty, is precisely that which takes on the situatedness of the one who acts or paints and realizes a perspective, questioning that fundamental ambiguity. World is precisely the name Merleau-Ponty gives to an ambiguous space, full of shadow zones, and yet active and real, somehow qualified neither a Nothing, nor a Whole, but *Etwas*, a something. In this sense, the OOO has the same problem that Sartre and all Stalinist Marxism had: it still has to "learn the slowness of mediations."[23]

Believing in the world: an aesthetics for the Anthropocene

Almost anticipating the ultra-realist critiques of OOO, Gilles Deleuze argued, in a well-known interview: "believing in the world is what we miss the most: we have completely lost the world, we have been dispossessed of it. Believing in the world also means arousing events, however small they may be, that escape control, or giving life to new space-time, even of

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20   Gianluca de Fazio, *Avversità e margini di gioco. Studio sulla soggettività in Merleau-Ponty*, (Milano: Mimesis, 2022).

21   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of Dialectic*, trans. Joseph J. Bien (London: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 40.

22   *Ivi*, 100.

23   *Ivi*, 102.

reduced surface and volume."[24] Beyond the particular declination of the classical concept of event that Deleuze gives, it is interesting to see how the diagnosis that the French philosopher makes of our time is exactly the opposite of Morton's. The problem of our own age, an essentially political problem, is precisely the inability to create worlds, or, in other words, to interrogate reality in such a way as to let her to give us meaningful answers.

This is the perspective recently taken by Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. What they argue is that, in the Anthropocene, the world does not end: only the cosmos of the Moderns disappears, with their distinction between nature and culture, the first being an objective and inert space and the second a space of creation and indefinite annihilation. In the opinion of the two scholars, this is not, however, for us to renounce to the concept of world as a space of meaning resulting from the *chiasme* between subject and object, between embodied consciousness and the place where it concretely and historically gives itself. On the contrary, it is a matter of drawing on a series of non-western cosmologies in order to create a new world, not in the sense of technically reconstructing what already exists, but of addressing our geographical being[25] in a different sense. Namely asking, so to speak, new and at the same time never really overcome questions to the natural space in which we have always been.[26] The two authors represent our condition through a cinematographic image, taken from the film *Melancholia* by Lars Von Trier. In the last scene of the film, before the planet crashes into the Earth and the world (Life) ends, the three remaining humans wait for the end inside a hut made of pieces of wood, holding hands. Claire's little son believes that this hut is magic and that it can save them; Claire and Justine use those last seconds to shake hands, to look into each other's eyes, and to give back, even if on the brink of catastrophe, a meaning to their lives. They build, in other words, a world, that is a space of meaning within which it is possible to give a meaning, even only for those few final seconds, to their existence. Against the end of all things, against the end of Life, against the end of the world, they inhabit a world.[27]

This way of posing the question has an almost immediate aesthetic consequence. An aesthetics for the Anthropocene, in fact, no longer consists, if we accept the need to believe in a world, in a mere passive reflecting of a whole series of objects that are outside of us.

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24   Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparler. 1972-1990*, (Paris: Les èditions de Minuit, 2003), 199.

25   Augustin Berque, *Écoumène. Introduction à l'étude des milieux humains* (Paris : Belin, 2000).

26   Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *End of the World*, trans. Rodrigo Nunes (New York: Polity Press, 2016).

27   A more in-depth analysis, from a philosophical point of view, of this film can be found in Paolo Missiroli, "Credere nel mondo. L'umano e la fine", in *Glocalism*, 3, 2018.

As Czakon and Michna have recently demonstrated,[28] and as Merleau-Ponty had already said about the painting of Cézanne, in order to find the perceived world, beyond the abstractions of the absolute dualism of Westerners, it is necessary to make the maximum inventive effort.[29] Consider, for example, the work of the French artist Mathilde Roussel, entitled *Lives of Grass*.[30] These sculptures are made from recycled materials, earth, and cereal grains. The artist prompts us to reflect on the life cycle of living beings: she shows the human body in symbiosis with a plant. It is clear how the artist wants to represent our metabolic relationship and continuity with the natural and biological world. At the same time, it would be absurd to think that this relationship derives from a direct gaze at a hyper-object. Roussel has by no means received, ready-made, some elements that have directed his creative action; rather, he has attempted to represent our chiasmatic relationship (since the grass takes on a human form, and not only is the human form taken in a "grassy" materiality) with the natural world. This relationship remains in an obscurity that we cannot in any way appropriate. We might say that Roussel, unlike Morton, learned the slowness of mediations. This is what happens, in fact, in Boulez's music as well: it is not, as Morton thinks, the passive repetition of an entirely clear and evident world, of an assemblage of objects. It is rather a collage: there is a real bricolage, we could say, that the artist puts into action in relation to the world. Neither creation ex nihilo, nor passive repetition of the already given, but rather, institution, recovery that transforms.[31] The awareness of the centrality of a negative dimension for any artistic-aesthetic form in the Anthropocene is well present in almost all those who undertake artistic paths with these interests. For example, Anselm Frank, the curator of the well-known *Anthropocene Project*,[32] stated in an interview:

> "In a way, I've been trying to figure out this spectrum—it was more unclear to me before The Whole Earth—that goes from boundary practices with strong negativity toward the Anthropocene condition, where you no longer know how to circumscribe, address, or even deal with negativity, and hence with processes of ontological transformation."[33]

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28   Dominika Czakon and Natalia Anna Michna, "Art Beyond the Anthropocene: A Philosophical Analysis of Selected Examples of Post-Anthropocentric Art in the Context of Ecological Change", in *Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2021.

29   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Causeries 1948* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 25-26.

30   Matthieu Raffard, Mathilde Roussel, "Lives of Grass v. 3," Raffard–Roussel http://www.raffardroussel.com/en/projets-lives-of-grass-v3/ (accessed March 23, 2022).

31   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'intistution, la passivité. Notes de cours au Collège de France* (1954-1955), (Paris: Belin, 2003) ; Roberto Esposito, *Pensiero istituente. Tre paradigmi di ontologia politica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2020).

32   https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozaen/anthropozaen_2013_2014.php. Accessed March 25, 2022.

33   Anselm Frank (in conversation with Etienne Turpin), "The Fates of Negativity", in *Art in the Anthropocene. Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, ed. Heater Davis and Etienne Turpin, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 144.

Frank is concerned with the elaboration of expressive forms that do not consist in a mere reproduction of reality (in which case, in his opinion, they would be of no use). It is by virtue of this concern that he emphasizes the necessity of artistic invention to narrate the contemporary condition; to this end, it is not enough to look at objects and reproduce them, therefore, but rather to receive and institute a world. This negativity, declined through the notion of invisibility, is at the center of another important reading of a series of artistic works by Gutierrez and Portefaix.[34] In fact, already Bonneuil and Fressoz, in their famous book, have spoken of the Anthropocene as a narrative:[35] as is evident, every narration consists by definition in a gap, in a distance that is not cancellation but recovery and transformation of the same real to which it turns and to which it always returns. A different perspective on realism emerges here. There is no doubt that Merleau-Ponty and the other scholars quickly mentioned here are realists, in a sense, however, quite different from that of the OOO. It is, we might say, a negative realism, that is, one that does not think of the real as an object (or a set of objects), but as a place endowed with agentivity and at the same time never entirely visible. It is because of this ultimate invisibility that, for us, there is a world, that is, the need for a perspective, always partial, on reality. This is what Erich Auerbach argued in his masterpiece Mimesis. Reading the tenth canto of Dante's Inferno, Auerbach describes it as creative realism. In it, in fact, the tendency towards reality never results in a radical empiricism. Dante does not want to report reality as it is, in toto, outside of any experience, but rather "to imitate the sensible experience of earthly life,"[36] show a contingency linked to the biological-everyday dimension that cannot be separated from an eternity and an eternal (the *Inferno*) pervaded in any case by contingency and unpredictability. It is precisely this emphasis on partiality and unpredictability[37] that is missing from the realism of the OOO.

It is only in this way that aesthetic disciplines can be assigned an ethical-political role that is not a mere copy of the set of things that exist, but returns that deep and real dimension that is the world. If it is true, then, that the Anthropocene needs a form of realism, it is also true that the latter must be declined beyond and against the OOO, at least in its most openly empiricist tones. Some ideas in this direction, with reference to the literature, come to us from the recent work of Carla Benedetti. Picking up on Amitav Gosh, she states that "if there is one thing that global warming has made perfectly clear, it is that thinking about the world only as it is

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34   Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix, "Island and Other Invisibles Territories", in *Art in the Anthropocene*, 223-232.

35   Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, trans. David Fernbach (London, New York: Verso, 2017).

36   Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Williar Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 205.

37   Ubaldo Fadini, *Il senso inatteso. Pensiero e pratiche degli affetti*, (Verona: Ombrecorte, 2018).

tantamount to collective suicide."[38] The point, for Benedetti, is not to see a whole series of objects that are present in front of us and to reaffirm their existence in the literary work, but rather to think of literature as rousing power, as a narrative tool capable of arousing another world, at least on the level of the imagination.[39] This is why a literature (as well as art or architecture) in the Anthropocene is, also, political: it has the power to give birth to a world, to interrogate the real in a different way than the way western-capitalist modernity has done so far.

In conclusion, it is necessary to clarify a fundamental point. In recent years, there has been a vision of politics and ethics flattened on an entirely symbolic dimension, for which the construction of the space of meaning is entirely delegated to a symbolic procedure.[40] The position that seems to emerge from this rediscovery of the notion of world does not go in this direction: Benedetti, as well as Gosh, de Castro or Merleau-Ponty himself (but we would like to mention, at least, the name of Ingold) do not think at all that there is no real and that reality is an unreachable X. However, they do not think that reality is entirely unfolded before our eyes. However, they also do not think that reality is entirely unfolded before our eyes. We need a world to the extent that reality is sprinkled with a negativity that makes it elusive to us in its totality. Believing in the world means nothing more than asking this reality questions and having the ability to come to terms with the answers it offers us. In this sense, we are quite curios about the contempt Morton shows for Tolkien's small and yet so brave hobbits. What could be less provincial than the journey they undertake outside their own little world? And isn't their courage manifested precisely in their willingness to deal with the crises and catastrophes of that larger real? But, at the same time, how is this real given to them, if not as the outline of their world? As they open themselves to the infinity of Middle Earth and transform its fortunes, they always dream of home. Meaning always arises from the encounter between a point of view and a real that exists before us. Only from this encounter can transformative power arise. There is no possible transformation that does not start with the imagination and the concrete practice of a world.

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38   Amitav Gosh, *The great derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016) 159.

39   Carla Benedetti, *La letteratura ci salverà dall'estinzione*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2020), 24-25.

40   Alenka Zupancic, *Ethics for the Real: Kant and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2012) ; Ernesto Laclau, *On populist reason*, (London: Verso 2007).

Paolo Missiroli (1992) studied at the University of Bologna, where he obtained a Master's Degree in Philosophical Sciences and, subsequently, he obtained a PhD at the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa and at the Université Paris X in Nanterre. He is a "cultore della materia" at the Department of Philosophy and Communication in Bologna and a contract professor in Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. He works on contemporary French philosophy, with a focus on the work of Foucault and Merleau-Ponty. His research interests revolve around the concept of the Anthropocene. He is a member of the editorial board of the "Almanacco di Filosofia e Politica".

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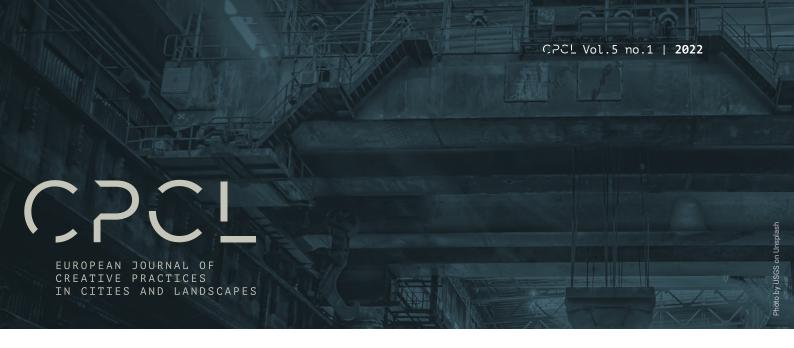
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MAIN SECTION

Theorizing Eco-Dystopia: Science Fiction, the Anthropocene, and the Limits of Catastrophic Imagery

Marco Malvestio — University of Padova, Italy // University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA
Contact: marco.malvestio@unipd.it

ABSTRACT

This essay considers a peculiar kind of science-fictional writing with environmental concerns that pivots on the imagery of catastrophe and blends the dystopian and the post-apocalyptic traditions. This sub-genre is known as eco-dystopia, which, I argue, merges the catastrophic imagery of the post-apocalyptic tradition with the consequential mode of dystopia. Eco-dystopias rely on the imagery of catastrophe to warn the public about the dangers and the consequences of the Anthropocene. However, such imagery presents strong limitations when used to dramatize and conceptualize the Anthropocene, as it is modeled on catastrophes that have little in common with the current ecological crisis.

It has often been argued that the Anthropocene is a phenomenon so complex and so distant from human comprehension that it is intrinsically *weird*[1] and can thus be understood and described most appropriately only through means of speculative fiction (and indeed discussing climate change and our response to it would require an entirely new lexicon).[2] It comes as no surprise that international and especially Anglo-American science fiction has made extensive use of the tools and the tropes of dystopian and post-apocalyptic imagery in order to describe the Anthropocene in general and climate change in particular. There are several ways in which science fiction elaborates ecological concerns, of course:[3] by representing alien worlds where extreme environmental situations force the characters into different and more nuanced synergies with the environment (including processes of terraformation), or by presenting encounters with alien species that force the characters to rediscuss their understanding of the boundaries between human, animal, and vegetal and that contest the supposed exceptionalism of the human species, and thus an anthropocentric perspective. However, although it is but one of the many ways in which science fiction deals with environmental anxieties, the imagination of catastrophe is by far the most pervasive.

It might be argued that discussions of the Anthropocene should not be concerned with unrealistic representations like those of science fiction. However, I suggest that the analysis of science-fictional representations of disaster is important because they are not limited to this genre, but migrate into our culture at large. The imagination of catastrophe is pervasive in environmental activism as well, and rightly so:[4] the Anthropocene is an age of disasters, characterized by mass extinctions, ocean acidification, extreme weather events, drastic changes in climate, and an increasing amount of land that will be rendered inhabitable. Arguably one of the foundational texts of modern environmentalism, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), opens with the uncanny image of a small American town progressively emptied of life due to the effects of pesticides. People get sick, birds die, farm animals are infertile, bees disappear and no longer pollinate the trees, vegetation becomes brown and withered—silent

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1   See Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology. For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

2   Matthew Schneider-Mayerson and Brent Ryan Bellamy (eds.), *An Ecotopian Lexicon* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

3   A lot has been written on the relationship between science fiction and ecology. Besides the texts that I directly quote here, see Patrick Murphy, "The Non-Alibi of Alien Scapes: SF and Ecocriticism," in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 263–278; Brian Stableford, "Science Fiction and Ecology," in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 127-141; Ursula K. Heise, Sense of Place, *Sense of Planet. The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); the monographic issue of *Critical Survey* 25, no. 2 (2013), ed. Rowland Hughes and Pat Wheeler, on the topic of eco-dystopia; Dori Griffin, "Visualizing Eco-Dystopia," *Design and Culture* 10, no. 3 (2018); and the monographic issue of *Science Fiction Studies* on science fiction and climate crisis, ed. Brent Ryan Bellamy and Veronica Hollinger, 45, no. 3 (2018).

4   See Greg Garrard, "Environmentalism and the Apocalyptic Tradition," *Green Letters* 3, no. 1 (2001).

apocalyptic signs that precede the end of life as we know it. The combination of catastrophic imagery and science-fictional topoi is so pervasive that even ecological nonfiction often employs the means of science fiction to describe climate change,[5] as is the case, for instance, in Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* (2007), which imagines the consequences of the extinction of the human race, Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway's *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (2014), describing the long-term effects of climate change and written as an essay by a Chinese scientist of the twenty-fourth century, or William T. Vollmann's two-volume *Carbon Ideologies* (2018), framed as a letter to a future inhabitant of a post-apocalyptic Earth.[6]

But what shape do catastrophes take in contemporary science fiction? This essay considers a peculiar kind of science-fictional writing with environmental concerns that pivots on the imagery of catastrophe and blends the dystopian and the post-apocalyptic traditions. This sub-genre is known as eco-dystopia, which, I argue, merges the catastrophic imagery of the post-apocalyptic tradition and the consequential mode of dystopia. Of course, every taxonomy of a genre cannot help being approximative: someone might even argue that abstract models of genres only exist to be disproved by the actual texts. Keeping this in mind, my definition of eco-dystopia is not meant to be binding or rigid; rather, it is intended to highlight certain features (that may be more or less present in each example) of a hybrid form.[7]

A consistent number of science-fictional works try to imagine and foresee the development of human activities on the planet, representing the consequences of pollution, overpopulation, and climate change: John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* (1956), James Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962), John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1973), George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987), Bruce Sterling's *Heavy Weather* (1994), Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998), Maggie Gee's *Ice People* (1998), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* (2007), Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007), Liz Jensen's *The Rapture* (2009), Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009) and *The Water Knife* (2015), Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* (2013), Nathaniel Rich's *Odds against Tomorrow* (2013), Kim Stanley Robinson's trilogy *Science in the Capital* (2004-2007) and the novel *New York 2140* (2017), as well as

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5   Ursula K. Heise, *Imagining Extinction. The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 215.

6   I have discussed this book in Marco Malvestio, "'All Our Choices Will Probably Run Out'. La non-fiction post apocalittica di William T. Vollmann," *Ácoma* 17 (2019).

7   It is also worth mentioning that this categorization is valid for Western literature and films, while non-Western traditions (African, Asian, Latin American) have elaborated different approaches to the genre that may avoid the flaws of Western works. For further details on these alternative imaginations, see Suzanne M. McCullagh, Luis I. Prádanos, Ilaria Tabusso Marcyan and Catherine Wagner (eds), *Contesting Extinctions: Decolonial and Regenerative Futures* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

movies such as Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004). My aim is to provide a definition of this form while at the same time highlighting its limits in depicting the Anthropocene.[8]

Between dystopia and apocalypse: Theorizing eco-dystopia

Of the two kinds of abstraction on which, according to Darko Suvin,[9] science fiction is based, that is, the extrapolation of elements of the present to build future scenarios, and the analogy between invented and real elements, dystopia belongs to the first group. Although it seems like an easy concept to grasp (or maybe precisely because of that), it is quite difficult to offer a definition of dystopia that simultaneously takes into account both its position in the realm of science fiction and its own story, which is connected to the literary form from which it takes its name, utopia.[10] A working definition, which is hopefully not too specific or generic, could be as follows: dystopia describes human society as it could be in a near future or in an alternative present, providing that some of its features (for instance, mass surveillance, digital technologies, or overpopulation) are increased. In other words, dystopia (contrary to utopia) imagines a negative version of our world based on aspects that are indeed present in it, and is meant to serve as a warning against the realization of such a reality.[11] While utopia means both a place that does not exist (from the Greek οὐ-τόπος) and a happy place (εὖ-τόπος; Thomas Moore, who coined the word, highlighted the ambiguity, which arises from the fact that the two words are homophones in English), dystopia stands for a negative situation (δυσ-τόπος, δυσ meaning "bad"). That not every dystopia is necessarily an eco-dystopia is almost self-evident: A dystopia could easily focus on a pejorative aspect of society that is not an environmental aspect (for instance, one of the most famous dystopian novels of all time, George Orwell's *1984*, presents few ecocritical issues). On the other hand, as stated above, not every work of science fiction is necessarily dystopian.

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8   I have discussed examples of eco-dystopias in my book *Raccontare la fine del mondo. Fantascienza e Antropocene* (Milano: nottetempo, 2021), 19-22 and 107, as well as in "Sognando la catastrofe. L'eco-distopia italiana del ventunesimo secolo," *Narrativa* 43 (2021). While this essay shares with those works some references and a theoretical framework, it is an original contribution.

9   Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 27-30.

10   On the relationship between utopia and dystopia, see David Seed (ed.), *Imagining Apocalypse. Studies in Cultural Crisis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky. Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000); Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future. The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso Books, 2005); Peter Fitting, "Utopia, Dystopia and Science Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. George Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135-154; Adam Stock, *Modern Dystopian Fiction and Political Thought. Narratives of World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2019). On utopia and ecology, see also Geoff Berry, "Afterword. The Utopian Dreaming of Modernity and Its Ecological Cost," *Green Letters* 17, no. 3 (2013) (which closes a monographic issue on the same topic).

11   Gregory Claeys, "The Origins of Dystopia: Wells, Huxley and Orwell," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, 107-134, 107.

Thus, eco-dystopia is a particular kind of dystopia that focuses on eco-logical elements and incorporates features of the post-apocalyptic genre.

The post-apocalyptic genre often borders and merges with dystopian imagination, as noted by several scholars.[12] However, at least in theory, the distinction between dystopian and post-apocalyptic texts is quite straight-forward. While dystopia proposes or attempts to propose a prediction of the future of a society on the basis of certain tendencies that can be traced in its present, the post-apocalyptic sub-genre represents the survival of indi-viduals (as in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, 2006) and/or societies (as in Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, 1959) after a catastrophic event. It seems clear that a dystopian novel is not necessarily post-apocalyp-tic, as in most cases it does not focus on the catastrophe or the event that initiates the worsening of a society, while a post-apocalyptic novel, despite describing a situation in which it is not desirable to live, starts with an event (an atomic war, a pandemic) that, by virtue of its exceptionality, does not represent the worsening of present conditions. In other words, while the post-apocalyptic novel is based on the rupture between the past and present of the narration, dystopia is based on the (hypothesized) continuity between the present/future of the narration and our present, which often appears in the form of ruins, unusable technological instru-ments, and so on. As Christopher Palmer wrote, "often through its valuing ordinary decency, contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction interrogates the nature of 'the ordinary' in a situation in which the ordinary is itself in ques-tion and ordinary decency often turns out to be itself anomalous."[13]

The reason why this distinction is relevant when discussing eco-dysto-pias is that, in the context of an ecological dystopia, every dystopian novel is also, at least partly, but inevitably, apocalyptic. Eco-dystopia qualifies as a hybrid genre, in which rumination on a catastrophic event (usually climate change) is not simply a narrative tool, but a way of reflecting on our present. Eco-dystopia merges the narration of the catastrophe of the post-apocalyptic novel and the predictive speculations of dystopia. In eco-dystopias, we can find "apocalyptic" events, meaning decisive frac-tures between two moments in time, but more frequently these "apoca-lyptic" events are nothing more than the continuation of currently ongoing processes, in accordance with an understanding of climate change not as a single phenomenon, but rather as a summation of phenomena too various and too wide to be clearly deciphered, not to mention stopped.

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12   This confusion in categorizing also emerges in several studies dedicated to the sub-genre, such as Susan Watkins, *Contemporary Women's Post-Apocalyptic Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2020), 8, and Heather J. Hicks, *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century. Modernity beyond Salvage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7-8. Hicks highlights the terminological variety of the definitions of this narrative form: "post-apocalypse, neo apocalypse, crypto-apocalypse, counter-apocalypse, ana-apocalypse, ironic apocalypse, technological apocalypse, anti-apocalypse, capitalist apocalypse, slow apocalypse, and postmodern apocalypse, among others" (6).

13   Christopher Palmer, "Ordinary Catastrophes: Paradoxes and Problems in Some Recent Post-Apocalypse Fictions," in *Green Planets. Ecology and Science Fiction*, ed. Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 158-178, 158-159.

Moreover, eco-dystopias tend to indulge in the representation of the consequences of climate change in ways that are similar to the usual tropes of post-apocalyptic fiction: by showing, in other words, the known world reduced to a wasteland deprived of life and littered with the remnants of a past civilization (which is to say, our present civilization). In Bruno Arpaia's *Qualcosa là fuori* (2016), for instance, the catastrophe is represented by the consequences of climate change: while there is no clear apocalyptic event, the novel (which focuses on a group of people migrating from Italy to Scandinavia, due to unendurable climatic conditions) clearly draws on the post-apocalyptic genre. At the same time, the disaster imagined by Arpaia is but the continuation of processes that are currently ongoing in our present, thus qualifying his book, technically, as dystopic. In Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, on the other hand, the dystopian and the post-apocalyptic elements are paralleled in the narrative structure. The story focuses on the life of Snowman on a post-apocalyptic Earth, with flashbacks detailing the events that led to the destruction of civilization. In the flashbacks, the United States is described as a dystopian nation, increasingly ruled by corporations, with a wider divide between the rich and the poor, and with frequent environmental disasters. By paralleling a planet disrupted by climate change with a more traditional apocalyptic event (a laboratory-engineered pandemic), Atwood highlights the difficulty of representing the Anthropocene as a single catastrophe, while at the same time adopting the catastrophic paradigm to represent it.

The limits of catastrophic imagination: Six theses

Due to the aforementioned pervasiveness of the imagery of catastrophe in environmental activism, it is important to highlight its limits in representing the Anthropocene. In an article published on *Public Books* in 2015, Ursula K. Heise lamented the lack of originality of contemporary dystopias (including Oreskes and Conway's aforementioned *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, a nonfiction book with a science-fictional frame). These novels, she argued, lack a proper imaginative investment, as they rely on worn-out tropes. "Dystopia," Heise argues, "is flourishing. In the process, it is becoming routine and losing its political power":[14]

> Contemporary dystopias [...] aspire to unsettle the status quo, but by failing to outline a persuasive alternative, they end up reconfirming it. This weak cocktail of critique and complacency may explain the current popularity of "apocaholism," as biologist Peter Kareiva has called it. Dystopian science fiction seems like a ready-made tool with which to engage current social and environmental crises—but only because

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14   Ursula K. Heise, "What's the Matter with Dystopia?," *Public Books*, January 2, 2015, available at: https://www.publicbooks.org/whats-the-matter-with-dystopia/ [last accessed February 11, 2022].

it so often recycles worn scenarios from the apocalypses of the past. At this point, postapocalyptic wastelands have themselves become too reassuringly familiar. Perhaps Michael Crow, the president of Arizona State University, was right in accusing writers of dystopian fiction a few years ago of being complicit in pervasive social pessimism, and calling on them for new utopian visions. When dystopia becomes routine, science fiction writers have new tasks cut out for them.[15]

Heise's critique is definitely on point: readers can easily verify that the tropes of eco-dystopia are so well known and circulated among the public that they are constantly reprised, often with very little imaginative effort. There is, in other words, a problem of quality, as is to be expected with such a popular and widespread genre. At the same time, however, there is also a series of intrinsic problems, or intellectual flaws, in eco-dystopia and more generally in the adoption of the imagination of catastrophe to describe the Anthropocene. While it is true that the intrinsic mode of eco-dystopia focuses on a catastrophic event that is continuous with ongoing processes, thus complicating the apocalyptic model and introducing a consequential element that is typical of dystopia, many eco-dystopias rely on a simplistic understanding of catastrophe and risk banalizing the very ecological concerns about which they aim to raise awareness. This is not to say, of course, that all contemporary dystopias share some invalidating defects that make them unworthy of attention, but only that their generic model presents a series of ambiguities. I have summarized these in six theses.

1) Eco-dystopias are spectacular and sensationalistic, but the Anthropocene usually is not.

By merging dystopia and the post-apocalyptic genre, eco-dystopia pivots on an imagination of disaster, often on a spectacular scale. In *The Day after Tomorrow*, a huge storm covers all of North America in ice. In *Oryx and Crake*, a pandemic causes the extinction of the human race. In Nathaniel Rich's *Odds against Tomorrow* (2013), a hurricane floods New York. While it is true that the Anthropocene is an age of extremes and that extreme weather events are going to become increasingly frequent, the effects of the Anthropocene are not limited to such spectacular events. On the contrary, the most pervasive damage to the environment caused by humans is more difficult to detect in everyday life: extinctions, reduction of biodiversity, ocean acidification, pandemics, pollution, waste.

In fact, the representation of the Anthropocene poses enormous difficulties. Rather than a single phenomenon, it is to be understood as a wide variety of phenomena, whose causes and effects are not always immediately discernible. Philosopher Timothy Morton, for instance, defined climate

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15   Ibid.

change as a "hyperobject"—something that is "massively distributed in time and space relatively to humans."[16] Hyperobjects are "nonlocal":[17] One cannot experience them in their entirety, only their single manifestations. However, these manifestations do not provide a complete understanding of the hyperobject. Similarly, in the case of the Anthropocene, its single aspects are but a fragment of a wider phenomenon that is more than the summation of these parts. Most Anthropocenic violence is hard to see or put in relation to the Anthropocene. The sixth mass extinction, for instance, is not happening sensationally, but is, rather, the product of the continuous alteration of habitats and ecosystems by humans—an alteration that is part of our everyday lives and that is hardly spectacular. Even climate change needs to be spectacularized (see next point) in order to be properly understood, as it is often contradictory in terms of everyday perception and looks scarier in graphs and data than in one's experience (as William T. Vollmann sarcastically comments, "each cool day disprove[s] global warming anew").[18]

2) Eco-dystopia tends to represent the Anthropocene with an exclusive focus on climate change.

Because of their attention to the catastrophic features of the Anthropocene, eco-dystopias tend to focus on the most alarming one: climate change. Eco-dystopias usually portray future Earth as a hot, unhabitable planet or indulge in the representation of cities devoured by the rising seas (Oreskes and Conway's *The Collapse of Western Civilization* presents several maps of the shapes of the continents in the future; Ballard's *The Drowned World* and George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* describe great metropolitan cities that have been turned into swamps). Whether these representations are accurate or realistic is beyond the scope of this essay; however, it is worth noting that, by attributing so much importance to climate change, eco-dystopias tend to offer an extremely limited portray of the Anthropocene. Erik Swyngedouw talks about "a fetishist invocation of CO_2 as the 'thing' around which our environmental dreams, aspirations, contestations as well as policies crystallize."[19] This fetishization again depends on eco-dystopias' need to spectacularize and sensationalize the effects of the Anthropocene, but ends up overlooking a wider series of phenomena that are equally and violently pervasive, although less visible.

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16   Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2013), 1.

17   Ibid.

18   William T. Vollmann, *No Immediate Danger. Volume One of Carbon Ideologies (*New York: Viking, 2018), 11.

19   Erik Swyngedouw, "Apocalypse Forever?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27 (2010): 219.

3) Eco-dystopia tends to promote a catastrophic understanding of the Anthropocene as a single event.

A common feature of many eco-dystopias is a focus on a single catastrophic event—a storm, a flood, a climatic collapse. The Anthropocene, however, is not an event; it is a series of interrelated phenomena. Eco-dystopias, on the contrary, often portray it as a huge cataclysm that is dangerous and overwhelming, but also clearly recognizable as one single event. This understanding of the Anthropocene as something that, destructive though it might be, can be isolated in time contradicts the long temporality of Anthropocenic events, which have to be measured in decades, centuries, or even thousands of years. In Roland Emmerich's *The Day after Tomorrow*, "climate change" is something that happens quite literally in the course of a few days: a huge storm covers half a continent in ice and then ceases. The recent Netflix movie *Don't Look Up* (2021), while not itself an eco-dystopia, uses a meteor as a metaphor for climate change: a danger that is irrefutably approaching and that (in line with the imagery of atomic disaster) will happen at a precise moment in time. There is a time before and a time after the impact of the meteor or the nuclear holocaust, but there is not a time before or after the Anthropocene: We are in the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is not something that might happen; it is happening right now, with temporalities and timescales that are unfamiliar to us and difficult to comprehend.

4) The magnitude of the catastrophes portrayed in eco-dystopia inhibits actions to counter the effects of the Anthropocene.

The representation of Anthropocenic disaster often aims at raising awareness of environmental problems, but the magnitude of the catastrophes portrayed by eco-dystopias might end up inhibiting actions to counter the current climate crisis. Climatic catastrophes are presented as inevitable; it is too late to counter them. Furthermore, despite their anthropic origin, they are not man-made, which means that they defy the usual "hero(es) vs. villain(s)" narrative scheme. The Anthropocene is a phenomenon for which a collective responsibility exists. Of course, as Latour writes, 'speaking of the anthropic origin of global warming is meaningless […], if by "anthropic" we mean something like "the human species"':[20] it is anthropic in the sense that is the product of a very specific form on civilization, which is to say, industrial modernity, fueled by colonial domination and exploitation. However, although there are various degrees of responsibility, both internationally (as it has been noted, "people in developing countries will be most affected by climate change, whereas the largest share of [greenhouse gases] in the atmosphere has been emitted in industrialized

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20   Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 121-122.

countries")[21]   and within a society (different social groups have different carbon footprints), and although there are groups lobbying against environmental activism, there are no villains in the Anthropocene in the traditional sense. This lack of a clear antagonist risks disorienting the audience and thus eco-dystopias tend to represent clear antagonistic figures (usually lobbyists, corrupt politicians, or the military) in order to dramatize a crisis that would otherwise be extremely difficult to portray with traditional narrative schemes. However, there is no conspiracy behind the Anthropocene: On the contrary, it is the product of a series of collective behaviors.

Connected to this issue is another representational problem of the Anthropocene: the difficulty to trace consequentiality between causes and effects. This is caused first of all by the aforementioned difficulty to see certain effects of the Anthropocene in our everyday life. For instance, the production of waste and pollution (that led Marco Armiero to define our present age as the *wasteocene*)[22] is often hidden from our eyes—waste is collected and transported outside the cities, but this does not mean that its disposal is necessarily ecological. Furthermore, the situation is complicated by the collective dimension of the Anthropocene: its catastrophic consequences are the product of the behavior of billions of people, which makes it difficult for individuals both to perceive that their own actions have an impact and to imagine that they are able to make any difference in countering the ecological crisis.

5) Apocalyptic narratives are consolatory.

Eco-dystopias often portray not simply circumscribed disasters, but the end of our civilization and the world as we know it. In accordance with the post-apocalyptic model, they portray an apocalypse. In the history of civilization, apocalyptic narratives have always provided societies with meaning, teleology, and hopes for palingenesis. The apocalypse is the culmination of history (in the Christian tradition, it is the end of history and the beginning of God's kingdom), an exceptional event that (etymologically) reveals the true structure of things. After the apocalypse, a society can be born again, hopefully on sounder and more just foundations, so that the world can be redeemed of the faults that led to the apocalypse in the first place. The apocalyptic event divides those who are defeated (the damned) and those who are saved, providing a new, meaningful identity for those who survive—with whom, usually, readers are invited to identify. In this sense, apocalyptic narratives provide a meaningful frame within

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21   Michael Jakob, Ottmar Edenhofer, Ulrike Kornek, Dominic Lenzi, Jan Minx, "Governing the Commons to Promote Global Justice: Climate Change Mitigation and Rent Taxation", ed. Ravi Kanbur and Henry Shue, *Climate Justice: Integrating Economics and Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 43-62, 43.

22   Marco Armiero, *Wasteocene. Stories from the Global Dump* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

which to interpret human history—the culmination of a series of sins and mistakes, but also an opportunity for redemption. As mentioned, however, the Anthropocene is not an event; it is a series of phenomena, a process. There will not be a moment when the skies open and the angels play their trumpets, signaling the beginning of the end: we are immersed, right here and right now, in the catastrophe that will change our world, which has a less exciting, less inviting, and less meaningful appearance than the apocalyptic frame with which we are familiar.

6) Eco-dystopias are ecophobic.

Eco-dystopias are centered on the idea that humans have abused the natural world, and the catastrophes they portray tend to show the natural world getting its revenge on the human species. This is not necessarily to say that eco-dystopias embrace "the idea that modern society has degraded a natural world that used to be beautiful, harmonious, and self-sustaining and that might disappear completely if modern humans do not change their way of life":[23] this pre-modern world is not necessarily idealized in eco-dystopia, which is often anti-pastoral, refuting an idealized model of environmental representation that developed during the Romantic era and that still characterizes, to some extent, current environmentalism.[24]

The opposition between a benevolent nature and a wicked and corrupted human race constitutes an attempt to neutralize non-human agency, the terror of which is at the basis of human culture (and has, on the contrary, been rediscovered and cast in a positive light by contemporary material ecocriticism).[25] Critic Simon C. Estok labelled this terror ecophobia:[26] "being a part of diverse narratives with potent material effects, ecophobia turns nature into a fearsome object in need of our control, the loathed and dangerous thing that can result only in pain and tragedy if left in control."[27] Ecophobia, according to Estok, "is all about frustrated agency"[28] and, coherently, eco-dystopia pivots on events that undeniably reveal the

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23   Heise, *Imagining Extinction*, p. 7.

24   See Glen A. Love, "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism," *Western American Literature* 25, no. 3 (1990); William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996); Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature. Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

25   Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman (eds.), *Material Ecocriticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); see also Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

26   Simon C. Estok, "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness. Ecocriticism and Ecophobia," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 16, no. 2 (2009), 203-225, 210: "Human history is a history of controlling the natural environment, of taking rocks and making them tools or weapons to modify or to kill parts of the natural environment, of building shelters to protect us from weather and predators, of maintaining personal hygiene to protect ourselves from diseases and parasites that can kill us, of first imagining agency and intent in nature and then quashing that imagined agency and intent."

27   Simon C. Estok, "Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia," in Iovino and Opperman, *Material Ecocriticism*, 130-140, 135.

28   Simon C. Estok, *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 10.

agency of "nature" and its uncontrollability.

At the same time, eco-dystopia presents a certain (sometimes sadistic) idealization of the incompatibility of contemporary life and environmental health: in other words, the renewed agency of nature is displayed in an apocalyptic frame as a punishment for humanity's sins. An ambiguity can thus be noted: the refusal of a dichotomy between nature and culture and the recovery of the agency of nature, on the one hand, and, on the other, the replication of anthropocentric conceptual dynamics, according to which global warming is not an effect of human actions, but rather a punishment inflicted upon us.

If eco-dystopia has become a preeminent mode for discussing climate change and the Anthropocene, this is due to its potential for spectacularly dramatizing the effects of the current climate crisis. Eco-dystopias borrow the post-apocalyptic genre's emphasis on catastrophic imagery to represent the consequences of an ongoing process, extrapolating elements of our present world and portraying their progressive worsening. At the same time, the spectacularization on which they rely is not always successful in conveying the reality of the Anthropocene. While the best eco-dystopias are capable of representing the Anthropocene as a complex, long-term process, many of them adopt worn-out imageries and narrative schemes that are not suitable for the subject they treat. Catastrophe is a powerful narrative tool, but it comes from a tradition that has portrayed it as a simpler, clearer event: as the result of a nuclear holocaust, a pandemic, or a solar storm, catastrophes in the post-apocalyptic genre are often circumscribed, isolated, fateful. The Anthropocene is not, and precisely because it so easily defies our comprehension, we, as scholars, should seek out those narrative forms that make the best effort to understand it, and, as a society, we should strive to produce them.

Marco Malvestio is EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Padua and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His project "EcoSF – The Ecology of Italian Science Fiction" explores the presence of ecological issues in Italian science fiction. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Padua, and was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Toronto. In 2021, he published *The Conflict Revisited: The Second World War in Post-Postmodern Fiction* (Peter Lang), based on his doctoral thesis, as well as *Raccontare la fine del mondo: Fantascienza e Antropocene* (nottetempo).

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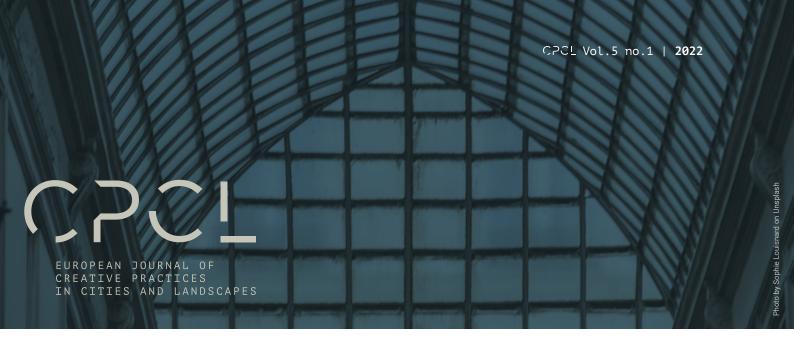
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MAIN SECTION

The Anthropocene and the Historical Index of Architecture

Joerg Gleiter — TU Berlin, Germany
Contact: joerg.gleiter@icloud.com

ABSTRACT

In the world of science, the term Anthropocene is widely recognized as the term used to describe the current epoch in the Earth's geological time scale in which human activities are affecting the Earth system on a scale far beyond natural, geological forces. And architecture is at the center of it. For, on the one hand, human development and architecture are closely linked, for, on the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear today that architecture has been a major project for reshaping the Earth from the very beginning. Along with devices, tools and machines, architecture is the cultural technique with which the "deficient human being", in order to compensate for his lack of natural abilities, must intervene in nature with the aim of creating an environment that meets his changing and unchanging needs.

Today, however, man's success story seems to turn into a disaster story, the "architecture of good intentions" seems to turn against man, even though he originally had the best of intentions when he followed the biblical mandate to subdue the earth with his devices, tools, machines, and architecture.

From an anthropological perspective, therefore, a different definition of the Anthropocene is emerging. The Anthropocene is the age in which the dialectic between man's well-intentioned intentions and the destructive consequences for the Earth system clearly emerges. What becomes visible is that the relationship between architecture and the environment, or between humans and the Earth system, is inherently fractured and contradictory, and that this contradiction is constitutive of human existence. It follows that the Anthropocene requires a critical questioning of the dialectic of human and system earth inherent in culture.

The term Anthropocene denotes the current epoch in the Earth's geological timescale. It acknowledges that in the last 250 years, with industrialization, the development of science and technology, population growth, globalization and the Internet, human activity has impacted the Earth system by an order of magnitude far in excess of natural, geological forces.

A geoscientific definition like this is unsatisfactory, however, because it reduces the complexity of the phenomena involved to scientific data and narrows the approaches to solutions to an instrumental rationale. As it happens, in the Anthropocene the relationship between humans and the Earth system is fraught far more profoundly than that. When it comes to the philosophical, aesthetic, historical and socio-cultural dimensions, the *aesthetics of the Anthropocene* will have to delve deeper into the anthropological underpinnings.

With the position of humans in and vis-a-vis the world changing in the Anthropocene, literally the "Age of Man", architecture for its part is also attracting new attention. For, on the one hand, human development and that of architecture are closely linked; on the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear today that architecture from the outset was a grand project for transforming the Earth system. Along with devices, tools and machines, architecture constitutes the cultural technique with which humans, those "deficient beings",[1] compensate for their inadequate inborn facilities. It compels them to intervene in nature with the aim of creating an environment appropriate to their changing and unchanging needs – one that is different from nature, and that is the only one worth living in.

Today, however, in the Anthropocene, the human success story appears to be turning into a tale of disaster. Culture reveals itself as being in a "metacrisis".[2] The works of man – the "architecture of good intentions"[3] – seemingly now turn on him, despite the best of intentions originally in hewing to the biblical mandate to subdue the earth with his devices, tools, machines and, ultimately, architecture.

In anthropological terms, therefore, a different definition of the Anthropocene is emerging. It reframes it as an age in which is revealed the dialectic between man's well-intentioned labors and their destructive consequences for the Earth system. In the process, it is becoming clear that the relationship between architecture and the environment or between man and the Earth system is inherently contradictory, and that this contradiction is constitutive of human existence. It follows that the Anthropocene occasions a critical reexamination of culture's innate logic.

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1   Arnold Gehlen, Man, *His Nature and Place in the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 27.

2   Eva Horn and Hannes Bergthaller, *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities* (New York; London: Routledge, 2019), 22, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429439735.

3   Colin Rowe, *The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect* (London: Academy Editions, 1994).

The thesis here is that only in the Anthropocene, with the prying open of the inner contradiction of the anthropological fundaments, does modern architecture come into its own. It is in architecture that the inherent contradiction of the Anthropocene becomes culturally productive. With the sustainability debates and the resulting changes in architecture, modernism reclaims what must be called, with Christine Blättler, the "historical signature"[4] or, to quote Walter Benjamin, the "historical index."[5] It seems as if it took the acute conflict between mankind and the Earth system for the demand of *don't demolish but rebuild and continue to build* to restore to architecture the twin qualities that hitherto had been denied it: history and memory.

Following Jürgen Habermas, we might call it the fulfillment of "the unfinished project of modernity,"[6] which, however – how could it be otherwise? – can only manifest itself in the completion of its dialectical conception. Three notions from philosophical anthropology lay the foundation for this inquiry:

1. Eccentricity and the reassessment of the humanistic foundations of architecture, 2. The resistance of things and the resurgent obstinacy of things, and 3. The historical index and the recovery of architecture's and the city's memory.

Eccentricity

Much uncertainty exists today about the place of humans in the world. We no longer talk about man's alienation from himself and from the world, as was common in the early modern era. Instead, the Anthropocene is directly linked to the overcoming of humanism, a tendency referred to as post-humanism. It says that humans have lost their special position vis-à-vis animals, things and nature, that they are no longer at the center of the world as they were during the 500 years since humanism emerged during the Renaissance – or at least that they must now share this center with other things.

However, it is a misconception to limit humanism to merely having put man at the center of the world – in order to postulate his expulsion from the center today and proclaim a post-humanist age. The corrective to this flawed concept is realizing that the great theme of humanism instead was precisely the dialectical tension between man and the world, which we increasingly acknowledge today in the Anthropocene as a constitutive

4 Christine Blättler, *Benjamins Phantasmagorie: Wahrnehmung am Leitfaden der Technik* (Berlin: Dejavu, 2021), 7.

5 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin MacLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 462.

6 Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project', in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, ed. Maurizio Passerin D'Entreves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1996), 38–55.

element of human existence. In philosophical anthropology, this is what the terms "eccentric positionality"[7] or "eccentricity"[8] of man stand for.

The fundamental conception of humanism becomes particularly visible in comparing it to the classical worldview, from which humanism sought to distance itself in the 15th century by reconceptualizing the arts, philosophy, and architecture. An important point of reference here is Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (80-17 BCE - 15 CE), better known simply as Vitruvius. His *Ten Books on Architecture* (*De architectura*) is the only work on architectural theory surviving from antiquity. It occupied a key position not only in the reconceptualization of architecture in the early Renaissance, but also in the formation of humanism. Humanism was always a vitruvianism impossible to separate from the development of architecture.

The eponymous figure of the Vitruvian Man as described by Vitruvius greatly influenced the development of the humanistic worldview, far beyond architecture: "For if a man be placed flat on his back, with his hands and feet extended, and a pair of compasses centred at his navel, the fingers and toes of his two hands and feet will touch the circumference of a circle described therefrom. And just as the human body yields a circular outline, so too a square figure may be found from it."[9] In Vitruvius' worldview, then, the centers of the circle and square and the navel, itself regarded as the center of the human body, merge into a single point. The reverence in which Vitruvius was held is evident in Cesare Cesariano's (1475-1543) version of the figure, for which he followed Vitruvius' description verbatim. The three elements are pinned together as if with a needle. As described by Vitruvius, in Cesariano's illustration the supposed center of man, the navel, also coincides with the centers of the circle and the square.

Vitruvian Man, however, falls far short of reflecting the humanist idea of the human being. The figure only describes the mechanistic world order of antiquity, which humanism, based on Christianity and freely inspired by and adapted from Vitruvius, was trying to move beyond. In Vitruvius' words, the principle of the machine was taught to humans by "the revolution of the firmament",[10] that is, machines imitated the cosmic order. Thus, conversely, by using geometrical methods, i.e. "by means of this, through architectural principles and the employment of the compasses, we find out the operation of the sun in the universe".[11]

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7   Helmuth Plessner, *Mit anderen Augen: Aspekte einer philosophischen Anthropologie* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2017), 9.

8   *Ibid.*, 10.

9   Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan, vol. 3.1, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1914), 73.

10   Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan, vol. 10.1, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1914), 284.

11   Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan, vol. 9.1, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1914), 257.

Since they reflected the world order, buildings and machines by mirroring the mechanistic cosmic order shared the same status.

It remains then that Vitruvian Man as originally conceived does not describe the humanist ideal. For that, we must turn to Leonardo da Vinci. His famous rendition of the Vitruvian Man deviates from the original in what may appear to be a minor detail: His circle, square and man no longer share the same center – of which there are now two. It is a crucial difference. Because here, unlike in antiquity, emerges the humanistic understanding of the relationship between man and world as characterized by decentering or eccentricity. This means, paraphrasing Helmuth Plessner's formulation, that "man is placed not only in his environment, but also against it. He lives in dynamic harmony both with his environment and also in opposition back to it, the living thing."[12] Following Plessner, we can speak of eccentricity as the *conditio humana*.

As we see with Leonardo, the humanists appropriated the writings handed down from antiquity and along with them the image of the Vitruvian Man in keeping with their own time and to their measure, i.e., on a Christian-humanistic basis. Man is not locked into a world mechanism but is part of the creation story as one of evolution. In this sense, it is instructive that the great Renaissance humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-96) has God say to Adam in *De hominis dignitate* (On the Dignity of Man): "Neither as a celestial nor as an earthly creature have I made you, and neither mortal nor immortal have I made you, so that you may, like a molder and maker of yourself, as you see fit and by your own power, form yourself into the shape which you prefer. You can descend to the level of animal, you can be reborn by your own will and rise to the divine."[13]

It is man's eccentric position in relation to the world that makes the dynamic of human development possible. Thus, especially today, in the face of human-induced global environmental problems, man's position relative to the world is changing. From the kinship of humanism and modern architecture – both emerging symbiotically in the 15th century based on the *Ten Books on Architecture* – it follows that, in turn, the reconceptualizing of humanism is intimately linked to that of architecture and the realignment of the relationship between architecture and the environment.

Resistance of things

Man experiences the world as outside himself, as eccentric. It follows that through architecture he not only creates a suitable environment for himself, but that this environment comprises things and artifacts that confront him, resist him, and by no means simply bend to his will.

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12   Plessner, *Mit anderen Augen*, 9.

13   Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate: Über die Würde des Menschen* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2009), 9.

Philosophical anthropology deals with the resistance of things, with which the world, in Hannah Arendt's words, "as objective-material object resists man and confronts him".[14] Bruno Latour speaks of the active "intractability"[15] through which things become, as it were, actors that oppose man. And it is precisely the manmade artifacts that often, as Latour writes, scandalously defy human mastery as "obstacles, impediments".[16]

The resistance of things as a basic anthropological condition dictates man's relationship with architecture. For example, a simple partition or wall, this most basic of architectural elements, first resists a man by blocking his path, but with an opening, a door, subsequently letting him pass through it. Due to the wall's resistance, cutting a door in it turns it from obstacle into a spatial and social element. Only thanks to the door is an in-front separated from an in-back, an exterior from an interior, a private from a public space.

With Émile Durkheim, we can speak of the wall as a social fact as something that cannot simply be circumvented, such as the wall or architecture in general, which imposes itself on everyone, "whether he wishes it or not."[17] It acts as an "external constraint"[18] but which often is not consciously experienced in everyday life. For, whoever willingly and gladly adapts to architecture will feel little or nothing of its compelling character. „Undoubtedly when I conform to [architecture] of my own free will, this coercion is not felt or felt hardly at all."[19] This is a daily occurrence. It is in line with our everyday experience that walls, corridors or stairs make one thing possible by making something else impossible.

Arnold Gehlen went one step further. He saw in the "resistance of things"[20] not only a social fact, but the necessary impetus for raising human consciousness. Gehlen held that the resistance of things triggers man's reflection on his circumstances and on what conditions them. Here he highlighted the role of language as "a sort of »twilight world« (Zwischenwelt) between consciousness and the real world, linking but also separating the two."[21] Language approaches things through words and concepts, but things also resists them. The concepts – also because of their different materiality – never become absorbed in the thing; they cannot align with it. "To the extent that a word intends to embody a thing, it is thrown back, reflected, upon itself."[22]

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14   Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben* (München: Piper, 2002), 16.

15   Bruno Latour, *Das Parlament der Dinge: für eine politische Ökologie*, trans. Gustav Roßler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010), 115.

16   Ibid.

17   Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1938), 51.

18   Ibid., 59.

19   Ibid., 51.

20   Gehlen, *Man, His Nature and Place in the World*, 238.

21   Ibid., 239.

22   Ibid.

The word-thought (Wortgedanke) encounters „resistance from the thing, it is reflected back upon itself."[23]

Thus, as man encounters resistance from things, both materially and linguistically, he becomes aware of himself. From an anthropological point of view, this succinctly and quite fundamentally denotes the function of architecture for man. Through the resistance of things in architecture, he becomes conscious of the self; he recognizes himself in architecture, which he experiences eccentrically. However, it is not because architecture holds up a mirror image to him but because it resists him. Therefore, as artifact, on the one hand, architecture not only serves us – for instance, by protecting us from inclement weather – but, on the other hand, in a no less elementary way, it furnishes a medium through which we also gain self-awareness.

Beyond the sociological and theory-of-consciousness levels, resistance of things can also be said to have a material-aesthetic level. It involves the obstinacy of the material, for example, of stone, steel, or wood. Material is not infinitely malleable; it always offers resistance. In this way, it contributes its properties – potentials and resistances – to architecture.

Here is also where the problem of modernist architecture intrudes: Modernism tends to neutralize or even destroy the obstinacy of the material. This was Gottfried Semper's criticism of modernism as it appeared to him around the middle of the 19th century. He was convinced that the material's obstinacy was an essential part of the process of architecture. But modern machines, he wrote, made everything so easy, "the hardest porphyry and granite cuts like chalk, polishes like wax, ivory is softened and pressed into molds, rubber and gutta-percha [latex, author's note] are vulcanized and worked into deceptive imitations of carvings in wood, metal and stone."[24] We might augment Semper's reflections by positing that architecture only emerges from the dialectical tension between the will of the material and the will of the architect. Semper wanted the opposite: he wanted to engage with the machine's material resistance but he turned against the machine. The machine negates the obstinacy of the material and therefore inhibits architecture.

It is a key element of Semper's philosophy of technology that by breaking down the material's resistance, modernity risked abandoning the anthropological preconditions of human existence, namely eccentricity, and along with it quasi the humanistic foundations of architecture. The break with the humanistic fundaments resides conceptually and historically in the 19th century, the dawn of the machine age.

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23   Ibid.

24   Gottfried Semper, *'Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst', in Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst und andere Schriften über Architektur, Kunsthandwerk und Kunstunterricht*, ed. Hans Maria Wingler, Bauhausbücher (Mainz und Berlin: Kupferberg, 1966), 32.

Historical Index

Today, however, with the rising CO_2 buildup in the earth's atmosphere, with global warming, or with the resource crisis, the environmental problem leads precisely in the opposite direction – namely increased and intensified eccentricity and resistance of things. We can see how the resistance of things returns at a higher level. Is it not the case that the resource crisis forces man to react? Nor can we simply sidestep global warming and its consequences. The terms environment and environmental protection, as they emerged in the 19th century, do not adequately reflect the situation. It is becoming clear that in the Anthropocene we must work from a changed conception of the resistance and the obstinacy of things.

With that, the way is open for the historical index, the third concept in our inquiry, and with it the topic of the recovery of memory and remembrance in architecture and the city. In 1991, Bruno Latour in his discussion of postmodernism had still declared "We have never been modern."[25] He made this remark in the context of the debates about postmodernism and with it polemically flipped its argumentation on its head: Postmodernism was based on the false premise that modernity had come to an end, when in fact the latter had not yet really begun.

Latour's point deserves to be taken seriously. Following him, I will postulate that modernity seems to come into its own only under current Anthropocene conditions; that, with the environmental problem, it gains something it had always been deprived of, but for which, according to Walter Benjamin, it was always searching for in its innovative drive: namely the "historical index" at a given point in time. While Benjamin, however, spoke of the historical index as a dialectical image and correlation between the symbolic world of mythology and the world of modern technology, in architecture, so the argument goes, the historical index manifests itself in the dialectic of "phenomenon and the logic of signs."[26] The historical index here is a physical trace that inscribes a deed, an action, or an act in the material.

This is precisely what seems to be happening today under the pressure of change brought on by the Anthropocene. Central to the phenomenon is the return of the resistance of things, but on a higher plane. Today, things or objects are no longer to be apprehended only as physical walls, stairs, doors, or doorknobs. We need to expand the concept of thing to include "hyperobjects".[27] The category includes things that can only be measured with instruments and software algorithms, such as the hole in the ozone

25   Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).

26   Charles S. Peirce, *Phänomen und Logik der Zeichen*, ed. Helmut Pape (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998).

27   Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2013), 1.

layer, the CO_2 buildup in the atmosphere, the concentration of particulate matter in the air or the radioactivity of water, but it also encompasses the planet's dwindling resources, the destruction of forests, the acidification of soils, etc.

It is these objects which today offer resistance to man. They confront him, demand that he react and adapt his actions to them, or, as Latour argues, quasi submit to them. A different resistance issues from them than from conventional material things such as a door or a table. Due to the sheer scale of the problem – think global warming or rising oceans – the tension between man and the Earth system increases, the degree of eccentricity rises. On the flip side, there is also a newfound appreciation of things, objects, and materials. Thus, today the existing building stock is undergoing a reappraisal, especially the inventory of modern architecture. Where demolition and new construction used to be the predominant stance, it is replaced today by concern for the existing building stock and the techniques of transformation.

In building anew on the old, the requirement for permanence now shines through, as described by Aldo Rossi in his work *The Architecture of the City*[28] over a half-century ago. For Rossi, permanence signified the immediate material, conceptual, and social continuity of architectural objects. He had demonstrated this in exemplary fashion with the Palazzo Ragione in Padua. Constructed first in the 14th century as a specific building type, it initially contained only the memory of the actual building process. As such, it merely documented its making in both material and conceptual terms. Beyond that, however, it was devoid of history, without major historical references, that is, it lacked a historical index. However, in the course of centuries, it was continually rebuilt and further developed, and thus imbued with memory and history. The passage of time then left traces and indices of use in the Palazzo Ragione.

In the face of the resistance of things again asserting itself in the Anthropocene and under the pressure of environmental problems, we can observe that today the high-rises, office buildings, and apartment blocks of the last decades are no longer being demolished but are converted and, like Palazzo Ragione, have their potential restored to become a medium of cultural memory. It is due to the elevated level of the resistance of things, to the ecological pressure exerted by the hyperobjects, that modern architecture now can also become the bearer of history and, by means of the historical index, the medium of the identity of man, architecture, and the Earth system.

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28   Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984).

Joerg H. Gleiter (Dipl.-Ing. habil.), is professor of architectural theory and the head of the department of architectural theory at the Institute of Architecture of TU Berlin. From 2005-12 he held the position of professor of aesthetics at the Faculty of Arts and Design of Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (Italy). His recent publications included Architekturtheorie zur Einführung (Introduction into Architectural Theory) (Junius Verlag 2022) and The Promise of an Object. Design Processes as Processes of Theory Construction (in: Innovation in Practice and Theory, Torino 2022). Currently he is a visiting professor at Politecnico di Milano. Among his research topics are Critical Theory of Architecture in the Anthropocene, Project Earth – sustainability and knowledge transformation, semiotics and aesthetics of architecture.

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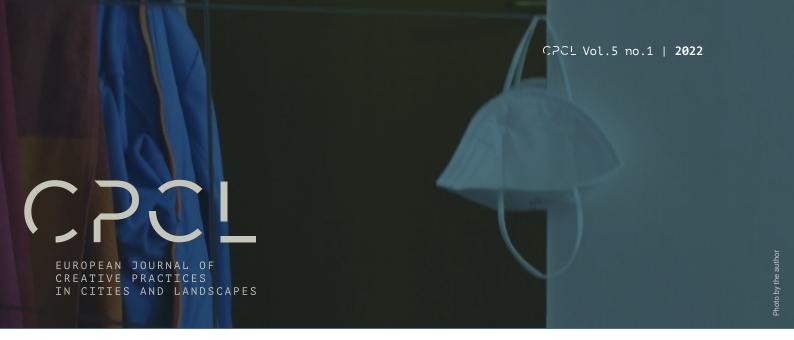
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MAIN SECTION

Inhabiting the Anthropocene: Aesthetics of Everyday Life in Times of Crisis

Arshia Eghbali — University of Bologna, Italy
Contact: arshia.eghbali@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reconciling the seemingly incompatible concepts of the Anthropocene and the everyday, this paper argues and demonstrates that (1) despite the disconcerting effects of its truly planetary scale, the Anthropocene is not absent or invisible in the realm of everyday life; (2) the everyday is not simply a neutral background solely meant for times of stability, but it is in fact a dynamic system that responds to various scales of change and absorbs the new and the unfamiliar into the familiar. Moreover, the paper also shows that the ways in which change is lived and navigated on an everyday scale, in times of the covid-19 pandemic and climate change, are a unique field for aesthetic enquiry. Everyday material objects such as tote bags, water bottles, masks, and habits like working from home and second-hand wearing are discussed as examples of the everyday experience of relating to the Anthropocene and its crises.

The Anthropocene and the everyday: a doomed marriage?

What the Anthropocene and the everyday have in common, as concepts, is perhaps that they both seem to encompass everything and yet elude delineation. As Timothy Clark points out, especially in the humanities, the term Anthropocene is used "mainly as a loose, shorthand term for all the new contexts and demands—cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political—of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale."[1] The broadness of the term is such that in the wake of the so-called "Syrian refugee crisis" in 2015, it was suggested that the conflict and the ensuing wave of displacement should also be seen through the lens of the Anthropocene and as a consequence of anthropogenic climate change[2]. It is, then, no stretch that, with the emergence of the covid-19 pandemic, many scholars readily included the pandemic in the Anthropocene literature either directly[3] or by discussing it in relation with the boldest issue within the Anthropocene, namely climate change[4]. Similarly, everyday life is used as a loose blanket term to refer to all that is familiar, recurring, and thus generally taken for granted. The abundant and the mundane. But its boundaries are hardly clear. Where does the ordinary stop and the extraordinary begin? How to take account of something that is supposed to be almost invisible in the background? In Maurice Blanchot's words: "whatever aspects it might have, the everyday has this essential trait: it does not allow to be seized, it escapes."[5]

However, apart from the all-inclusiveness and elusiveness that the Anthropocene and the everyday share, there seems to be little that is common between the two. With its origins within Earth System science and geological time, the Anthropocene is a totalizing framework that, first and foremost, marks a "rupture" in Earth history and thus a "paradigm shift" in how we must think about the planet and our position[6]. As such, the discourse around the Anthropocene—or better put, all the discourses that are

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1   Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene As a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 2.

2   Colin P. Kelley, Shahrzad Mohtadi, Mark A. Cane, Richard Seager, and Yochanan Kushnir. "Climate Change in the Fertile Crescent and Implications of the Recent Syrian Drought," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 11 (2015): 3241-46; and Byron Williston, "The Sublime Anthropocene," *Environmental Philosophy*, 13, no. 2 (2016): 155-174.

3   See for instance: Eva Horn, "Tipping Points: The Anthropocene and Covid-19," in *Pandemics, Politics, and Society: Critical Perspectives on the Covid-19 Crisis*, ed. Gerard Delanty (Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2021); Cristina O'Callaghan-Gordo, & Josep M. Antó, COVID-19: The disease of the anthropocene," *Environmental Research*, 187 (2020): 109683.

4   See for instance: Bruno Latour, *La crise sanitaire incite à se préparer à la mutation climatique*, Le Monde (26 March 2020), 23; Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World* (London & New York: OR Books, 2020); Thomas Heyd, "Covid-19 and climate change in the times of the Anthropocene," *The Anthropocene Review*, 8, no. 1 (2021): 21−36.

5   « Quels que soient ses aspects, le quotidien a ce trait essentiel : il ne se laisse pas saisir. Il échappe. » Maurice Blanchot, *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 357.

6   Clive Hamilton has repeatedly emphasized this point in his works. See for instance: Clive Hamilton, Defiant Earth: *The Fate of Humans in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017); and Clive Hamilton, "The Anthropocene as Rupture." *The Anthropocene Review*, 3, no. 2 (2016): 93−106.

gathered under the great umbrella of the Anthropocene—are concerned with the "big questions" regarding the future of humanity and the planet, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution, or pandemics, but also fundamental questions of human-nature relationship and the entanglements of the human and the non-human. The scale here is the largest possible—the planetary scale. On the other hand, we have the everyday, which has a far more modest scope. It deals with the humdrum aspects of human life and all the insignificant details of run-of-the-mill non-events. There seems to at least be a clash of scales. But this is just the surface. There are larger epistemological and ontological concerns arisen with the Anthropocene (such as the shift from the human-centered viewpoint[7]) that could make the perspective of everyday life (which is, as Agnes Heller puts it, temporally and spatially anthropocentric[8]) rather trivial, if not altogether impertinent and outdated.

So, the question, here, is whether the two seemingly incompatible concepts can be reconciled in a meaningful and useful way. Moreover, what could an aesthetic enquiry into everyday life entail, within the framework of the Anthropocene? The aim of this paper is to show that establishing a dialogue between the Anthropocene and the everyday is not only possible but also valuable. In order to do so, I briefly review some of the challenges that embracing the concept of the Anthropocene brings about, as well as comparing climate change and the covid-19 pandemic as two types of crises. Then, I turn to the matter of everyday life and the ways in which change and the unfamiliar are assimilated and absorbed into it, followed by some concrete, everyday examples from the two crises. These examples are accompanied by a few photographs taken in Bologna and Copenhagen as part of my studies on the homes and everyday lives of university students in those two cities.

Challenges of embracing the Anthropocene

The problem of scale with regards to the Anthropocene is not simply that we are dealing with big issues or extra-large entities. That is one part of the problem; we need to think about human life in much broader spatial and temporal scales. We are faced with issues such as climate change that are not directly observable or easily localizable, because as Clark puts it, "there is no simple or unitary object directly to confront, or delimit, let alone to 'fix' or to 'tackle'. There is no 'it', only a kind of dissolution into innumerable issues."[9] But the planetary scale of the Anthropocene is fundamentally disconcerting because it radically asserts that everything is connected with everything else and, as such, it challenges our very position

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7   This perspective will be discussed in the following section.

8   Agnes Heller, *Everyday Life*, trans. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 239.

9   Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, 10.

as a subject *in* or *in front* of Nature and the non-human. The dual distinctions of subject/object and Society/Nature are famously dismantled in the works of Bruno Latour[10], and later in the object-oriented ontology movement[11], particularly championed by Timothy Morton with regards to ecology and the Anthropocene. Morton refers to this vastness of scale by coining the term "hyperobject" to describe an entity that is so vast in temporal and spatial scale, and complexity, that it overwhelms ordinary conceptions of thingness as well as shattering the foreground-background distinction in favor of a flat, symmetrical ontology[12]. Therefore, Morton defines "ecological awareness" as a moment when we rid ourselves from the idea of "living in an environment":

> The historic moment at which hyperobjects become visible by humans has arrived. This visibility changes everything […]. This is a momentous era, at which we achieve what has sometimes been called ecological awareness. Ecological awareness is a detailed and increasing sense, in science and outside of it, of the innumerable interrelationships among lifeforms and between life and non-life. Now that awareness has some very strange properties. First of all, the awareness ends the idea that we are living in an environment! […] When we look for the environment, what we find are discrete lifeforms, non-life, and their relationships. But no matter how hard we look, we won't find a *container* [my emphasis] in which they all fit; in particular we won't find an umbrella that unifies them, such as world, environment, ecosystem, or even, astonishingly, Earth.[13]

Now, even if we take it that we do not live in the world, as a neutral container that envelops us, we still *inhabit* it by actively forming habits and negotiating regimes of habitus in everyday life. This is even bolder when we speak of large-scale change—be it the slow and creeping rise of CO_2 levels in the atmosphere, or the bursting spread of covid-19 across the globe. In order to become visible, and for us to achieve ecological awareness, the hyperobject needs to become perceived in the everyday. And since a hyperobject like climate change can only be encountered in its totality through discourse, as Maggie Kainulainen suggests, the matter of representation is key.[14]

That is why, in order to address the epistemic and aesthetic aspects of the encounter with the hyperobject, scholars like Kainulainen,[15] Byron

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10   See: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

11   See: Graham Harman, *Object-oriented ontology: A new theory of everything* (London: Penguin UK, 2018).

12   Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

13   *Ibid*, 128–9.

14   Maggie Kainulainen, "Saying Climate Change," *symplokē*, 21, no. 1-2 (2013): 109-123.

15   *Ibid.*

Williston,[16] and Eva Horn[17] have resurrected the concept of the "sublime" to deal with a greatness that is not relative but absolute. Recognizing the absence of a neutral background, and the entanglements of the human and the non-human, the sublime of the Anthropocene marks the disturbing inability to precisely map the complexity of climate change, for instance, or locate oneself within it. As Horn puts it, "no aesthetic distance is possible; rather, the aesthetic experience is one of radical immanence."[18] We cannot withdraw ourselves from the event, but the events and the things withdraw from perceptibility and representability[19]. Therefore, although many effects of climate change or the pandemic can be physically experienced, narratives—or metanarratives for that matter—are the only way to connect various events together, draw causal relations, and call them by those names. This, in turn, highlights the potentials and also the perils of these narratives in shaping the everyday thought of the Anthropocene, as well as affecting the shape of everyday life.

Indeed, the issue of narratives and representations of the Anthropocene crises such as climate change have been raised numerous times. One of the main lines of criticism, which is well represented by Erik Swyngedouw, is the warning against the depoliticization of discourse and the establishment of a post-political framework that is not really concerned with a systemic change but tries to allow life as we know it to continue for some, while sacrificing the others. Instead, he advocates for a political perspective that gives space for dissent and true performative political action in the sense that considers political practice to be strictly aesthetic and performative.[20] Swyngedouw has eloquently levelled this criticism at various types of discourses: the academic discourse on symmetrical relational ontologies[21] (like those that were briefly mentioned in this text), the sustainability-oriented governance rhetoric that promises salvation in techno-managerialism, and apocalyptic representations of climate change and doomsday scenarios.[22] This latter type of narratives, namely the catastrophic, is worth a closer look here, since it reveals something about the relationship between time and crisis, which became particularly

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16   Williston, *The Sublime Anthropocene*.

17   Eva Horn, "Challenges for an Aesthetics of the Anthropocene," in *The Anthropocenic Turn: The Interplay between Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Responses to a New Age*, eds. Gabriele Dürbeck and Philip Hüpkes (New York & London: Routledge, 2020), 159-172.

18   *Ibid*, 166.

19   The withdrawal of objects is intended in the sense that Timothy Morton elaborates in *Dark Ecology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

20   Japhy Wilson and Erik Swyngedouw, "Seeds of Dystopia: Post-Politics and the Return of the Political," in *The Post-Political and Its Discontents: Spaces of Depoliticisation, Spectres of Radical Politics*, eds. Japhy Wilson and Erik Swyngedouw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014): 1-22.

21   Erik Swyngedouw and Henrik Ernstson, "Interrupting the Anthropo-obScene: Immuno-Biopolitics and Depoliticizing Ontologies in the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 35, no. 6 (2018): 3-30.

22   Erik Swyngedouw, "Apocalypse Forever?" *Theory, Culture & Society*, 27, no. 2–3 (2010): 213–232.

salient with the covid-19 pandemic.

Up until before the pandemic, the Anthropocene crisis (i.e., the ecological crisis and climate change) was generally perceived as a *looming crisis*; imminent, but nevertheless pertaining to the future. As such, it was always tied to the rather paradoxical notion of the prophecy of catastrophe and belief, as explored by Jean-Pierre Dupuy.[23] But with the eruptive covid-19 crisis, the question was no longer if or when the crisis would happen; it turned into when or if it would end. Although, this did by no means stop political and everyday discourses and actions from plunging into outright disbelief and denial[24] on one side as well as obsession and abuse on the other side, in many instances. The main difference, though, is in how change is introduced and perceived in everyday life within the context of the pandemic as opposed to that of the larger ecological, Anthropocene crisis. Patterns of change can, in fact, be seen in both crises, in a scalar, almost fractal way. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have time and again witnessed peaks of acceleration and periods of relative stability. A "tipping point."[25] Similarly, in the larger scale of the ecological crisis, the same pattern of lengthy, seemingly uneventful periods followed by moments of sudden escalation and abrupt change can be observed—the covid-19 being one such eruptive moment. And although there have already been many other moments before, such as occasional wildfires, droughts, and so on, the gravity and immediate globality of the pandemic had a much stronger effect. If until then, "it was necessary to conjure up the ultimate event: the end of the world," writes Eva Horn, "today, with Covid-19, things look different. The arbitrariness of disaster scenarios has suddenly given way to something all too real: the pandemic."[26] Realizations of this kind have prompted many scholars and thinkers to conclude their arguments—quite rightfully—by statements such as "the only thing that is now no longer possible is to carry on as before." But it is hard to imagine that right after finishing typing that final sentence, they would go about preparing their dinner or taking a shower any differently than the day before. Such is the inertia of everyday life and the sheer obstinacy of its practices.

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23   Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé : Quand l'impossible est certain* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002).

24   Since Dupuy and his Catastrophisme was mentioned here, it is worthwhile to note that this very disbelief and denial in the face of the covid-19 pandemic prompted him to revisit his work and write a new book: *La Catastrophe ou la vie. Pensées par temps de pandémie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2021).

25   Eva Horn takes this term from Malcolm Gladwell's 2001 bestseller of the same title to discuss the pandemic and the Anthropocene: "hard-to-predict moments of dramatic change in a complex self-regulating system. A tipping point occurs when a threshold value is reached at which a slight increase of a certain factor suddenly causes a massive change in the overall system, which thus irreversibly transitions to another state. At the tipping point, a small quantitative increase leads to drastic qualitative change in the entire system, or to the emergence of unpredictable new phenomena". Horn, "*Tipping Points*", 126.

26   *Ibid*, 130.

Inhabiting change in times of the covid-19 pandemic and climate change

What we see as the inertia and inflexibility of everyday life, at first sight, is in fact a much more dynamic system. If the everyday is that which is most familiar, then what happens when it is disrupted by the unfamiliar, say, climate change or the covid-19 pandemic? First, we must realize that it is not only via big changes that the everyday is presented with the unfamiliar or the new. The unfamiliar is constantly introduced to the everyday on many scales all the time. In fact, everyday life is the arena for this dynamic process: the process of turning the unfamiliar familiar; getting accustomed to the disruptive force of the new; and adjusting to new ways of living. That is not to say that the everyday does not resist; but its resistance is not to repel, it is to assimilate and absorb: to create a *homely* world that we can *inhabit*.

Homely not in the sense of having some sort of coziness and warmth—although that could be the ultimate goal in many cases—but in the more pragmatic sense of establishing the familiarity that makes everyday life and its many recurring demands (from bodily functions of eating, washing, sleeping, to daily rhythms of commuting and work) possible. Now, let us turn to the word 'inhabit'. *Habitō* from which we have the words inhabit, habit, habitus, and the Latin verb of *habitāre*, meaning to dwell, is itself made of *abeō* (from habēre, to have, to hold) and the frequentative suffix *-itō*. Naturally, the frequentative signals repetition and habit, which manifests itself in the act of *habitāre* and inhabiting. As such, "inhabiting" evokes the notion of home and homeliness, but also habit (i.e., the everyday practices and semi-automatic routines that lay the foundations of quotidian life for an individual) and habitus (i.e., the tacit knowledge and the unthought know-how to navigate everyday life). As such, the relationship between everyday life, the act of inhabiting, and change becomes clear. I would like to turn to a passage by Georges Teyssot that sums this point very well:

> […] the act of inhabiting would consist in the production of regimes of habitudes, as well as in the transposition of these regimes when in contact with extraordinary situations or noncustomary events, such as an invasion of other humans, a change of climate, or the spread of unusual diseases.[27]

Thus, inhabiting the Anthropocene and its crises, entails navigating change in everyday life through cultivating new habits, modifying existing ones, or recycling those that have been forgotten. As already discussed in the previous section of this paper, we can only encounter the hyperobjects of climate change and the covid-19 pandemic in their totality through

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27   Georges Teyssot, *A Topology of Everyday Constellations* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2013), 9.

narratives. Those narratives, combined with the actual experiences of certain effects inform our new constellations of habits and shake our existing dispositions, our habituses. However, it is important to understand this does by no means indicate a top-down, linear trajectory, where narratives simply shape habits. In his seminal work on the practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau distinguishes between "strategies" and "tactics" in the sense that he associates strategies with a totalizing view when "a subject of will and power is isolatable from its environment," whereas a tactic is based on "doing" and spontaneous, practical creativity.[28]As such, in spite of the strategic nature of grand narratives, policies, and designs, the tactical nature of everyday life means that even as consumers of those narratives, policies, or designs, we still find and make our own "ways" and "arts of doing," even if the exact way seems to be dictated already.[29] An inquiry into the aesthetics of everyday life in the face of large-scale changes should be concerned with the seemingly insignificant, everyday practices and objects that form and are formed by the new emerging habits. It must be taken into account that, as Walter Benjamin points out, habit has a playful, aesthetic dimension: "Habit enters life as a game [...] habits are the forms of our first happiness and our first horror that have congealed and become deformed to the point of being unrecognizable."[30] Now, let us take the example of the covid-19 pandemic; for many of us who were lucky enough not to be closely struck by the "unknown" illness at the beginning, the pandemic and the lockdowns came as a shock, for sure, but the dramatic, overnight change in lifestyle presented itself in a rather playful manner. "We stay home for a couple of weeks, and it will all pass!" we said, and we started baking bread at home, showing up to online work meetings in pajamas, talking to neighbors from balconies, socializing with friends over video calls, and occasional clapping for health workers at the window. But soon, the playfulness faded away and we were faced with a new situation where habits of working or meeting from home, for instance, were parts of the everyday reality.

It is important to note that a habit is not simply a repeated action. As Rita Felski puts it, "habit describes not simply an action but an attitude: habits are often carried out on a semi-automatic, distracted, or involuntary manner."[31] As such, habits are *attitudes towards* objects. In that sense, working and meeting from home also mean a change of attitude towards the materialities of the home. The dining table becomes a work desk, and the things around the table, which were only meant to be seen by dinner guests, now appear every day on online meetings. Is the bookshelf a better background for an online meeting or the painting on the wall? If

28   Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien : 1. Arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), I-LIII.

29   *Ibid*.

30   Walter Benjamin, "Toys and Play: Marginal Notes on a Monumental Work," in *Selected Writings* Volume 2, Part 1, 1927-1930, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 120.

31   Rita Felski, "The Invention of Everyday Life," *New formations*, 39 (1999): 26.

once for Walter Benjamin, the domestic interior was "antithetical to the place of work" and a "phantasmagoria", because "the private person who squares his accounts with reality in his office demands that the interior be maintained in his illusions", concluding that the living room is "a box in the world theater,"[32] now the domestic interior has become the setting where its objects have to perform at the theater of everyday work, through the digital window of video calls. Not only uses of certain objects have altered, but in a more profound way the relations between the inhabitant of the home and its objects are changed. If working-from-home is an example of how existing everyday objects and practices enter into new relations in the context of the covid-19 pandemic, wearing masks can be seen as an example of the introduction of a new object in everyday life. As the pandemic gained momentum, many countries around the world adopted various degrees of mask-wearing mandates or recommendations in public spaces. Suddenly, a small object that was almost entirely absent from the lives of many, became an indispensable part of everyday life and a recognizable element in the landscape of many cities. For example, one can, in many cases, easily distinguish a 'pandemic era' photo of a public space versus a pre-pandemic one, solely on the basis of the mask. It also soon went on to become available in different sizes, patterns, shapes, colors, and brands; and a face without a mask a 'naked' one. Wearing a mask is closely related to the human body, both on an individual and a collective level. It can arguably be seen as an embodied habit[33], where the mask becomes an extension of the body of the wearer, forgotten at times despite its unpleasantness. Therefore, the ensemble of the mask-wearer and the mask become an embodied subject that has a certain level of protection or immunity, therefore more apt for social settings where the virus can be transmitted, but also with limited sensory perceptions of smell, for example, or diminished abilities in speech. On a collective level, it is about the interconnectedness of our human bodies with each other, with the virus, as well as with the material object of the mask and with the air that we share. But the connections do not stop there. An ironic consequence of widespread mask-wearing has been the massive environmental toll that mask waste has taken on the planet.[34] A respiratory disease caused by a virus that infects humans poses threats to marine ecosystems, via this object that we introduced in our crisis-ridden everyday life—making it look more like we are moving from one crisis to another.

Within the Anthropocene, the issue of waste has always been an important point of reference. Closely tied to consumption habits and choices,

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32   Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 154.

33   In the sense that can be derived from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York & London: Routledge, 2002).

34   See, for instance: Selvakumar Dharmaraj et al., "The COVID-19 pandemic face mask waste: A blooming threat to the marine environment," *Chemosphere*, 287, no. 4 (2022): 132411.

FIG. 1   FFP2 masks hanging next to the mirror in the bed-room of a student in Bologna, December 2021. Photograph by author.
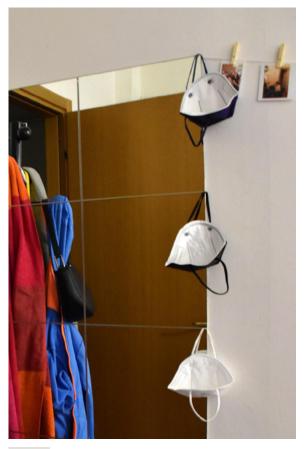
FIG. 2   A vintage Carlsberg beer crate is used as a makeshift bookshelf in the bedroom of a student in Copenhagen, November 2018. Photograph by author.

FIG. 3   A second-hand desk in the bedroom of a student in Bologna, March 2022. Photograph by author.

awareness of waste issues easily connects with everyday, aesthetic choices and questions of lifestyle. One example could be the popularity of vintage and second-hand,[35] in clothing items as well as domestic objects, among many young people in Europe. Other examples of 'waste-aware' Anthropocene objects are those that replace disposable items, such as reusable shopping bags, cloth tote bags, and water bottles, that again, especially among young people in Europe, have become common as objects of everyday use, which represent a subtle signaling of ecological concern and action.

In an attempt to play the devil's advocate, the first question that was put forward at the beginning of this paper was a rather loaded one: can the two seemingly incompatible concepts of the Anthropocene and the every-day be brought together in a meaningful way? The assumption that lurks behind the question is that a predominantly human-centric concept such as everyday life cannot be of much relevance vis-à-vis the Anthropocene. I hope to have demonstrated that a meaningful dialogue can indeed be established between the two concepts. On the one hand, this dialogue shows that, despite the disorienting effects of its planetary scale, the

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35   For a review on the literature dealing with second-hand and vintage, as well as an in-depth study on second-hand objects in Swedish homes, seen through the perspective of the Anthropocene, see: Anna Bohlin, "The Liveliness of Ordinary Objects: Living with Stuff in the Anthropocene," in *Deterritorializing the Future Heritage* in, of and after the Anthropocene, eds. Rodney Harrison and Colin Sterling (London: Open Humanities Press, 2020): 96-119.

FIG. 4   A water bottle in the bedroom of a student in Copenhagen, November 2018. Photograph by author.

FIG. 5   A tote bag hanging from the door handle in the bedroom of a student in Copenhagen, December 2018. Photograph by author.

Anthropocene is not absent or invisible in the realm of everyday life. On the other hand, there is something revealed about the everyday: it is not simply a neutral background solely meant for times of stability, but it is in fact a dynamic system that responds to various scales of change and absorbs the unfamiliar into the familiar. Moreover, the paper has shown that the ways in which we navigate and live change on an everyday scale in our crisis-ridden times are a unique field for aesthetic enquiry. It is crucial to acknowledge the implications of everyday aesthetics on the state of our world and its future, because the seldom-noticed aesthetic dimensions of our everyday lives constantly influence us and lead us to certain attitudes and actions, and thus, affect our collective world-making[36]. Trivial things such as tote bags, water bottles, masks, and ordinary actions like going on an online work meeting, or wearing a second-hand jacket simply make up our everyday experience of relating to the Anthropocene and its crises, and guide us in our attitude towards building our world's present and future.

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36   Yuriko Saito emphasizes this point in her works on everyday aesthetics. See: Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Special Volume 4 (2017); Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Seyed-Arshia Eghbali is a double-degree PhD Candidate at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna, and the Department of Arts & Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. His research revolves around home cultures, everyday life, and Georges Perec. Arshia holds a Joint Master's Degree in Urban Studies (4CITIES) from Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen, and Madrid, and a Bachelor's in Architecture from University of Tehran.

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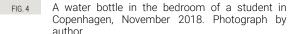
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MAIN SECTION

Houston, We Have a Problem. Sloterdijk and the Anthropocene

Mirko Alagna — University of Firenze, Italy
Contact: mirko.alagna@unifi.it

ABSTRACT
Island, raft, bell, greenhouse, hot-air balloon, cruise ship, spaceship: These are some of the metaphors mobilized by Peter Sloterdijk to describe the spaces within which the human being is born and reproduces itslef, from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene. The aim of this contribution is to reconstruct these passages and, above all, to analyze how the metaphor of the spaceship succeeds in describing some aspects of our current condition, while risking leaving others in the shade.

Polyhedral, controversial, polemic, prolific; this is only a small sample of adjectives that can be associated with Peter Sloterdijk (and his thought). Culturally bulimic and deliberately digressing, the reading of his texts resembles the crossing of a swarm of research cues, always connected by crossways, hybrid figures, lexical assonances. It is difficult to find straight lines, yet his thought does not lose its compactness – precisely on the basis of continuous archaeological and ethnographic *détours*. The effect for the reader is as fascinating as it is disorienting: within a production that is endless and – in my opinion – highly recursive and self-reflective, we find crowd together recurring knots, leitmotifs, metaphors always updated with new nuances or partially resemantized.[1] At each re-reading different links are identified, the emphasis shifts, and as in a kaleidoscope at the end result in overall images never completely overlapping. It is Sloterdijk himself to invite readers to exploit the polysemy of his texts, to join the dots in new forms: his trilogy of the Spheres closes with a retrospective in which a theologian, a macro-historian and a literary critic discuss that same text, revealing the different possible interpretations, thus invalidating the author's primacy over the text and implicitly inciting readers to play with that writing, to bring out its potentiality well beyond the author's intentions and abilities.

Here, one of the (many) ways in which it is possible to go through Sloterdijk's production –[2] that is to say, one of the (many) ways in which it is possible to connect the different nodes of his reflection – is to collect and line up the metaphors used to describe the space in which human beings arise and live. It may seem a completely useless move, since it slavishly follows the fundamental heart of Sloterdijk's proposal: all of his thought can be summarized as an investigation into the internal spaces in which the human being arises and lives: the *spheres* – and their triple declination in *bubbles*, *globes* and *foam* – refer exactly to this topic. My proposal, however, is to concentrate on the images and metaphors – so to speak – of the "second level": those mobilized from time to time to give greater concreteness and intuitiveness to the "first level" metaphor constituted by the sphere and its triple declination. An essential list, which emerges even on a relatively superficial reading, is as follows: island, raft, bell, greenhouse, hot-air balloon, cruise ship, spaceship. There is a family air among these figures: in all cases, they are used to represent the creation of spaces within which the absolutism of the reality has been

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1   Cfr. Jean-Pierre Couture, 'A Public Intellectual', in *Sloterdijk Now*, ed. Stuart Elden (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 96–113.

2   Other interesting perspectives, covered by critical literature in Italian are: D. Consoli, Introduzione a *Peter Sloterdijk. Il mondo come coesistenza* (Genova: il melangolo, 2017); A. Lucci, Peter Sloterdijk (doppiozero, 2014); T. Ariemma, *Immagini e corpi. Da Deleuze a Sloterdijk* (Roma: Aracne, 2010); G. Bonaiuti, *Lo spettro sfinito. Note sul parassitismo metodico di Peter Sloterdijk* (Milano: Mimesis, 2019); A. Lucci, *Un'acrobatica del pensiero. La filosofia dell'esercizio di Peter Sloterdijk* (Roma: Aracne, 2014); A. Lucci, *Il limite delle sfere. Saggio su Peter Sloterdijk* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2011); the «aut aut» monographic edition *Esercizi per cambiare la vita. In dialogo con Peter Sloterdijk*, n. 355 (2012); M. Pavanini (eds.), *Lo spazio dell'umano. Saggi dopo Sloterdijk* (Napoli: Kajak, 2020).

liberalized; spaces in which a lighter atmosphere prevails and we can settle down and relax, as individuals and as species. The order of exposition, however, is not accidental: with the exception of the "greenhouse" – authentic continuous bass in Sloterdijk's reflection – those different second-level metaphors seem to accompany and represent the entire arc of the history of *homo sapiens* from the dawn to our days – that is: from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene.

1. Raft, island, bell, greenhouse

According to Sloterdijk, "if there is anything that could unconditionally demand the amazement of laypersons and the astonishment of scholars, it is the existence of those large political bodies that were formerly known as "peoples" and are now, thanks to a questionable semantic convention, termed "societies".[3] The history of political ideas is basically the history of the techniques of co-existence. The failure to perceive this improbability is the result of a perspective error: the oblivion of the Pleistocene, that is, having imagined that the genesis of the human being and the rise of the first great civilizations were practically coincident phenomena, or separated by a contract. Sloterdijk starts from those magmatic millennia in which homination occurs, and identifies there the first paleopolitical formation: the horde. The horde is the incubator, the womb of the human being – that is to say, using his own words: an island, a raft, a tent, a greenhouse. The beginning (of human history) is in the horde: this proto-social ensemble of about a hundred specimens held together by blood ties is an island in the sea of the world, therefore able to develop its own insular climate and a specific atmosphere unnaturally light and lightening. The singular burdens of vigilance are lightened as they are shared, the temperature is raised thanks to the common distance from the fire, the silence of the world is broken by a sound bell that circumscribes the very first *lessico famigliare*.[4] We hear each other (*hören*) because we are together (*zusammengehören*); what will become language does not arise from the coordination needs of groups of men on the hunt, but from the evolution and modulation of maternal chants. In this way, the horde is configured as a humanizing environment. Certainly, humans humanize the environment, but the force of this evidence (and the oblivion of the origins of the species) has obscured the opposite vector: the environment humanizes the hominid. The productive cycle of the human begins according to the form O-A-U (hominids, environment, humans) and continues uninterruptedly in the form U-A-U' (humans, environment, humans always different). This means that to understand the human as a species we must analyze the atmosphere in which it is immersed and that makes possible its genesis

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3   Peter Sloterdijk, *Stress and Freedom* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015), 3.

4   Cfr. Natalia Ginzburg, *Lessico famigliare* (Torino: Einaudi, 2010).

and reproduction.[5]

In the horde begins then "the revolutionary incubation of the counter-natural in nature itself",[6] and the fundamental figure of its contronaturalness is given by the attenuation of gravity and heaviness; in this greenhouse arises the human being as a creature who can afford to lose some traits of animality until then essential: heads become "strangely large, skin strangely thin, women strangely beautiful, legs strangely long, voices strangely articulated, sexuality strangely chronic, children strangely infantile, the dead strangely unforgettable".[7] Thanks to the greenhouse effect of the horde the emergence of the human face from the animal snout becomes possible, describing a selection that begins to follow aesthetic parameters, absolutely unrelated to the maximization of the chances of biological survival; it is human is what derails towards beauty. It is only in the raft – or in the tent – of the horde that the human being arises as a creature that not only can afford a long childhood, but that even maintains childlike traits throughout its biographical parabola. Humans are not ill-equipped for life in the world, if only because they never live in the world tout court, but precisely in protected and climatized spheres (rafts, islands, tents), so that they embody the luxury of remaining partially childlike, immature. We are never in the world *sans phrase* – or rather: there is no possible humanity in the world *sans phrase*; the *homo* species is born exactly at the moment in which the hominid finds itself in an air-conditioned and lightened space; a (partially and imperfectly) immunized space in which is possible wasting energy on the superfluous, making decisions according to useless parameters. The outside is filtered rather than removed: however threatening, it always remains (also) as a space available for the extroversion of negativity and as a reserve of material useful for the development of the inside.

2. Hot-air balloon

From the raft to the hot-air balloon, the jump is abysmal – even in a trivial chronological sense: the hot-air balloon is an invention of modernity and a symbol of modernity. In both cases, however, we are describing in allegorical way the construction of spaces with reduced gravity and lightened atmosphere; the hot-air balloon expresses "only" on the one hand the extreme intensification of this anti-gravitational process and, on the other, the victory of the technological way in the search for lightening, against the acrobatic ascetic elevation. The semantics of anti-gravitation is one of the recurrent lines of all Sloterdijk's reflection, intersecting two declensions that are reciprocally connected yet profoundly different, two

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5   Cfr. Marie-Eve Morin, 'The Coming-to-the-World of the Human Animal', in *Sloterdijk Now*, ed. Stuart Elden (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 77–98.

6   Peter Sloterdijk, *Im Selben Boot. Versuch über die Hyperpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 19 (my translation).

7   Ibid., 20 (my translation).

strategies of neutralization of gravity: elevation and lightening. The first foresees the implementation by individuals of a whole range of exercises (pompously called "metaphysics") capable of making practitioners reach acrobatic levels of elevation and overcoming gravity; it is the ascetic way to flight, whereby gravity is defeated thanks to the elevation of the hard-trained individual. The second way, typically modern, aims at overcoming gravity by lightening the world, not by elevating the individual. It is no longer necessary to become an ascetic in order to fly: it is sufficient to get into a hot-air balloon.

"In modernity, the metanoic imperative [*you must change your life*] increasingly changed into a prescription of 'outward application'",[8] declining into: you must change the world and in this way you will change your life and the life of everyone else. Ascetics give way to teachers, inventors and entrepreneurs who, in different fields, modify the social field with the effects of their actions; political reforms, technical or cultural innovations: they aim at making life easier, more comfortable and less burdensome. Sloterdijk speaks of "historic compromise between self-improvement and world improvement".[9] It is the second Silver Age: it is useless to dwell on paraphrases, what he has in mind is the contemporary Western world, *sive* the Crystal Palace. The heaviness of the 20th century was the tail end of heaviness *tout court*; undertrack, and visibly since the second post-war period, an aeonic shift has developed: the *uprising* of Western masses from poverty (*extreme*, with the consequent spread of the ubiquitous relative poverty). Not the age of extremes, but the entry into the first non-mythical epoch of post-scarcity: "probably for the first time since the entrance of remembrance into our space of tradition, the climate of reality in contemporary Western 'society' is no longer determined primarily by poverty-related themes and the psycho semantics of hardship".[10] It is not a matter of denying obscene inequalities or contingent regressions – "the plateau from which its denizens will be forced by regressions to descend temporarily or for longer periods is, from a sociohistorical perspective, incomparably high" –[11] but of adopting a macro-historical gaze and even a materialist posture: what we see is the popularization of access to exquisite commodities and relieving machines. The five weights of the old reality are under attack: hunger bites a small, historically unprecedented number of Palace dwellers; fatigue recedes following the mass emancipation from agricultural labor, the outsourcing of industrial labor, and the subcontracting of logistics labor, while homes have filled with lightening tools and air conditioning; the libido has free rein after the sexual revolution; power has been domesticated with elections and constitutions, a war with mass conscription does not seem to be on the agenda, and the

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8   Peter Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 369.

9   Ibid., 372.

10   Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres III. Foam* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2016), 634–35.

11   Ibid., 644–45.

State becomes an institution in charge of allocating resources and amortizing risks; death does not disappear, but recedes, is often bloodless and at least technically could become "sweet". To this list Sloterdijk adds the legitimization of individual taste, the availability of cultural content, the prolongation of lifetime devoted to education, the change of family structures, the expansion of the possibilities of movement, the availability of treatments performed under anesthesia, the fact that most of the living of the last generations are sons and daughters expressly wanted and sought (and therefore hopefully loved).

It is impossible to summarize 200 pages of panegyric of the anti-gravity vice; according to Sloterdijk this *cahier des luxes* is an essential prerequisite to recognize and deal with the unprecedented problems of the unburdened existence and to cope with the available theoretical and political traditions – all equally anachronistic in his opinion. In this context, however, more than his *redde rationem* with the modern political tradition, it is interesting his description of the Hot-Air Balloon Age and the analysis of its assumptions and vectors; his position is clear: The Great Relief was based on the energy surplus provided by coal and hydrocarbons as universal workers: "access to fossil energy is the objective crutch of the frivolity without which there would be no consumer society, no automobilism and no global market for meat or fashion."[12] Thanks to fossil fuels and motorized machines the anti-gravity dynamics reaches unprecedented – both for altitude and extension – levels of relief in the millennial history of *homo sapiens*. The exploitation of man by man becomes shocking at the very moment in which it appears avoidable thanks to "man's methodical exploitation of the Earth";[13] what for centuries has been the normal (harsh and bitter) reality – the relief of the few through the service of the many – becomes intolerable at the moment in which it appears realistic a collective relief through the intensive exploitation of the Earth conceived as a resource to be technically dominated. It is from this moment that the upward and lightening forces acquire an unprecedented energy and (Western) societies are filled with an increasing number of lightening machines enlivened by fossil fuels. Sloterdijk does not resist the temptation to draw from this a thesis of philosophy of history alternative to the Marxian one: more than history of class struggles, "all narratives about changes in the human condition are narratives about the changing exploitation of energy sources – or descriptions of metabolic regimes" –[14]that is: tell me what kind of energy sources you use and I will tell you who you are. In this perspective, consistently, "the petroleum bath is baptism for contemporary human beings".[15]

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12 Ibid., 163.

13 Peter Sloterdijk, *What Happened in the 20th Century?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018), 131.

14 Ibid., 132.

15 Ibid., 136–37.

This thesis with its *geschichtsphilosophisch* sonority must be taken very seriously; the advent of fossil fuels – i.e. their usability as energy sources – unhinges and overturns the meaning of many ontological categories that constituted the infrastructure of the vetero-European experience of the world. A first example, hiddenly, has already been made, and it concerns precisely the meaning associated to the concept of *reality*. It is (also and above all) the diffusion of motorized machines powered by coal or oil that gave a constructivist bent to the concept of reality; "reality" (hard and bitter) ceased to denote what cannot be otherwise, what must be accepted in its heaviness, and became perceived instead as something malleable, that can always be modified and can be (made) different from what it currently is. Inventiveness – and no longer resignation – becomes the passion associated with the experience of reality. It is not by chance that modernity is the era of revolutions: it is not (only) a matter of variations on the theme archetypically expressed by the French proto-socialists – exploiting the Earth together and stop exploiting each other among humans –, but more generally of the snowball effect caused by the evidence that, through the mediation of adequate techniques, even the hardest core of reality was actually modifiable – it was even possible to fly!

Moreover: revolutions do not "simply" indicate a change, but more specifically a rapid, potentially instantaneous change. In other words: an *explosive* change. It is not by chance, Sloterdijk seems to suggest, that revolutions and the exploitation of fossil fuels are coeval:

"Active treasure, which is what we are here referring to, coal and petroleum (other forms of biosynthesis, too, later), embodies the principle of getting something for free in a typically modern way. This is because such a principle is suited for rapid combustion and for producing immediate effects, in stark contrast to its predecessor – the Earth as bearer of slow growth. Active treasure is the actual agent of the principle of immediacy".[16] Only an era shaped by the explosive force of fossil fuels can realistically think to overturn reality with a *coup de grâce*.

Coal and oil (and engines able to exploit their combustion) represent therefore the philosopher's stone searched in vain by alchemists – and found instead by miners, technicians, engineers. Without fossil fuels "there would be no capitalism, no widespread affluence, no welfare state, and no trace of anything that constitutes the modus vivendi of the current Western system of comforts";[17] but even more, there would not have been the (constructivist) idea of reality that has made modernity the testing ground for countless political, social, technical and cultural experiments. There would have been no freedom understood as "the right to unlimited mobility and festive squandering of energy";[18] Sloterdijk coined a specific expression:

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16   Ibid., 152.

17   Ibid., 151.

18   Ibid., 138.

"kinetic expressionism", precisely to condense "modernity's mode of existence, which was primarily made possible by the ready availability of fossil fuel".[19] The point is twofold: on the one hand, oil-powered machines are vectors not only of comfort, but also of freedom, as they make possible previously unthinkable experiences and perform tasks freeing time that humans can devote to other things. On the other hand, those fuels also "blazes in our existential motivations, in our vital conceptions of freedom. We can no longer imagine a freedom that does not always also include the freedom to rev our engines and accelerate, the freedom to move to the most distant destinations, the freedom to exaggerate, the freedom to waste, indeed, lastly, even the freedom to detonate explosives and destroy ourselves".[20] Lightening of reality and extreme freedom clearly go hand in hand: the reality principle ceases to be a constraint and become a stimulus to exercise freedom in the work of perpetual modification of reality. The freedom of the moderns was born as a spur to overcome limits – as condensed by the motto of Charles V: *plus ultra* – and develops itself in the form of being without limits.

The Age of the Hot-Air Balloon is, in short, the era of extreme and explosive lightening. The Earth appears here in the dual role of coffer of the most amazing treasures and neutral background in which all undesired effects are diluted, absorbed and finally disappear. The Hot-Air Balloon Age conceptually divides *missions* and *emissions*: the former – increasingly daring and acrobatic – indicate specific goals and mobilize the necessary fossil and technical arsenal; the latter name the side effects of the missions: the disregarded effects, which fall into a vacuum capable of absorbing them; if the Hot-Air Balloon Age is an era of extreme experimentalism (technical, political, cultural), emissions are the quantities knowingly neglected in a controlled experiment.

However high they may soar, hot air balloons land. It is taken for granted that they can dock on stable ground, recharge the burner, rest before another trip. Precisely for this reason they may no longer represent the best metaphor for describing the space in which we live.

3. Spaceships, cruise ships (and foams)

There are cases in which "metaphor […] represents the higher form of the concept".[21] The important feature of metaphor is its "practical force": "its truth is revealed in the pertinence of its implications for the real situation"

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19   Peter Sloterdijk, 'The Anthropocene – A Stage in the Process on the Margins of the Earth's History?', in *What Happened in the 20th Century?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018), 29.

20   Ibid., 30.

21   Ibid., 26.

—[22] it is a *verité à faire*.[23] Metaphor has a "performance truth" where linguistic-descriptive precision is still limping (and yet we have urgency to act). The contemporary situation is, according to Sloterdijk, one of these cases, and so he proposes a battery of metaphors: Buckminster Fuller's *Spaceships Earth*; Phileas Fogg's ship forced to self-combust; the cruise ship as a floating self-sufficient city. With different accents, in all cases it is a matter of making intuitive what must become the first task of the human being, the Anthropocene imperative: act in such a way as not to consume the internal space in which you live because there is no outside (or at least it has no resources and is not humanly livable). In Sloterdijk's terms, "ships – and environments in general – can no longer be regarded merely as maternal containers that protect and care for us under all conditions"; it is necessary for humans to learn how to "repair their ships, their systems, their institutions".[24] The central point is, in all cases, that astronauts and sailors have always known what humanity now needs to learn: that the inner space in which human life is possible is an artifact and cannot therefore be taken for granted; not (anymore) a foundation but a construct, not (anymore) a base but a vehicle.[25] Several practical and cognitive corollaries derive from this: first of all the need to explicitly formalize that the first interest of a crew must be the maintenance of livable conditions within the *artificium*. Secondly, the conceptual difference between missions and emissions collapses – i.e. ignorance is no longer allowed; it no longer makes sense to distinguish between scientifically researched objectives and the side effects of that research, since those effects now far exceed in magnitude any possible objective. Thirdly, it is necessary to overturn the relationship between error and learning: we need to learn *before* making mistakes, and not *from* them.[26] Those three images – the spaceship, the cruise ship, Fogg's ship – play different roles in Sloterdijk's thought: the first two have a normative value – you must act aware of living in a spaceship – while the last one responds to more descriptive needs – we are burning the vessel that keeps us afloat, and in our case there is not even a port on the horizon. All three, however, effectively condense some fundamental aspects of our situation, but this effectiveness is paid with a certain simplification that emerges if we adopt the most obvious point of view: ours, that is, of those who are inside the spaceship. From our perspective this spaceship appears divided and fragmented inside, teeming with pilots, incredibly complex and confused. It is therefore worth recovering the first level metaphor coined by Sloterdijk: *foam*.

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22   Sloterdijk, 'The Anthropocene – A Stage in the Process on the Margins of the Earth's History?'

23   Cfr. Hans Blumenberg, *Weltbilder und Weltmodelle*, in: «Nachrichten der Gießener Hochschulgesellschaft», Gießen, 30 (1961), p. 69

24   Peter Sloterdijk, 'The Ocean Experiment: From Nautical Globalization to a General Ecology', in *What Happened in the 20th Century?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018), 87.

25   Sloterdijk, 'The Anthropocene – A Stage in the Process on the Margins of the Earth's History?', 26.

26   Ibid., 29.

What is foam? On the one hand, foam describes a world too wide and interconnected to be cut and reduced through the setting aside of large sections in indifference and irrelevance: the *saturated* world has no external spaces to be ignored, into which negativity can be poured without fear of reactions and counter-movements. On the other hand, it is also the form of every section of the world, which has also become too wide, regardless of its actual size, as it is inhabited by individuals who are increasingly mutually different, dissimilar, unique. In the hyperfractionated world diversity explodes in our hands both because we can no longer ignore and erase any of the extreme diversities present on the entire globe (they react, we depend on them, we are reachable and connected) and because we are increasingly individualistically different from each other, within the remnants of the old spheres. Foam therefore signals both vectors: both the amassing of more or less large bubbles, forced to touch each other without being able to ignore and distance themselves, and the internal fractioning of what thought to be a homogeneous sphere.

Let us focus on the first vector: it is gone the era in which, from Florence, I could sovereignly disregard what was happening in Southeast Asia or Central America – if the backlash came, it would take decades; now a war in Syria or Ukraine is visible immediately in the news, causes within weeks the arrival of refugees in my neighborhood and an escalation of political tensions, raises gas or oil prices, causes a surge in feed prices and thus farm meat prices etc. Intensive breeding, deforestation, eating habits of an unknown region of China become the breeding stock of a *spillover* that within a month forces me to stay home for a year.

According to Sloterdijk we need to invent new immunizing practices suitable for the Astronautic Age of intensified and self-conscious foam. The model that became classic in the Hot-Air Balloon Age – explosive creativity and productive efficiency *plus* externalization of negativity – is completely ineffective under the new conditions. In the foam, immunity is only possible as *co-immunity*; this is not unexpected altruism, but a physical law: the bubbles in the foam share boundaries and therefore each bubble lives and survives only if all contiguous bubbles live and survive. All of them have to take care of the membranes that both unite and separate them, all of them have to regulate and purify the flows that circulate within them and that always filter (even if only for metabolic needs) into the neighboring bubbles. Each bubble is only safe, and therefore immune, if the overall scaffolding of the foam, if each bubble-bubble boundary is sufficiently functioning and elastic. They are *too close to fail*.

Compared to the macrospheric immune model, typical of the time of the hot-air balloon, there are two enormous differences: first, the centrality of the borders. In the macrosphere, the border was a fracture and a barrier: they marked the limit of the center's expansive force (and the line in which the forces of two contiguous centers touch each other). The centrality

always belonged to the center; it decided the identity and homogeneity of the internal space, conceived as an irradiation of that focal point; the frontier was empty space, which could only relate to its center. In the foam, on the contrary, borders are the essential carriers of every bubble and therefore they require a constant and mutual care: they are con-tended. They cease to be the limit of a/the world and become threshold, regulatory filter, place of inevitable passage of people, goods, information, fashions, music, viruses. The second big difference is tensegrity. The macrosphere aspired to solidity and compactness, it was all the more immunizing the more solid and strong it was; borders are again emblematic: their effectiveness was directly proportional to their impenetrability. This method no longer works in the foam: one cannot control what arises in the other bubbles, one cannot distance and detach oneself in order to escape a possible domino effect, it is ridiculous to think that one can hermetically close oneself to the contaminations coming from the other microspheres and an empty external space is no longer available. The immunity in the foam is based on and achieved by training elasticity and adaptability of its elements: when an element of the foam is modified, the change is felt by the whole structure, but the structure holds up thanks to its ability to flex without breaking, adapting, balancing itself in the new situation and finding integrity thanks to the balance of tensions. Without distance and empty spaces, pressure cannot escape, and without elasticity, exaggerated pressure causes catastrophes.

Many of the concepts used by Sloterdijk sound decidedly more concrete (and sometimes sinister) after the pandemic wave. Air has returned to the center of our concerns, making explicit our being-in-the-world as being-in-the-air[27] (potentially loaded with *droplets* and viruses); the image of the expanded subject immersed in a cohabited atmosphere has become brutally perspicuous: each of us lives immersed in a sphere of vapor (literally: atmosphere) produced also by our own exhalations – and this is why we wear masks to filter this atmosphere. The pandemic event was revolutionary – à la Sloterdijk: that is, it was a massive vector of explication of the foamy structure of reality. At each wave, the same scenes: an outbreak, the illusion of being detached and isolated, the expansion of contagion. Each time the reflexes of macrospheric hypnosis were triggered: what is happening in China will not reach Italy, what is terrorizing Italy will not affect France, what has filtered through France will not be a British problem, and so on, in a succession of increasingly dangerous delays. Borders, empty spaces, long times, are the afterthoughts that have guided the (in)action: the belief that borders are impassable limits of a world and that "leachates" take decades to develop and who knows how many things will have changed in the meantime. Instead, each time the contagion has started again, precisely because in the foam we are fatally

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27   Cfr. Sloterdijk, *Spheres III. Foam,* 85-178, § 'Airquake'.

bordering, interconnected and interdependent. This condition is unavoidable – tourists, caregivers, laborers, truck drivers, gas, raw materials, food, researchers, football competitions and TV sets: too many performances indispensable in the bubble depend on a constant exchange between all the foam.

In this scenario, even the need to think of immunization as co-immunity gains new evidence: containing the circulation of the virus in the whole foam, preventing the emergence of variants, avoiding the overload of health systems are all "well-intended" immunities, attempts to achieve that co-immunization that alone guarantees *chances* of singular immunity. On the other hand, as we can see, this does not mean harmony and cooperation; rather, it means a moving landscape of decisions dictated by decisions of others, reactions to behaviors implemented or by other bubbles. The virus containment strategy, the reopening plan, the organization of the vaccination campaign depend closely on strategies, plans and organizations implemented or imagined elsewhere. No sovereign and unilateral decision, but a patchwork of reactions to reactions. What we call "power" is revealed as the momentary point of equilibrium of the foamy structure, the contingent result of a plurality of different and contradictory tensions that add up and compensate each other – and in the face of ever new disproportions the whole foam settles down on new balances. In short, the inconsistency of an image of power as a compact and monolithic "thing" owned by someone to the detriment of others has become dramatically visible; what emerges is a mobile and foamy picture with contrasts, negotiations, momentary alliances, strategies of direct and indirect conditioning. A picture, in fact, also "dramatic", as no one clearly has control of the situation, no one has a clear plan and the tools to put it into practice, but everybody bets in a more or less risky way: hundreds of pilots occupy different areas of the spaceship, react to the reactions of others while it is not known where the spaceship itself is going.

> The utopia of a frothy world, mindful of the pandemic lesson, would sound like this: "a global co- immunity structure is born, with a respectful inclusion of individual cultures, particular interests and local solidarities […]. A romanticism of brotherliness is replaced by a cooperative logic. Humanity becomes a political concept […]. Civilization is one such structure. Its monastic rules must be drawn up now or never; they will encode the forms of anthropotechnics that befit existence in the context of all contexts".[28]

Beautiful, too beautiful. Sloterdijk mobilizes here a part of his theoretical arsenal and in fact his appeal, retranslated without emphasis, sounds like this: the global expansion of interconnections and the exponential increase of human power on Earth has reached its limit; since there are no more "empty spaces", the classic immunization mechanism of protectionism/

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28   Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, 451–52.

externalization has definitively jammed: either we will save ourselves together, or no one will be safe. The argument holds, and the pandemic offers an immediate example. However. Sloterdijk's bet is all cognitive: it seems that it is sufficient to reveal to humanity the foamy structure of our world, show them the anachronism of old immune systems, explain them the physics of foam *et voilà* everybody will be ready for the new monastic civilization. It seems that the problem is "only" ignorance: if we really understand that we live in a foam, most of our problems would be solved. The point, concrete, is that illusions work even when improbable, and they have reality effects even when the effect is potential suicide. We know that a vaccination campaign focused on the Palace is dangerous: variants could arise and invalidate our efforts; yet we are behaving like this. One (absurd) afterthought is the same as always: if it happens, this time we will be able to isolate ourselves, to detach ourselves from the foam; the other (more understandable), whisper that this time too we will find the solution – a drug, an update of the vaccine, yet another amazing scientific leap forward. Better to flip a coin than wait longer and delay (semi-) normality again. In short, we know that the only immunity now possible is the shared one, the problem is not ignorance: the problem is that we still hope or delude ourselves that the next catastrophe will not affect us or that, in the meantime, something will come to save us – after all, it has often happened. All in order not to adopt new lifestyles, objectively more tiring. We all know how we should act in order to reduce our environmental impact, and in many cases we would like to do so; but if we do not act, it is not because of induced ignorance, machinations or other reasons; much more banally and dramatically, the problem is that a whole series of lightening performances have become indispensable to us, we even find it hard to recognize them as luxuries in a historical perspective. We live in the foam and we know it, but we act as if we were driving a hot-air balloon: the success of an image or a metaphor depends not only on its ability to describe the existing, but also (and perhaps above all) on the performances and the kind of behaviors it makes possible.

Sloterdijk himself, in other passages,[29] shows himself to be wary (and in the end also worried) about an emphasis on the ethical solution for the Anthropocene: there are few chances that an ecological (and catacomb) Calvinism under the banner of frugality will spread *sua sponte*, there is a strong risk that this frugality will eventually be imposed in the form of an ecological martial law. There is a possible alternative, applying Spinoza's famous phrase to the Earth: no one yet knows what the body of the Earth can do. In the Hot-Air Balloon Age, technical development focused obsessively on how to exploit fossil fuels, but now it has the opportunity to break free from this literally deadly embrace and imagine a completely different interaction between environment and technology; the (potential) future is

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29   Cfr. Sloterdijk, 'The Anthropocene – A Stage in the Process on the Margins of the Earth's History?', 31–46.

to be built with a homeotechnology capable of imitating and empowering nature without doing violence to it. It is difficult not to support this hope – which also bans reactionary anti-scientific and anti-modern deviations. And yet, are we maybe once again, deceiving ourselves? Is it a *wishful thinking* – something will save us – that we enthusiastically embrace also because it legitimizes our (implicit) aspiration to go on *business as usual*? The challenge we face – or rather: the challenge in which we are immersed – is maybe too radical to be solved with an acceleration; if the hot-air balloon has overturned the concepts of reality and freedom, evaporating the first and declining the second as unstoppable "kinetic *expressionism*", it is possible that the Spaceship or Foam Era has in front of itself an equally radical task of re-signification. This means, needless to hide it, that we have (at least) a huge problem: when Sloterdijk states that the demands for moderation and the hopes for a climatic socialism have "all of expressionistic civilization's momentum against them",[30] he is using an acceptable paraphrase to express an unspeakable: we have a problem with (the modern idea of) freedom.

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30   Ibid., 39.

Mirko Alagna is researcher of Political Philosophy at the University of Florence. PhD at the University of Trento, was DAAD fellow at the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften and research fellow at the University of Milano-Bicocca. He focused on the thought of Max Weber, Hans Blumenberg, Hannah Arendt and Peter Sloterdijk. Author of "Sazi da morire" (AlboVersorio 2012), "Atlanti. Immagini del mondo e forme della politica in Max Weber" (Donzelli 2017), "Superficialismo radicale" (ETS 2021, with L. Mazzone) and "Peter Sloterdijk" (DeriveApprodi 2021). He has also published articles in several Italian and international journals.

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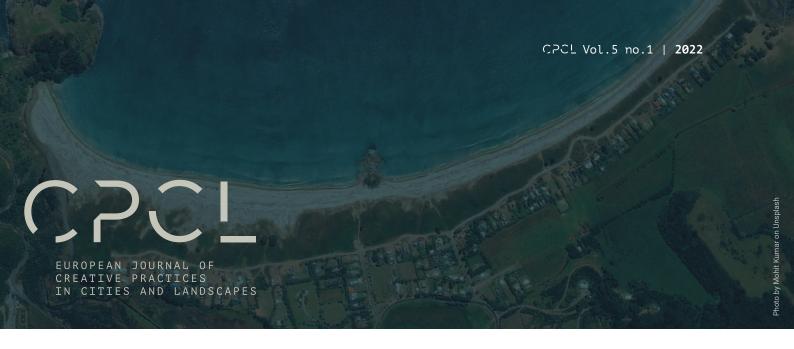
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MAIN SECTION

Aesthetics and Dreams in the Absence of Epoch. Bernard Stiegler's Bifurcation of the Anthropocene

Claudia Nigrelli — University of Bologna, Italy
Contact: cla.nigre@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
In this article, we analyze the concept of Anthropocene in Bernard Stiegler's work through the cross-reading of the possibility of aesthetic experience and of what Stiegler calls a war against this experience and the function of dreams. The aesthetic experience as the experience of the exosomatisation is addressed in the books concerning The Symbolic Misery; the function of dreams is addressed in the book The Age of Disruption, in which the Anthropocene appears to be "an absence of epoch". For Stiegler, this concept implies the consideration of a catastrophe that is not only ecological but also psychic and collective, that is, the impossibility of thinking of an alternative present to the one imposed by the capitalist economy. At the center of Stiegler's analysis is the intertwining of aesthetics and technics as what allows individuation and the political-philosophical reflection on technics as what is necessary for human life but that also consists in a risk, the one of losing the possibility of cultivating reason as what allows to live a life worth living, to cultivate the singularity and the unexpected as the ability to bifurcate the paths of the possible.

Introduction

Since the dawn of the millennium, the Anthropocene has been a central facet of intellectual, political and scientific debate. This timing is significant, as the concept, first posited by Paul Crutzen, concerns the acknowledgment of a new moment in the history of Earth beginning in the eighteenth century with the emergence of the fossil fuel energy regime and the exponential growth in both energy use and population.[1] This is the critical moment in which human impact transforms the biosphere, and humankind emerges as the most powerful influence on global ecology. As a wake-up call, the Anthropocene tells the story of a planet in deep distress: an atmosphere that has been damaged by tons of carbon dioxide, the impoverishment and artificializing of the Earth's living tissue, a warmer world with a higher risk of catastrophes, diminishing ice cover, higher sea levels and a climate that is generally out of control,[2] all because of the activity of a single species, precisely the one who is now "waking up". However, this version of a homogenous humanity equally responsible for the destruction of earthly living conditions has been criticized as being anti-political in that it effaces the responsibility of the capitalist world-ecology for the present planetary crisis.[3] The green variant of this construct hands the keys to saving the Earth over to techno-optimistic engineers, crediting our own excellence[4] as humans who are now a titanic force, ruling over the ruins that we ourselves have produced.[5]

As the Anthropocene Working Group[6] states on its website, one can consider the Anthropocene from the point of view of a "geological signal" that needs to be scientifically justified in order to demonstrate that it is a precise geological time unit; one can also refer to it as a more informal term (a quasi-empty signifier, as argued by Jason Moore)[7] to denote a broader

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1   John R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration. An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*, (Cambridge– London:The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

2   Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene. The Earth, History and Us* (London: Verso, 2016).

3   Jason Moore, "Introduction" in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM press, 2016), 1-11.

4   Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene.*

5   For a discussion on the Anthropocene as an aesthetics of the sublime see Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "L'Anthropocène et l'esthétique du sublime" (2016) online at https://mouvements.info/sublime-anthropocene/ [accessed on 5/5/2022].

6   "Phenomena associated with the Anthropocene include: an order-of-magnitude increase in erosion and sediment transport associated with urbanization and agriculture; marked and abrupt anthropogenic perturbations of the cycles of elements such as carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and various metals together with new chemical compounds; environmental changes generated by these perturbations, including global warming, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and spreading oceanic 'dead zones'; rapid changes in the biosphere both on land and in the sea, as a result of habitat loss, predation, explosion of domestic animal populations and species invasions; and the proliferation and global dispersion of many new 'minerals' and 'rocks' including concrete, fly ash and plastics, and the myriad 'technofossils' produced from these and other materials". Online at: http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/ [accessed on 5/5/2022]

7   Jason Moore, "Name the System! Anthropocenes & the Capitalocene Alternative" (2016), online at https://jasonwmoore.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/name-the-system-anthropocenes-the-capitalocene-alternative/ [accessed on 5/5/2022].

interpretation of the anthropogenic impact on the planet. This second approach is permeated with a certain fascination and negative pleasure in witnessing destruction: but if the world is burning, the first question one might ask is who is this *Anthropos*[8] that set the fire? If this ambiguous fascination emerges primarily from the phenomenal quantities of matter mobilized and emitted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries[9]— that is, an obsession with humanity becoming a natural force, and of quantity as being central to understanding modernity in terms of a tech-nical-technological acceleration that is "an increase in *quantity* per unit of time"[10]—the Anthropocene appears more to be the age of capital than of humanity,[11] something that its narrative tends to naturalize. For this reason, other stories have been told about "how" the world has become less habitable, about "how" the theoretical separation between nature and culture, an endless series of human and extra-human exclusions and oppressions, that is fundamentally linked to the capitalist political econ-omy has reached its limit of ecological and social affordability. One might thus be tempted to substitute the "anthropogenic" impact with the "cap-italogenic" one and replace the term Anthropocene with Capitalocene[12]

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8   "Tool, weapon, word: that is the word made flesh in the image of the sky god; that is the Anthropos. In a tragic story with only one real actor, one real world-maker, the hero, this is the Man-making tale of the hunter on a quest to kill and bring back the terrible bounty. This is the cutting, sharp, combative tale of action that defers the suffering of glutinous, earth-rotted passivity beyond bearing. All others in the prick tale are props, ground, plot space, or prey. They don't matter; their job is to be in the way, to be overcome, to be the road, the conduit, but not the traveler, not the begetter" in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chtulucene*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 39-40. See also Jason Moore, "Who is responsible for the climate crisis?" (2019), online at https://www.maize.io/magazine/what-is-capitalocene/: "Historically, most human beings have been practically excluded from membership in Humanity. In the history of capitalism, there has been little room in the Anthropos for anyone not white, male and bourgeois. From 1492, the super-rich and their imperial allies dispossessed peoples of color, Indigenous Peoples, and virtually all women of their Humanity, and assigned to Nature – the better they could be transformed into profit-making opportunities. The upshot is that the cosmology of Man and Nature in the Popular Anthropocene is not only a faulty analytic, but implicated in practical histories of domination. When the Popular Anthropocene refuses name capitalogenic climate change, it fails to see that the problem is not Man and Nature, but certain men committed to the profitable domination and destruction of most humans and the rest of nature".

9   Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "L'Anthropocène et l'esthétique du sublime".

10   Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration. A New Theory of Modernity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

11   "It became common at the end of the twentieth century to speak of humanity as though those making up this we were all, more or less, in an equal condition. This so-called equality points to an absolute fiction, and the growth of inequality in living conditions is such that the groups making up different communities and social groups often have very little in common" in Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1. The Hyper-industrial Epoch*, (Cambridge – Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 79.

12   Following Moore, "Who is responsible for the climate crisis?": "*Capitalogenic*: "made by capital." Like its sibling, Capitalocene, it can sound awkward when spoken. That doesn't have much to do with the word, however – it's because under bourgeois hegemony we are taught to view with suspicion any language that names the system. But naming the system, the form of oppression, and logic of exploitation is what emancipatory social movements always do. Justice movements unfold through new ideas and new languages. The power to name an injustice channels thought and strategy, something dramatically underscored by labor, anti-colonial, and feminist movements across the long twentieth century. In this respect, mainstream environmentalism since 1968 – the "environmentalism of the rich" (Peter Dauvergne) – has been a complete disaster. The "ecological footprint" directs our attention to individual, market-oriented consumption. The Anthropocene (and before that, Spaceship Earth) tells us that planetary crisis is more or less a natural consequence of human nature – as if today's climate crisis is a matter of humans being humans, just as snakes will be snakes and zebras will be zebras. The truth is

as a "geopoetics"[13] in which capitalism is what precedes and precipitates the Anthropocene as a geological era.[14] For those authors who are trying to challenge the narrative of the destructive impact of humans on Earth in general in order to illustrate the disaster perpetuated by capitalism in particular, the political acknowledgment of the Anthropocene as a *boundary event* is fundamental. Doing so marks severe discontinuities: a highly unsustainable, massive and high-speed process of destruction operating on a planetary scale whose direction must be reversed in order to escape from it,[15] in order to make it as short as possible,[16] in order to inhabit the Earth less frightfully.[17] Potential solutions radically challenge the idea of redemption by science alone.[18] As Donna Haraway says, "the task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places, learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings."[19] But can we?

In this regard, one of the merits of Bernard Stiegler's philosophical reflection is to raise the question concerning the Anthropocene from the point of view of the relationship between the physiological-psychical, the collective and the technical individuals. His work aims to show that ecological destruction is also the destruction of the faculty of thinking, of producing symbols, of imagining and dealing with our times; that is, to act and to make sense. For Stiegler, the reason why we find it difficult to imagine that another world is even possible is another "symptom"[20] of the disaster perpetuated through a precise mode of technical (re-)production. It urgently calls for us to re-think the particular relationships between bodies, technics and societies in order to conceive a possible bifurcation of what is yet to come.

more nuanced, identifiable, and actionable: we are living in the Capitalocene, the Age of Capital. We know – historically and in the present crisis – who is responsible for the climate crisis. They have names and addresses, starting with the eight richest men in the world with more wealth than the bottom 3.6 *billion* humans."

13   For the term 'geopoetics' see Kenneth White "Elements of geopoetics" in *Edinburgh Review* 88 (1992): 163-178. Jason Moore refers to Angela Last, "We Are the World? Anthropocene Cultural Production between Geopoetics and Geopolitics" in Theory, Culture & Society, 34(2-3) (2017): 147-168.

14   Jason Moore, "Name the System! Anthropocenes & the Capitalocene Alternative".

15   Bernard Stiegler, "Escaping the Anthropocene" in Mauro Magatti (eds.), *The Crisis Conundrum*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2017).

16   Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

17   Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

18   ibid.

19   Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.

20   See Paolo Vignola, "Symptomatologies Du Désir Entre XX° et XXI° Siècle" (2014), online at: http://www.ladeleuziana.org/2014/06/01/symptomatologies-du-desir-entre-xx-et-xxi-siecle-par-paolo-vignola/. See also Sara Baranzoni and Paolo Vignola, "L'hiver de la pensée. Symptomatologie de la betise à l'age du défaut grec" in *La Deleuziana – Rivista online di filosofia*, n.0/2014, 229-239.

Anthropocene as the absence of epoch

As Bernard Stiegler discusses in *Automatic Society*, the Anthropocene presents itself as a process that developed within the context of the Industrial Revolution. It is marked by a growing self-consciousness of its own geological impact and of itself as the collective cause of massive and accelerated environmental and social destruction;[21] it is "a geological era without epoch, and [...] the end of an historical era, if not of History – [that] seems, in the very course of this thematization, to amount to an *unbearable*, *unlivable* and *unviable* episode, from which we must find an exit by all means possible [...]".[22] The term 'epoch' requires specific definition and unpacking. In order to understand its meaning, which is central to the first volume of *Technics and Time*, Stiegler refers to the concept of *epokhe* as both a 'period of time', an 'era', and an 'arrest', an 'interruption', a 'suspension of judgment': what the philosophers call the *epokhe*, he says, is a *conversion of the gaze* and a *change in the way of thinking* as the outcome of a technological upheaval derived from a change in the technical system. The *epokhe* concerns the transformation of "the understanding that there-being (*Dasein*) has of its being",[23] it is thus both noetic and technological and occurs as a disadjustment between the technical system and the social system that generates conflicts: religious, spiritual, political and so on. Conflicts generate new ways of thinking, doing and living, that is, *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre*, through a reconfiguration of the relationship with the past into new desires and will (protentions),[24] which are both collective and individual:

> [a] new epoch emerges only when–on the occasion of these conflicts, and due to the loss of the salience of the preceding epoch's knowledge and powers of living, doing and conceiving–new ways of thinking, new ways of doing and new ways of living take shape, which are 'new forms of life' in Georges Canguilhem's sense, on the basis of precursors *reconfiguring the retentions inherited from the earlier epoch into so many new kinds of protention*.[25]

According to Stiegler's philosophy, technics are the conditions by which it becomes possible to articulate the past and projections of the future. In fact, the sedimentation of memory onto material supports (the spatialization of temporality) lies at the origin of humanization, comprising the formation of an environment constituted by artifacts; this is the third type of

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21   Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society. Volume 1. The Future of Work* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 8.

22   Bernard Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 186.

23   Ibid., 12–13.

24   Protentions are wills, desires and expectations, in all of their various forms, that depend on retentions (primary, secondary and tertiary), that is, what is retained: perceptions (primary retentions), memory (secondary retentions) and sedimentations of memory that are spatialized on material supports (tertiary retentions).

25   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 13.

memory (Stiegler calls this "tertiary retentions") that is added to the genetic memory as well as that of the nervous system. Tertiary retentions are historical and environmental and constitute the bridge between the collective and the individual; transmitted collectively and acquired individually over the course of life, they create the possibility of interpreting and reconfiguring the past in a different way each time. This process of externalizing and then re-internalizing memory is fundamental for understanding not only the relationship between humans and technics as co-original, but also the inextricability between the individual and the collective through the participation in a technical milieu that consists of formalization and spatialization of human gestures that can thus be reproduced, inherited and interpreted perpetually, forming a culture. Autonomy and heteronomy are thus entangled and must be adopted as a necessary default that "makes the individual feel that life is worth living,"[26] but they also reveal the risk inherent to technics as both curative and potentially toxic.[27] In Stiegler's words, technics are a *pharmakon*: "[it is] at once what enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken – in the sense that it is necessary to pay attention: its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that it is also destructive".[28] In this view, "taking care" means the possibility of developing "a process of apprenticeship through which an art of internalization is developed", an art that Stiegler calls "creativity." It also means the possibility to bifurcate (instead of a relation of adaptation to technics that would result in total dependence, and repetition without difference). To interrogate the curative and toxic dimension of technics is the "primary question" for a world experiencing a planetary crisis that is both economic and spiritual.[29]

What Stiegler calls the "contemporary epoch of the absence of epoch" is marked by the fact that this technological change is not followed by the emergence of new forms of thinking, by the adjustment of the social system and by the arising of projections of the future. In fact, the technical system permanently changing beyond its limits destroys in advance any capacity to be adopted by the social body. In the Anthropocene, adaptation substitutes the process of adoption:[30] permanent and unlimited innova-

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26   Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2013), 21. If the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy has been demonstrated by Derrida in his commentary on the Phaedrus in 'Plato's Pharmacy', the pharmacological perspective as a discourse on the *pharmakon* understood in both its curative and toxic dimensions is, in Stiegler's view, missing. For Stiegler, this is the "primary question" for the world as a whole, haunting "planetary consciousness and the planetary unconscious", the loss of trust and the economic and spiritual crisis in which we are living. It is the question of care, and of its condition. See the Introduction to *What Makes Life Woth Living. On Pharmacology*, 1-5.

27   See Paolo Vignola, "Il *pharmakon* di Stiegler. Dall'archi-cinema alla società automatica", pre-printed paper now published in Vincenzo Cuomo (eds.), *Medium. Dispositivi, ambienti, psicotecnologie* (Tricase: Kalak Edizioni, 2015).

28   Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living. On Pharmacology*, 14.

29   Ibid., 4–5.

30   From the Ars Industrialis vocabulary by Victor Petit: "Adaptation est un terme qui dérive d'"*ad-aptare*" qui signifie *rendre apte à* ou *ajuster à*; *joindre* ou *conformer*. C'est une idée banalement darwinienne que d'affirmer que plus un vivant est adapté moins il est adaptable,

tion proceeds much faster than social systems and is undergone by them. Despite sharing the same technical system, people cannot participate in it because the system proceeds from the top to the bottom, bringing an "industrialization of schematism" conceived of as the capacity for imaginative projection to synthesize the data of intuition with the analysis of understanding,[31] and whose aim is to anticipate, form and inform people's desires. The result is standardization of retentions and an elimination of individual and collective protentions, which are replaced in the new data economy by automatic ones. Collective retentions or forms of knowledge, which are transmitted collectively and shared through educational organizations allowing for the interpretation of the past, are standardized by cultural industries through audiovisual objects: if, as Stiegler considers, consciousness consists of the flow of its passing (that is, it is a temporal object in which I give myself my own time that is different from other times), people watching, for example, the same event at the same time on television interiorizes, adopts and lives the time of this other temporal object that is television, thus synchronizing the time of their consciousness with the time of television, which responds to an economy of consumption.[32] The problem is not the synchronic process in itself, since every mode of collective and individual life implies the sharing of calendarity and cardinality in which synchronic and diachronic processes compose together.[33] What is at stake in what Stiegler calls the "hypersynchronization" is precisely the erosion of diachrony through the standardization of memories and experiences (people watching the same programs every day) and the homogenization of time (from the imposition of the Christian calendar of a global scale to 24/7 capitalism) and space.

This becomes even more clear and radical in the digital economy of computational capitalism creating an all-pervasive reticulation through smartphones and other mobile devices and terminals. Here, information circulates at up to two-thirds the speed of light, transforming individuals

moins il peut adopter un nouveau milieu. Quant à l'humain, il ne s'adapte pas tant à son milieu, qu'il adapte son milieu, qui, de ce fait, n'est plus seulement un milieu de besoin mais *milieu de désir*. Adoption est un terme qui dérive d'"*ad-optare*" qui signifie opter ou choisir, greffer ou *acquérir*. Toute individuation humaine est un processus d'adoption, et la santé d'une individuation se mesure à sa possibilité d'adoption – d'un mode de vie, d'une technique, d'une idée, d'un étranger, etc. Le "faire sien" qu'est l'adoption suppose une participation de ce qui adopte a ce qui est adopté". https://arsindustrialis.org/adaptation-adoption [accessed on 5/5/2022]

31   Daniel Ross, "Introduction" in Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene*, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 18.

32   "When ten million people watch the same broadcast [...] they synchronize their flux. Of course, their criteria for selecting retentions vary, and, therefore, they do not perceive the same phenomenon: they don't all think the same thing about what they watch. But if it is true that *secondary retentions* form the *selection criteria in primary retentions*, then the fact that the same people watch the same programs every day necessarily leads each "consciousness" into sharing *more and more identical secondary retentions*, and thus to selecting the same primary retentions. They end up being so well synchronized that they have lost their *diachrony*, that is, their singularity, which is to say their liberty, which always means the liberty to *think*". Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 55.

33   As Stiegler says, "a calendar is a system of synchronization [that] makes possible [...] diachronic possibilities" *Acting Out*, 50 where "*I, we, diachrony, synchrony*– designate entities one must distinguish without opposing, and which are always in the process of composing". *Acting Out*, 52.

and groups into data providers and overtaking their faculty of reason via digital doubles or profiles that anticipate desires and wills that people themselves never express. This is what Stiegler defines as the accomplishment and perfect completion of nihilism—or disenchantment—and is the final stage of the Anthropocene:

> Nihilism is the process that solidifies what is now called the Anthropocene. In the epoch of disruption proclaimed by the new barbarians, the Anthropocene is reaching its final stage – what, in an article published in Nature entitled 'Approaching a State Shift in Earth's Biosphere', twenty-two scientists have called the 'shift'. It is this state of affairs that constitutes […] [a] horizon without expectations.[34]

The hypersynchronization of memories and the automation of projections lead to a loss of individuation—or a loss of *capabilities* or freedom as a form of agency and power to act,[35]—which constitutes a limit to both the consumerist model of the already analogic industrialism and to the new data economy. The latter, following Antoinette Rouvroy's article to which Stiegler refers,[36] works through "operations of collection, processing and structuration of data for purposes of datamining and profiling, helping individuals and organizations to cope with circumstances of uncertainty or relieving them from the burden of interpreting events and taking decision in routine, trivial situations."[37] As a result, "the constant 'adaptation' of environments to individual and collective 'profiles' produced by 'data intelligence'—be it called 'personalization' or 'technology of security'—is an unprecedented mode of government"[38] that through datamining and profiling produces a new 'truth regime'. Rouvroy calls this 'data-behaviourism', in which the 'unknown part of radical uncertainty', as both a challenge for institutions and a precondition for the possibility of critique, is eroded: knowledge does not appear as a production of the mind but as something that is always present and immanent in the digital world, in which it is discovered or from which it flourishes due to algorithmic operations.[39]

Contrary to Rouvroy, Stiegler posits that the disruptive force of the automatic society operates precisely against the constitution of a new truth regime[40] through a systemic *impediment of thinking*. Retentions and pro-

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34   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 38.

35   Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 4.

36   Antoinette Rouvroy, "The End(s) of Critique: Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process" in Mireille Hildebrand & Katja de Vries (eds), *Privacy, Due Process and The Computational Turn: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology*, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 143-168. Stiegler refers also to Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy, "Gouvernementalité algorithmique et perspectives d'émancipation" in *Réseaux* 177 (2013): 163-196.

37   Antoinette Rouvroy, "The End(s) of Critique: Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process".

38   Ibid.

39   Ibid.

40   See Patrick Crogan, "Bernard Stiegler on Algorithmic Governmentality: A New Regimen of Truth?" in *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics* 98 (2020): 48-67: "The opportunistic realization of digital technology in the extension of a capitalist, neoliberal exercise of power – a global, 24/7 'neoliberal jihad' in Stiegler's terms – threatens the maintenance not only of the

tentions are standardized and produced by algorithmic operations, and are thus short-circuited:

> This short-circuiting of psychic and collective protentions, replaced by automatically generated protentions, impedes dreaming, wanting, reflecting and deciding, that is, the collective realization of dreams. And these obstructions are ultimately a *systemic impediment to thinking*, which then constitutes the basis of algorithmic governmentality as the power structure of computationally generated integrated 24/7 capitalism.[41]

From the Middle Ages until today, a progressive affirmation of an economy of disinhibition[42] and calculability, during which the Cartesian discourse of the *mathesis universalis* comes into effect, has led to the emergence of a new madness formed by the rationalization and normalization of the risk posed to humanity by discoveries (at the foundation of globalization and capitalism) and the development of new technologies. The Anthropocene arises as the extreme stage of this process in which reason has produced its own destruction:

> What lies beyond this limit remains unknown: it destroys reason not only in the sense that rational knowledge finds itself eliminated by proletarianization,[43] but in the sense that individuals and groups, losing the very possibility of existing (for their existence depends on being able to express their will), losing therefore all reason for living, become literally mad, and tend to despise life – their own and that of others. The result is the risk of a global social explosion consigning humanity to a nameless barbarism.[44]

From this point of view, modernity appears to be a progressive process of denegation of the limits of reason itself, where what had previously been denied re-emerges in the Anthropocene as the risk of losing the very

regime of truth, but of what might be called the very idea of truth […]. This neoliberal opportunism could be thought of as promulgating a war on truth, and on governance, even as it seeks to guarantee a new form of control and a new mode of performative legitimation on realtime". Regarding Stiegler's idea of truth, this author agrees with the position that "Stiegler argues that truth (along with the just and the beautiful) consist as a desired horizon across the technical evolution of the human being, while also altering significantly in the character and potential of what can be materialized as truthful (or just or beautiful). Historically and technically – that is, in the reality of what comes to actually exist – these 'variants' of the truth differ. They are not just variations on one transcendent truthfulness, but evolving projections of what consistently animates human psychic and social becoming, so long as there is a being (or a becoming) worthy of the name".

41   Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 46.

42   See Chapter 8. Morality and Disinhibition in Modern Times, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 108-131.

43   See The Age of Disruption, 243 for the discussion with Marx and Engels: 1. Proletarianization is the loss of knowledge that comes from the exteriorization of knowledge in the means of production, what Marx and Engels described (loss of *savoir-faire*); 2. During the 20th century, proletarianization has been generalized: it occurs on the side of the means of production but also on the side of lifestyles, that are produced by the economic system (loss of *savoir-vivre*); 3. With intensive compute and 'deep learning' it also extends to intellectual and scientific work and to conception in general (*savoir concevoir et theorizer*). In the automatic society it extends to all classes. It produces entropy.

44   Stiegler, The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism, 8.

possibility of existence, both on a psychic and collective level, but also on an ecological level as well. This passage from reason to unreason is possible precisely because reason "is not an impersonal power: it is a noetic possibility within each of us, and as such it constitutes, as a potential shared by everyone but one that must be actualized, a responsibility that is always both individual and collective";[45] thus it is political and dependent on technics. Reason forms itself because it deforms itself,[46] it is essentially precarious and must always be maintained anew through a struggle against its reversal[47]. In this way it is a *passage à l'acte* that "*must not be lost* in order to live, noetically, the consistence of existence".[48] Stiegler's reflection can be read as a matter of *honing weapons* that are intended to assist in this struggle, weapons whose primary aim is to identify the forces, tendencies, processes and energies against which it is pertinent to fight[49] and to highlight the political and existential importance of taking time to reflect and critique in order to reverse the overwhelming tendency of the day: think we must.[50] Because his philosophy proceeds as an unsettled network (*réseau d'inquiétudes*)[51] that from one question keeps bifurcating and deepening into new questions, our ambition here will be to focus on only two bifurcations: the one concerning the possibility of aesthetic experience and the contemporary "nightmare aesthetic", and the one concerning the place of dreams in the Anthropocene. In so doing, the possibility emerges of reading the books concerning *The Symbolic Misery* (ed. or. 2004 & 2005) as a necessary compendium to *The Age of Disruption* (ed. or. 2016)—that is, the Anthropocene—in that they highlight the centrality of aesthetics for human life as being artifactual and the existence of a war against aesthetic experience whose consequences might be disastrous for the whole planet.

2. Aesthetic experience and the nightmare aesthetic

In Stiegler's thought, aesthetic experience implies the relationship between the sensible organs of the body, the artificial organs of technics and the social organizations resulting from the articulation of both artifacts and

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45   Bernard Stiegler, *States of Shock. Stupidity and Knowledge in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 16.

46   *Ibid.*, 17.

47   "[…] this 'conquest' we make remains always radically to be re-made and defended. What Adorno and Horkeimer added to the Kantian definition of the *Aufklärung* as conquest is that it must always be defended *against itself*, since it constantly tends, in becoming rationalization (that is, reification), to turn against itself as knowledge becomes stupidity – this dialecticization of the *Aufklärung* occurring after Weber's discovery that rationalization is characteristic of capitalist becoming. Presenting itself in this way in the garb of rationalization, reason cannot avoid engendering the temptation of irrationality" (States of Shock, 17).

48   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 27.

49   Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2015).

50   Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

51   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 2.

bodies: a lack of foundations, a default of origin (*défaut d'origine*). The reciprocal series of disadjustments between these three dimensions of human aesthetics can be read as a history of de-functionalizations and re-functionalizations of organs:

> […] prostheticity grounds human aesthetics as a prosthaesthesis, which can only take shape following the achievement of the upright stance as the inaugural moment of a process in which the hand, relinquishing its motor function, invents a fabricating function. The defunctionalization of the paw, which in this way becomes a hand or a foot, is the very opening of technicity, and represents a refunction-alization […]: the hand produces signs, objects, artefacts, prostheses, and work. And the foot gets dancing. This handiwork [*main ouvrière*] opens [*ouvre*] a world. This is what it does: it produces non-living tech-nical organs, or 'inorganic organized matter'.[52]

Hominization is this pursuit of life by means other than life,[53] the artifactu-alization of organs, which begins with the upright stance and the consti-tution of a socio-technical milieu in which time is spatialized and space is temporalized (what Stiegler calls the epiphilogenetic memory). Everyone participates in this milieu and contributes to its production, and through participation everyone experiences the fiction of a unity, that is, society, supported by the transmission of past experience and knowledge through things that constitute the human world. Thus, artifactual aesthetics has a formative function;[54] it is both a deviation from and a pursuit of animal aesthetics and erotics:[55]

> Leroi-Gourhan speaks of the affect[56] as the first condition – the deep-est and least controllable because the most unconscious – of the unity of human groups, as the essential factor in psychic and collective individuation. Human individuation is characterized by the fact that 'socio-ethnic memory' is artefactual. But it is the affects contained in this memory that constitute the most powerful social bond: the affec-tive stratum of memory is rooted in an aesthetic, and it is both possi-ble and necessary to compare animal aesthetics with the artefactual aesthetics that unfold with the process 'as a mark of group belonging,

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52   Ibid., 120.

53   Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch* (Cambridge - Malden: Polity Press, 2014), 6.

54   Stiegler quotes Lacan and the "formative and erogenous function of beauty" (*Symbolic Misery*. Volume 2, 122; 126; 127; 128), but he puts it in relation to Freud, Darwin, Leroi-Gourhan and the question of individuation with and beyond Simondon.

55   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 126.

56   In the following lines we will use the concept of "affect" without a proper definition, which is in fact missing from Stiegler's books concerning the symbolic misery and similarly absent in the rest of his work as well. Nevertheless, what is fundamental is the qualification of affects as a circuit (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 42; 55) related to desire and forming the feeling of a we from which the feeling of an I depends. Stiegler's theory of affects refers to Leroi-Gourhan, for sure, but also to Deleuze. See the intervention of Paolo Vignola at the Mousikè seminar organized by Edoardo Toffoletto, mins. 38.27-41.12: https://mousike.world/2022/03/31/registrazione-sessione-i-29-gennaio-2022/.[accessed on 5/5/2022]

a mark of power, a mark of war, and a mark of seduction'[…] But, on the other hand, they are to be differentiated at an ethnic level and according to criteria that are not, therefore, biological.[57]

An organism can be affected by what Stiegler calls an "external traumatism" to the extent that it expects it, that it is protentionally charged and already projected towards the exterior. Therefore, the "exterior traumatism" is already contained in the organism's potential, otherwise the organism would be destroyed by it.[58] In the case of humans, what is expected is channeled through what informs expectations and sensorimotor functions; that is, retentions as they depend on memory externalized and re-internalized in the technics of language, writing, tools and gestures, if we follow the interpretation of Yuk Hui.[59] Consciousness consists, in fact, of a temporal flux of primary retentions (perceptions that are selections or choices) that pass through the filter of secondary retentions (memory) oriented by tertiary retentions. A primary retention is in a way a repetition of the secondary retention, but this repetition never happens in the same way as before, precisely because this experience has already been experienced in the past. In this way the relationship is not linear, but rather it has the form of a spiral. Differences occur on an individual level but also on a collective level: for example, even though we watch the same film in front of the same screen, our individual experiences are different from one another because we filter the material presented by the film through our own specific memories. *Singularity* is precisely this endless novelty of the sensible,[60] the undetermined and unexpected, the difference in repetition, the transformation of what affects and who is affected:[61]

> When the soul is noetic in act, its perception of the sensible is not that of a simple reception but always of an ex-ception: it only takes place as the *individuation* of the one who senses […]. To sense noetically is to produce *oneself* through what is sensed, and in this production-of-self is the encounter of the singularity of the self in the singularity of the sensed in which it is reflected.[62]

By highlighting the evolution of the relationships between technics, bodies and societies, Stiegler's general organology and genealogical approach to

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57 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 130.

58 Ibid., 151–52.

59 Yuk Hui, *On the Existence of Digital Objects*, (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 147.

60 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 18.

61 "Affected, I affect in turn, and in this way I give back and put into circulation the affect that is trans-formed in circulation. But this trans-formation, which is a trans-*figuration*, goes by way of forms which are the matrices that inform both my expectations, as retentional and protentional horizons, and my sensorimotor functions. And at the end of this transfigured trans-formation, there is the *unexpected*, which is to say, the surprise that exceeds any understanding. There is emotion in its exclamation. This is psychosocial individuation thought through and in the sensational experience of the sensible" (*ymbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 109).

62 Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 48.

aesthetics inscribes politics at the very core of sensibility, in what it deems to be the possibility of producing singularity through participation and adoption of a technical milieu:[63] "politics is the art of securing the unity of the state in its desire for a common future, in its in-dividuation, its singularity as becoming-one. Such a desire assumes a common aesthetic ground: being together is feeling together."[64] Thus, the problem resides not in technics in general, but rather in their particular use and control, which opens up an avenue for a particular mode of individual and collective existence and can thus lead to singularity and individuation, or not. Aesthetics participation is this adoption of a technical milieu, which is political because it concerns a sharing of the sensible that allows something to be possible at the expense of something else. To sense something is to be able to express it, to transform it and to make it sensible for another: the sensible is technical and symbolic.[65] The latter function concerns the production and discovery of traces in collective time[66] through synchrony and diachrony: in the case of language, for example, I can speak to someone else because I am not in absolute synchrony with her; but if I can speak to her, it is because my diachrony tends to synchronize with her.[67] This articulation and composition of two forces generates symbols as dynamic processes that root in aesthetic experience. But in order for this experience to be one—in order for it to make sense—it must be expressed and sensed by another through shared technics and knowledge, and their transmission and implementation:

> The possibility of sensing, as perception and not only as sensation (Husserl would say as intentionality), is also, and to begin with, a possibility of *making* sense: it is a production. But such a capacity for producing sense, which is to say, *sensing commensurately with the sense one makes* for the other (including oneself as an other), presupposes a *know-how* where sensing, as the excitation of a sense by way of an organ—sight, for example—confers its sense on the sensed by inscribing *aisthesis* in a *semeiosis*, in a logical and symbolic horizon where the noetic soul in potential can act out, and where reception and production are inseparable. This logical and semiotic horizon, which I

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63   "The question of politics is a question of aesthetics and, vice versa, the question of aesthetics is a question of politics. I use the word aesthetics here in its widest sense, where aesthesis means sensory perception, and where the question of aesthetics is, therefore, that of feeling and sensibility in general" (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 2*, 1).

64   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 2.

65   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 33. "The noetic soul is characterized by the per-ception in act of a sense formed in this way (which, as sensible, is also symbolic and technical). So this kind of per-ception is never a simple re-ception: it is always already a production that is returned. When I sense something, one way or another I express it, sooner or later I make it sensible for another – insofar as I sense it noetically. This is why the exits of concert halls, cinemas and theatres are always so verbal, chatty even: the emotion received calls for its urgent verbalization. In order to form itself, judgment requires that it be realized as quickly as possible on the scene of symbolization [...]. I only REALLY sense, which is to say in REALITY, that which I am able to RENDER sensible" (33-34).

66   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 6.

67   Stiegler, *Acting Out*, 52.

have also just called symbolic, is, however, originally a technical horizon: noetic acting out is *technical*, a *tekhne*, which is to say, an art.[68]

Sensibility, technicity and simbolicity entwined one another and found the possibility of reason. But, following Stiegler, since the First Industrial Revolution we can distinguish three transformations of sensibility that are "machinic": the first one is the passage from artisan work to industrial production; the second one concerns the transformation of lifestyles in the consumerist economy; the last one concerns the digital age. As the example of music shows, with the development of recording machines it became possible to listen to music without knowing how to make it (to listen privately), which means the separation between producers and consumers. 'Cultural capitalism' is precisely the exploitation of this potential under an economy of consumption "capturing the attention of souls so as to control the behavior of bodies";[69] this is what Stiegler calls "a nightmare aesthetic".[70] It is thus a matter of attention, a war against aesthetic experience[71] through aesthetic conditioning, the homogenization of memories, desires and behaviors through industrial temporal objects (see §1). Despite that, in Symbolic Misery 1 Stiegler demonstrates that cinema occupies a unique position in this war because, as both industrial technology and art, it is an object that can combat aesthetic conditioning on its own territory[72] by producing a difference in the repetition. Again, the question of the unexpected and of singularity is at stake:

> Art in general in that which seeks to temporalize differently, so that the time of consciousness of the I, supported by the unconscious ground of its incarnated memory, is always diachronic. It liberates through its affirmation the narcissistic unexpected of consciousness's singularity, which can be projected in a we through the intermediary of the *screen that every work of art represents*. This is an experience. But television, on the contrary, seeks to synchronize consciousness, to neutralize them as consciousnesses, confining them in the most impoverished modality of the repetition compulsion.[73]

This battle against aesthetic experience is a battle for time as the attention, availability and disposition needed for this experience to be made. This leads to the destruction of the circuit of desire that is no longer structured as a gift,[74] as an exchange; that is, as a production of symbols. It is a loss of primordial narcissism. The control of affects through temporal objects, eliminating diachrony and singularity of the objects themselves,

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68   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 2. Katastrophe of the Sensible*, 31.

69   Ibid., 12.

70   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 84.

71   That is, a war against noetic experience in general since "[…] all thought is aesthetic, and always, at the origin of a concept you will find an affect" (*Symbolic Misery. Volume 1*, 82).

72   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*. viii

73   Ibid., 91.

74   Ibid., 9.

does not generate desires but a repetition compulsion that results in the explosion of drives–what happened, for example, on September 11.

3. Dreaming in the Anthropocene

To understand this loss of reason, that is, the loss of reason for living that creates and gives the feeling of existing,[75] becomes even more fundamental in the passage out of the analog audiovisual industry into the digital one. The reconfiguration of telecommunications through the internet was the beginning of the constitution of what Stiegler calls a 'reticular society', based on technologies that house enormous amounts of computational and automated power and run at extremely fast paces, thus destroying social relations, local cultures and psychosocial energies:

> 'Desires, expectations, volitions, will and so on': everything that for individuals forms the horizon of *their* future, constituted by *their* protentions, is outstripped, overtaken and progressively replaced by *automatic* protentions that are produced by intensive computing systems operating between one and four million times quicker than the nervous systems of psychic individuals.[76]

The problem of algorithmic governamentality, discussed in the opening paragraph of this article, is that it moves more quickly than any individual or collective will. This is the absence of epoch that is the Anthropocene, an epoch in which wills are obsolete in advance, in which the system of references and significances that is fundamental for individuation is submitted to the digital industry in the absence of a politics worthy of the name.[77] Retentions are standardized; protentions are progressively replaced by automatic ones.

If the relationship of consciousness to an object is the projection of an arrangement between primary and secondary retentions and protentions, the same object will generate different phenomena for different consciousnesses, but also for the same consciousness at different times, because the consciousness has previously encountered that particular object. This encounter, therefore, is made up of stereotypes: what has become a habitude (and thus the ordinary), and traumatypes, the production of differences (thus the extraordinary). The intertwining between these two is conditioned by memories and technics, which are organized around a culture, a collective individuation in which stereotypes form significations as common usages, and traumatypes form sense as object investments disrupting common usage.[78] A culture is precisely that which

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75   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 9.

76   Ibid., 8.

77   Ibid., 75.

78   Bernard Stiegler, "Organology of Dreams and Archi-Cinema," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 24, no. 47 (2014): 10.

fosters this relationship between the ordinary and the extraordinary, but it is also a thing of which care needs to be taken.[79] The relation to the extra-ordinary and enchantment is a fundamental function of the faculty of reason[80], its relation to fiction, delirium−*delirare* means to deviate from the furrow−and madness. It is the question of the dream, too, that is at stake. But it is also the question of the abandonment of the natural attitude, a suspension and a conversion that are central to the *epokhe*, as has been argued:

> We cannot go to the extra-ordinary−turn towards it, modify the gaze in its direction, abandon the 'natural attitude', make a 'conversion'−without leaving the path, the furrow, of oneself, in order to enter into the self-an-other [*soi-l'autre*]. It is precisely in this way that it is other−and that there is the other [...]. This *going to the other* that is the extra-ordinary [...] [is that] without which life would not be worth the *pain and effort* of being lived.[81]

But to abandon the 'natural attitude' is also to become human (or, as Stiegler says, non-inhuman) through the artifactualization of organs, the fact of exosomatization. So, if realizing a dream is to go beyond oneself, technics as prosthesis are precisely this dream essential to human life. Realizing a dream is thus a condition of humanity and consists of an artificialization of reality, a transformation that first requires a de-realization, a de-naturalization of reality. But a dream can be realized only if, after a de-realization, a new reality emerges, a new epoch of individuation occurs. To protein that which is not yet means to take one's dreams for realities, to hallucinate, and hallucination can lead to invention and innovation in the event that it is socialized or adopted, that it becomes reasonable. The future−as a consequence of exosomatization−consists of the realization of a delirium that becomes real. But this is also what happens within the process of disinhibition, where risk-taking and disruption are systematized and accepted as normal, leading to the Anthropocene as the age of madness, the absence of epoch; that is, the absence of transindividuation, the impossible constitution of a we and an I.

Computational capitalism and algorithmic governamentality impede dreaming as the improbable and unexpected through rationalization, calculability and automation. What in the analog cultural industry was a standardization of aesthetic experience, where the production of symbols pertains only to producers and not to consumers (resulting in diabols more than symbols), is with the advent of digital reticulation a complete "domestication of time and space".[82] Despite being exalted as the triumph

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79   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 82.

80   Bernard Stiegler, "The New Conflict of the Faculties and Functions," trans. Daniel Ross, *Qui Parle* 26, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 79−99, https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-3822421.

81   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 85.

82   Ibid., 49.

of individual freedom, it is one that transforms freedom—as the possibility to extra-vaguer—into the possibility of producing clicks. The final stage of grammatization is attained, the type of tertiary retention that appeared in the Western world that consists in a spatialization of time that enables control.[83] As "a war waged on spirits via the technical development", grammatization allows for the constitution of homogeneity and political power understood as the control of psychic and collective individuation. In the hyperindustrial age, this extends to "the discretization of gestures, behavior and movement in general […] going well beyond the linguistic horizon"[84] until the exploitation of dreams, which means the prevention of dreaming[85] in the 24/7 context of capitalism. Through complete reticulation, platforms like Google seek to eliminate defaults, but also to eliminate differences and variabilities that are necessary for desire to occur, desire being "a dream capable of realizing itself."[86] But if the digital, through the speed at which it functions, destroys the improbable, that is, "desire, affection, attachment, identification, singularity, individuation and the feeling of existing psychically and thus collectively, which are […] the conditions of any positively protentional hallucination", it is also "the bearer of a new epoch of psychic and collective individuation,"[87] thus a *pharmakon*.

The denial of madness from reason, of uncertainty from calculability, of dream from reality in order to control the latter and program it, leads to a point where "the laws of the improbable and the unpredictable assert themselves but in negative fashion."[88] This point of absolute madness is self-destruction through a disruption that becomes absolutely and irreversibly entropic. For this reason, Stiegler's approach to the Anthropocene aims to conceive it not just as an environmental crisis but also to see it in relation to the conditions and consequences of exosomatization as fundamental to psychic and collective individuation. Nevertheless, if technics are a *pharmakon*, rethinking the disruption that the digital provokes means to pose the question of who controls it, why and how, and to recognize the importance of forming a new public power that allows for individuations to be possible, a 'good-enough' power that takes care instead of leading to self-destruction. Dreams return as political: for this improbable bifurcation to come, hallucination is fundamental as that which does not yet exist but can be realized from a field of consistent possibilities. Hallucination is what founds fabrication and is founded in an aesthetic participation to the shared techno-symbolic milieu. In Stiegler's terms this fabrication—and hallucination—is pharmacological because it is both necessary and haunted by its failure, because it could destroy the one who

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83   Bernard Stiegler, "Foreword" in *Yuk Hui, On the Existence of Digital Objects*, 256.

84   Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery. Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch*, 56–57.

85   Stiegler, *The Age of Disruption. Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, 287.

86   Ibid., 54.

87   Ibid., 42.

88   Ibid., 96.

has fabricated it and the world in which it is fabricated; it contains the possibility of losing reason. The task is then to reinforce the preservation, cultivation and development[89] of reason as that which must dream – and realize its dreams:

> We must, then, be *much crazier* than these disruptors—whether they are so unconsciously or deliberately—who provoke an outburst of barbaric violence without precedent. We must realize a 'madness' of another kind—by provoking a much *more unexpected and unanticipated* bifurcation than those anticipated by all these madmen.[90]

Finally, to escape the Anthropocene means to cultivate the possibility of human beings to produce differences in their encounters with the environment, and to do this specifically through exosomatizations. If *pharmaka* are what render human life possible but also what potentially lead to destruction and toxicity, to escape from the Anthropocene means to cultivate a relationship with them that allows reason to bifurcate, given that reason depends on the dream of exosomatization, and to pose a constant critique of the limits of exosomatization itself.[91]

Conclusions

The problem of the aesthetic experience and of the artifactual foundation of human aesthetics as posed by Bernard Stiegler allows for the centrality of aesthetics to be conceived as exosomatization—that is, technics—for human life and its transformation into the field of an everyday war. The singularity of aesthetic experience is central to individuation conceived as the possibility to act, transforming the world, and to make sense, a possibility that is threatened by the consumerist economy and the all-pervasive reticulation and automation of the digital economy, resulting in the emergence of madness on an individual and a collective level, but also on an ecological level, as the concept of the Anthropocene expresses. Stiegler shows that the ecological destruction is also a psychosocial one. It is the destruction of aesthetic experience, of the faculty of dreaming and of the faculty of reason that allows not only for survival, but also for living well.[92] In Stiegler's view, these functions produce the unexpected, the extra-ordinary, the enchantment without which life would not be worth the pain and the effort of being lived. Despite from the differences between *The Symbolic Misery* and *The Age of Disruption*, the second being charged with concepts such as the pharmakon, it can be read as a further step in the critique of the articulation between sensibility and technics in the present

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89   Ibid., 103.

90   Ibid., 104.

91   Bernard Stiegler, "The New Conflict of the Faculties and Functions," trans. Daniel Ross, *Qui Parle* 26, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 79–99, https://doi.org/10.1215/10418385-3822421.

92   Sara Baranzoni, "La funzione della ragione. Per non divenire folli nella società automatica" in VV.AA., aut aut n. 371, *Bernard Stiegler. Per una farmacologia della tecnica*, (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2016).

time, moving from retentions to protentions. The theory of the three types of organs (bodies, technics and societies) constituting human aesthetics is fundamental for the conception of a possible alternative that stays within these three dimensions, that is, another use of technics itself as the *défaut, qu'il faut*.

Claudia Nigrelli is a 36-cycle doctoral student at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna (Aesthetics), in cotutorship with EHESS Paris (Law, Political Studies, Philosophy). She is part of the Architectural Humanities research group and is currently working on German philosophical anthropology.

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Almost Black Green.
On the Nineteenth-Century Park
and the Naturalization
of Inequalities

Pierpaolo Ascari — University of Bologna
Contact: pierpaolo.ascari@unibo.it

ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century, the projects of what Lewis Mumford called their "positive side" developed together with industrial cities: the large public park. The article aims to show how the inspiration, construction and functioning of these great engineering works also reveal a "dark side", understood as the use of the landscape and the spectacle of nature as a means of reproducing social inequalities.

Perhaps the best way to understand how spaces act is to refer to the pandemic emergency, which for all of us also involved the elaboration of a remarkable perceptual experience. The experience of a domestic space bewitched by the possible latency of the contagion and the experience of the city transfigured by the lockdown. A deserted, silent, abandoned, almost suffering city. It is as if the virus had animated the walls and squares, allowing us to experience something comparable to the perceived space from the perspective of animistic cultures. Not for chamce, animism is an essential dimension of the feeling of the uncanny, according to Freud. Or even better: the virus has made a more ordinary dialectic, that of the interaction between bodies and an acting space, more intense and describable. My proposal is therefore to preserve the recent and dramatic impression of this dialectic in order to understand the action of other spaces in other contexts, on other bodies. Because not only the spaces animated by SARS-CoV-2 plot something, but also the no less global ones of the safe city, the postcard city and all the other declinations of the urban characterized by an overall transfer of social problems in the field of aesthetic-perceptive solutions.

The argument could be presented as a variation on the theme of the *aestheticization of politics*, as Walter Benjamin defined it, that is, of the recourse to the aesthetic sphere to elude consciences in the construction of consensus. Or, in the long term, one could go so far as to suspect that the deep roots of this trend are to be sought even in the Counter-Reformation and in the last sessions of the Council of Trent, when the church of Rome opposed iconoclasm by reiterating that the images would continue to hold their function of *Biblia pauperum*, to allow the revelation to bless even the poor in spirit. Not for nothing the most radical reasons for the perception of the divine were supported by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Diego Laínez, according to whom two kinds of honors should be reserved for images: for what they represented (*relative adoration*) and for what they consisted materially, as an object of veneration and vehicle of "anathemas" in the same way as a consecrated robe (*objective adoration*)[1]. More recently, then, the relationship between perception and discipline will be given crucial importance in the development of Michel Foucault's reflection on the punitive city, where the penalty of the *Ancien Régime* will be replaced by "scenery, perspectives, optical effects, *trompe-l'œil*" which have the purpose of correcting behaviors through a specific figurative organization of the perceived space. Foucault writes: "At the crossroads, in the gardens, at the side of roads being repaired or bridges built, in workshops open to all, in the depths of mines that may be visited, will be hundreds of tiny theaters of punishment."[2] Punishments which therefore will have to operate in the same way as the anathemas

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1   Paolo Sarpi, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), 1250-61.

2   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 113.

inherent in the images of the Counter-Reformation, alongside the mimetic work of subjectivation that the Council of Trent had to favor by placing miracles and the example of the saints as a source of imitation before the eyes of the faithful, basis of a procedure that Foucault himself does not fail to define as "positive mechanics" of everyday life.[3]

The social positivity of nature

It is precisely the reference to such "mechanics" that is insistently mobilized by nineteenth-century designers to motivate the construction of large public parks. In an attempt to illustrate it, however, I will have to depart from how interpreting the appearance of the parks is a great city theorist like Lewis Mumford, according to whom their primary function would have been that "to provide for the masses of the city a brief equivalent of a visit to the countryside."[4] In this sense, says Mumford, "the designers recognized the need of the saving opposite within the city", drawing from the romanticism that continued to inspire the conception of nature in the context of industrialization a "positive side" (as Mumford always calls it). Without denying the existence of this positivity, therefore, the working hypothesis to which I would like to stick rather concerns its operation in the implementation of what could be defined as the corrective function or the *dark side* of public green. In other words, should we really consider the park as the *opposite extreme* of the industrial city?

Because even if we want to consider a paradigmatic case like that of the Buttes-Chaumont in Paris, for example, characterized precisely by the search for a profound discontinuity with respect to the metropolitan landscape that surrounds it, one would say that the presumed opposition between the public green and the chaotic development of the nineteenth-century city may miss something. To grasp this elusive element, it is perhaps worth noting how the creation of the Buttes-Chaumont represented only one piece of the more comprehensive transformation of Paris operated by Baron Haussmann during the Second Empire. From Marx and Engels to Benjamin himself, many have made explicit what was the class strategy that at the time had to animate the gutting of the old neighborhoods, both from a speculative point of view (with the creation of the first real estate credit), both from the point of view of the advantage that the *grands boulevards* would have ensured with respect to the narrow streets if it had been a question of repressing new riots. The baron himself, in his memoirs, does not fail to associate *the project d'embelissement* a properly military connotation.

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3   Ibid., 112.

4   Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (San Diego, New York, London: HBJ Book, 1970), 218.

The Buttes-Chaumont will then be understood as an extension of the same strategy and a realization of the same offices in the perspective of the advantages that a specific engineering of nature could have brought to the governance of social tensions.[5]

In the first place, what at first glance would appear to be an uncontaminated portion of the city is in effect the product of a specific technological performance. All the waters are artificial, starting with the waterfall and the lake, with an increasingly massive use of infrastructures that towards the end of the century led the press of the time to define the park as a "museum of cement and concrete."[6] Nature is supported and staged by technological means, it is nature built for the purpose of enhancing the policies of space and perception that the Second Empire is resorting to counter the tendencies that had led to the revolutionary uprisings of 1848. One of the contrast media, then, consists precisely in the concealment of inequalities through the participation of all classes in the confrontation with the *artificially opposite* of nature and the strategy to which the park seems to obey, consequently, we would say that of connecting a disorientation of a social order to the geographical disorientation. The park must refer to the landscape of the mountains or the sea, the Alps or the Norman coast, but it is also a walk in geological time, a return to the origins of the earth and their frightening otherness compared to the corresponding appearance of all mankind (as in the abortive project of inserting the stone reproduction of some "antediluvian" creatures into the cave). The spaces designed and administered in this way, therefore, undoubtedly pursue the objective of beautifying a suburb or a neighborhood,[7] but as "machines to produce urbanity" that tend openly to the correction of less integrated subjects.[8]

Frederick Law Olmsted could provide us with a sort of story of origins in this sense when, in May 1851, he visited Birkenhead Park in Liverpool.[9] In front of the entrance to what he calls a "People's Garden" Olmsted says he came across a group of women to whom he seems to assign a constitutive role in the development of his *reportage*. The women go towards him shouting: "Will you take a cup of milk, sirs! Good, cool, sweet, cow's milk, gentlemen, or right warm from the ass", until the visitor manages to slip away through the Ionic colonnade that introduces him to a completely different world. A tree-lined, flowery world, full of adventurous paths that

5   Chiara Santini, "Construire le paysage de Paris. Alphand et ses équipes (1855-1891)," in *Le Grand Paris d'Alphand. Création et transmission d'un paysage urbain* (Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2018), 38.

6   Antoine Picon, "Nature et ingégnerie: le parc des Buttes-Chaumont," *Romantisme* 150 (2010): 35-49.

7   Françoise Hamon, "Les Buttes-Chaumont," in *Les Parcs et jardins dans l'urbanisme parisien XIX e - XX e siècle.* (Paris: Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 2001), 99-100.

8   Picon, "Nature et ingégnerie," 47-48.

9   Frederick Law Olmsted, *Writings on Landscape, Culture, and Society* (New York: Library of America, 2015), 56-63.

flank a central pond, where the island was built amidst aquatic plants, goldfish and swans, and is accessed via a Chinese bridge. A world where "the contrivances to effect ventilation and cleanliness are very complete", above all, and where lower-ranking people enjoy the landscape together with gentlemen playing cricket or archery, because "the poorest British peasant is as free to enjoy it in all its parts, as the British Queen." Between a small temple and the orchestra for the marching bands, even "the wives of very humble laborers" can assume a demeanor that no longer has anything to do with the still warm milk of the ass, of which they emphasize the nunredeemed, incorrigible and plebeian nature. For the maximum satisfaction of "philanthropists and men of taste", certainly, but also of speculators and businessmen, because "the consequence of all these sorts of things is, that all about, the town lands, which a few years ago were almost worthless wastes, have become of priceless value." In short, the park's technology is one that Olmsted allows himself to summarize, six years before signing off on the Central Park project, in the guidebook he is leafing through in Liverpool, which says: "Here nature may be viewed in her loveliest garb, the most obdurate heart may be softened, and the mind gently led to pursuits which refine, purify, and alleviate the humblest of the toil-worn." And finally he quotes a certain Dr. Robertson, author of an 1847 book entitled *The Present Sanatory Condition of Birkenhead*, because together with political advantages, the people's garden seems to offer an important contribution to the fight against disease. In this respect the park corresponds to a strategy that can be defined both biological and moral[10] and which involves the transformation of the way in which public space is perceived and reproduced.[11] A space of which the synecdoche of the park is appointed to tame the uses, instilling in the consciousness of the lower classes an ideal of harmony and a corresponding intolerance to the conflict that the most spontaneous practices of the street (from strikes to petty crime) were making at the time increasingly desirable.[12]

Enclosures and contacts

These are the very first findings of a genealogy that should always be kept handy while we witness the simultaneous convergence of two factors. On the one hand, the debate on the so-called Anthropocene risks endorsing a conception of nature similar to that designed and then made operational by the engineers of the nineteenth-century parks, delegated to the aesthetic-perceptive government of inequalities and to the deactivation of conflict. In a book that is useful in many ways, Gianfranco Pellegrino

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10   Brett Williams, "The Paradox of Parks". *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 13 (2006): 158.

11   David J. Madden, "Revisiting the End of Public Space: Assembling the Public in an Urban Park," *City & Community* 9 (2010): 200.

12   Alvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Central Park against the streets: the enclosure of public space cultures in mid-nineteenth century New York," *Social & Cultural Geography* 15 (2014): 152.

and Marcello di Paola recently wrote: "Engaging in urban gardens is less striking than promoting an event, but it can have much more lasting political and symbolic consequences".[13] It seems clear to me: there is still something of these urban gardens that inherits the function of alternative to conflict (or its more traditional forms) that was entrusted to the parks of Baron Haussmann and Olmsted. On the other hand, the same function could take on a further and more overall relevance in light of the processes that continue to transform our cities into an articulated series of *theme parks*: extending the corrective model of Birkenhead Park to all spaces that can be translated into a setting more in line with tourist consumption, shopping, cultural festivals, Bohemianism, food and wine or what Jane Jacobs already defined the fetish of public green.[14] As the late Mark Fisher has repeatedly argued, these are processes that define the systematic retreat of neoliberalism to the economic and social solutions of the nineteenth century as modern or dutifully in step with the times. The theming of the city, writes Michael Sorkin, claims to be accredited as a "great scenes of the civic, visible and accessible", where the theme park acts as a model for the overall production of "the place that embodies it all, the ageographia [the disorientation to which I referred earlier], the surveillance and control, the simulations without end. [A space that] presents its happy regulated vision of pleasure - all those artfully hoodwinking forms - as a substitute for the democratic public realm, and it does so appealingly by stripping troubled urbanity of its sting, of the presence of the poor, of crime, of dirt, of work".[15] And if it really had been about learning from Las Vegas, conceiving the entire urban landscape as a *decorated shed*, that is to say a dimension in which all the "systems of space and structure are directly at the service of program",[16] we could consider ourselves satisfied. Except that the program in question remains that of the governmental function to which the park seems destined from the beginning (the ancient Franconian *parrik* which remains in the Latin *parricus* and in the German *pferch* means precisely "fence") and which is now being extended to the city entirely included in the disciplinary perspective of *new urban enclosures*.[17]

These enclosures always maintain a vital relationship with the ownership dimension of spaces, both when they are invoked as a solution to all the problems that should be attributed to the existence of excessively

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13   Gianfranco Pellegrino and Marcello di Paola, *Nell'Antropocene. Etica e politica alla fine del mondo* (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2018), 227.

14   Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961). 90.

15   Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a theme park: the new American city and the end of public space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), XV.

16   Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press, 1972), 87.

17   Stuart Hodkinson, "The new urban enclosures," *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action* 16 (2012): 500-518.

common spaces,[18] and when they are conceptualized as an extension of the predatory morphology that has always accompanied the so-called original accumulation of capital.[19] In the prehistory of the first case, the citizens of Atlanta will be mentioned who at the time of desegregation reacted to the presence of blacks in public parks with the request to transfer the municipal lands into the hands of private investors. White citizens of the working class, of course, who would not have benefited in the least from privatizations but who, through the identification of any public policy with a provision for the benefit of African Americans, favored them at every level and by every means, even resorting to the fiscal revolt.[20] In the second case, it will be appropriate to quote Mike Davis when he notes that "Latin American immigrants and their children […] exult in playgrounds, parks, squares, libraries and other endangered species of US public space, and thus form one of the most important constituencies for the preservation of our urban commons."[21]

Mary Louise Pratt defined it as a "contact zone", this kind of corresponding joint "to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths."[22] But the contact area is also one in which stories and lifestyles force the status of citizenship (p. 39) into "a productive space, not only reflective, where new possibilities and misunderstanding are generated at the same time. and understanding."[23] And to return to the point, therefore, also the contemporary city in which the green economy and the less protected sections of the population are damned, despite being hit by a violent division into fences or precisely in relation to the attempt to symbolically saturate its conformation and atmospheres, is articulated in a more comprehensive system of continuously marked and disputed spaces, areas of contact between the urban environment as a "growth machine", the consensus that these machines are able to generate and the not necessarily formal resistance of the bodies that remain entangled.[24]

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18   Shin Lee and Chris Webster, "Enclosure of the urban commons," *GeoJournal* 66, (2006): 27-42; Michael Hebbert, "Re-Enclosure of the Urban Picturesque: Green-Space Transformations in Postmodern Urbanism," *The Town Planning Review* 79 (2008): 31-59.

19   Tom Mels, "Primitive Accumulation and the Production of Abstract Space: Nineteenth-century Mire Reclamation on Gotland," *Antipode* 46, (2014): 1113-1133; Alvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Capitalist Formations of Enclosure: Space and the Extinction of the Commons," *Antipode* 47, (2015): 999-1020.

20   Kevin M. Kruse, "The Politics of Race and Public Space. Desegregation, Privatization, and the Tax Revolt in Atlanta," *Journal of Urban History* 31, (2005): 610-633.

21   Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism. Latinos Reinvent the Us City* (London, New York: Verso, 2000), 55.

22   Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991): 34.

23   Antonio Di Campli, *Abitare la differenza. Il turista e il migrante* (Roma: Donzelli, 2019), 84.

24   Harvey Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1976): 309-332.

Conclusion

In this way, Sevilla-Buitrago himself poses the fundamental problem of the conflict between the new enclosures and the body-perceptive sphere, while not daring to propose a solution, who writes: "No doubt, the body is a crucial battlefield of capitalism, both an accumulation strategy and a space for the production of social order and subjectivity. It is the object of a series of dispossessions throughout history, intensified recently in a wide range of bodily forms of alienation and commodification: from labor to affect power, from the corporeal image and reproductive capacities to sex and sexuality, organs and the genome. These and many other bodily aspects and functions are regulated, exploited, sold or trafficked, often violently, either on a state-enshrined or illegal basis. However, it remains unclear in what sense these procedures can be regarded as cases of enclosure."[25]

It remains unclear, therefore, but already the same model of the nineteenth-century park, by making a disciplinary enclosure correspond to a perimeter of wrought iron, while not resulting in a confiscation of the bodies, it selects the perceptions and expressions. The enclosure, in other words, does not exclusively call into question the most brutal processes of dispossession, but can also be determined at the level of the *perceptual canons* that inform and structure another common, that of bodies in connection with each other, namely the modulation field of *the nature that we are*. Intervening on the perceived environment therefore means manipulating this modulation: this would seem to be the contact area in which the milk sellers whom Olmsted met at the entrance to the first public park in history continue to cause scandal and produce tension.

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25   Alvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Capitalist Formations of Enclosure: Space and the Extinction of the Commons," *Antipode* 47 (2015): 16.

Pierpaolo Ascari teaches Aesthetics at the Department of Architecture, University of Bologna. He received his master's degree in philosophy at the University of Bologna, and his Ph.D. at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa. He is author of *Ebola e le forme* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2017), *Attraverso i confini. Lettura, storia ed esperienza estetica in Stendhal e Flaubert* (Milan: Mimesis, 2018), *Corpi e recinti. Estetica ed economia politica del decoro* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2019) and *The Adventure of Form: Aesthetics, Nature and Society* (Delft: BK Books, 2021). He was a fellow at the Alsos Foundation in Bologna for the research program "Migrations and migrants in Italy" and he edited the volume *Oggetti contesi. Le cose nella migrazione* (Milan: Mimesis 2020).

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MAIN SECTION

The *Terres d'Espérances*: Integration of Domestic and Green Worths into a Civic Polity

Fabien Jakob — Laval University, Quebec, Canada
Contact: fabienjakob@bluewin.ch

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the participatory revision of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema which develops into a polemical process of political will formation that is analysed with the tools of the sociology of justification. The challenge is to determine whether the engagement of citizens, representatives of agricultural lobbies, environmental activists and spokespersons for cultural heritage associations into the controversy calls across institutional and social arenas for a requalification of cultural and natural goods threatened with destruction in order to ensure their protection and transmission to future generations.

Natural heritage as a social construct

The integration of so-called natural elements into the field of cultural heritage is one of the most striking developments of recent decades.[1] Very schematically, the notion of natural heritage has historically developed from mystifying exaltations of nature; the writings of R.W. Emerson and H.D. Thoreau are indeed part of a transcendental vision of the relationship between humankind and a wild nature witnessing divine activity;[2] it is then a question of making theses spaces sacred and of preserving them from the very extension of the civilisation process.[3] The notion of natural heritage is also shaped by aesthetic influences characteristic of the 18th century;[4] it is then a matter of protecting these places for resourcing and contemplation that gain momentum with the picturesque journeys of the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. The notion of natural heritage also results from a significant scientific production, particularly in the field of natural sciences (first inventories, definition of selection criteria, etc.).[5] It is also a matter of competing against actors attempting to get exclusive access to natural spaces and resources; the creation of the first national parks and reserves can indisputably be considered as an outcome of a legal battle against the nascent tourist industry.[6] The notion of natural heritage is also politicised in the construction of national territorialities; it is then "the exceptional that is highlighted, that is shown as a founding element of (national) identity";[7] the creation of the first American national parks is indisputably related to the emerging tourist industry.[8] However, the notion of natural heritage is also politicised in the construction of regional territorialities; it then reproduces and updates on a local scale certain spatial and social values "that individuals, groups and collective in a given context project and fix on it".[9] From this point of view, natural heritage can be considered as a social construct;[10] in this respect, certain elites have initially contributed greatly to the designation of natural heritage and

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1   Jean-Claude Lefeuvre, "De la protection de la nature à la gestion du patrimoine naturel", in Patrimoines en folie, éd. par Henri Pierre Jeudy (Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1990), 29-75, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editionsmsh.3778.

2   Lionel Charles and Bernard Kalaora, "Pensée, Sensibilité et Action Dans La Société Française Autour de La Question de La Nature", Annales de Géographie n° 663, no. 5 (November 1, 2008): 3-25, https://doi.org/10.3917/ag.663.0003.

3   Samuel Depraz, *Géographie des espaces protégés. Genèse, principes et enjeux territoriaux* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2008).

4   Claude Raffestin, "De la nature aux images de la nature":, *Espaces et sociétés* n°80A, n° 1 (1 mars 1995): 37-52, https://doi.org/10.3917/esp.1995.n3.0037.

5   Jean Viard, "Protestante la nature?", in Protection de la nature: histoire et idéologie - De la nature à l'environnement, par Anne Cadoret (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985), 161-74.

6   Depraz, *Géographie des espaces protégés. Genèse, principes et enjeux territoriaux*.

7   Paul Arnould et Laurent Simon, *Géographie de l'environnement* (Paris: Belin, 2007), 135.

8   Stéphane Héritier et Lionel Laslaz, *Les parcs nationaux dans le monde. Protection, gestion et développement durable* (Paris: Ellipses, 2008).

9   Michel Lussault, "Identité spatial", in *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, éd. par Jacques Lévy et Michel Lussault (Paris: Bélin, 2003), 973.

10   Christine Bouisset et Isabelle Degrémont, "La patrimonialisation de la nature: un processus en renouvellement", *L'Espace geographique* 42, n° 3 (2013): 193-99.

scientists have certainly professionalized and institutionalised this quali-fication process;[11] however associative movements and actors from civil society have proved to be extremely active in making natural objects rec-ognized as part of heritage.[12] The diversity of beings involved in the qual-ification process can explain to a certain extent the typological evolution of natural objects included in the heritage field: from the patrimonializa-tion of ecologically remarkable objects with a high degree of naturalness, often already valued and protected before being explicitly patrimonialized, to the apprehension of ordinary objects of nature integrated into agricul-tural, forestry, rural or urban contexts.[13] These extensions and hybridisa-tions in the categories of natural heritage are reflected in an "increasing interweaving of natural heritage with other types of heritage: landscape heritage, cultural heritage, etc."[14] As a corollary natural objects are often apprehended with other notions such as the environment, the ecosystem and even the notion of sustainable development and this makes it more complex to understand the scope of natural heritage: "the heritage scale become global and universal (heritage), find its justification in the general interest of humanity and the survival of the planet."[15]

These considerations also question the meaning of natural heritage, from a natural heritage as a symbol of resistance to change that results in Western societies from critics of the consumerist model that have caused the degradation of certain environments since the 19th century,[16] to a natural heritage as a symbol of resilience through the coadaptation and co-evolution of humans and their environment. In this respect, the patrimonialisation of natural objects re-interrogates a certain relation-ship with time: when the last two centuries were focusing on what soci-eties should retain from the past, the 21st century is obsessed with what humanity should bequeath.[17] These considerations which bear witness to an evolution of the perception and representation of nature, so as more or less anthropocentric, biocentric or ecocentric apprehension,[18] have also a major influence on the deployment of strategies of protection, between preservationism, conservationism and other approaches that opt for a pru-dent and measured management of nature that shall ensure future uses.[19]

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11   Depraz, *Géographie des espaces protégés. Genèse, principes et enjeux territoriaux.*

12   Pierre Alphandéry et Agnès Fortier, "Les associations dans le processus de rationalisation des données naturalistes", *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 19, n° 1 (2011): 22-30.

13   Christian Barrère et al., *Réinventer le patrimoine. De la culture à l,économie, une nouvelle pensée du patrimoine?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

14   Bouisset et Degrémont, "La patrimonialisation de la nature: un processus en renouvellement", 195.

15   Ibid.

16   Jean Viard, *Le tiers espace: essai sur la nature* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1990).

17   Lionel Fouré et Claude Obadia, "Entretien avec Françoise Héritier", *Le philosophoire*, n° 1 (2009): 9-25.

18   Catherine Larrère, "Les éthiques environnementales", *Natures sciences sociétés* 18, n° 4 (2010): 405-13.

19   Estienne Rodary, Christian Castellanet, et Georges Rossi, *Conservation de la nature et développement: l'intégration impossible?* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2003).

Methodology

On the occasion of the participatory revision of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema, this research analyses the arguments as well as the normative references called by actors when they publicly justify the meaning or the scope of their actions and when they evaluate what they wish to attribute a value to. This research uses the sociological tools developed by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot that help systematising the logics of action, the modes of justification and forms of judgement that make it possible to measure the worth of beings and objects, with regards to six principles of equivalence (civic, domestic, market, fame, industrial, inspired polities) that actors resort to when they dispel doubts, clarify situations and possibly resolve and close controversies. Data collection (200 reports and memos produced during the consultative process, 15 written interpellations addressed to public authorities, 6 semi-structured interviews, 6 recordings of hearings of opinions, 115 newspaper article, 4 TV broadcasts, legislative and regulatory texts, other digital sources) makes it possible to contextualise this research, to establish a chronology of events and to assure a balanced selection of evidence. Following an initial reading of the corpus highlighting the prevalent themes of representations, beliefs and ideological references reflected by the discourses, the concepts identified are refined, progressively categorised by differentiation and then organised according to an axial coding deemed relevant to the objectives of this research.

The Terres d'Espérance

Located in the second peri-urban ring of Quebec City, on the western edge of the Beauport district and on the Saint-Laurent River north shore, the Terres d'Espérance have a surface area of about 200 hectares. With narrow, elongated lots that are oriented perpendicular to the river, their parcel system still bears the traces of the seigniorial regime. The road network which includes roads laid out from the 17th to the 20th century, in particular Avenue du Bourg-Royal to the west and Boulevard Louis-XIV to the north, also contributes to the specific character of the site. Offering a few vantage points (mainly from Louis-XIV Boulevard, just above Rue du Vignoble), a panorama over the Saint-Laurent Riverand the Ile d'Orléans, the visual perspectives also contribute to the harmony of the whole.

The architectural qualities of the buildings that stand in the middle of the land parcel also characterise the site. The cultural value of the Terres d'Espérance evokes the social works of the Sisters of Charity who have owned them since the XIX century till the XXI century and who have developed there forage, horticultural and dairy production to improve the living conditions of orphans and patients who they become responsible for at the turn of the 19th century. In that respect the Terres d'Espérance have kept an agricultural function have been integrated into the protected agricultural

FIG. 1   Communauté métropolitaine de Québec (2013). Residential development (1:72 224). https://www.sig.cmquebec.qc.ca/GeoLyre/index.html?viewer=sig2020

zone. The Terres d'Espérance represent also an environmental and ecological issue as they form the largest landlocked parcel in the region. The Terres d'Espérance have furthermore a very interesting potential for adaptation to new uses; they are thus the object of land speculations a rezoning can literally make the price per hectare soar. At the end of 2014, the sisters decide so to sell the lands to the real estate investment fund Cominar (launched by the Dallaire Group) which plans to build there 6,500 housing units; this requires the rezoning of the Terres d'Espérance and this is the main stake of the revision of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema.

Revision of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema

According to the provisions of the land use planning and development Act, the regional county municipalities are to adopt a land use planning and development schema. Greater Quebec City Area first land use planning and development schema was adopted in 1985. Itis based on a polycentric model; downtown Quebec City and the secondary centres of Sainte-Foy, Lebourgneuf and Côte de Beauport («structuring centres») concentrate the highest residential densities and the main facilities while the intermediate centres (locations for further densification of the territory) are developed along structuring corridors (along the Chemin Sainte-Foy and the Grande Allée Ouest, at the intersection of the Laurentian Autoroute and the Wilfrid-Hamel Boulevard, as well as at the intersection of Sainte-Anne and D'Estimauville Boulevards) which determine the positioning of specialised areas (industrial and commercial zones, as well as technology campuses, research and innovation centres, etc.) and the development of

a multimodal transport network connected to the port and airport zones. The agroforestry ring (50% of the territory) and the drinking water catchment areas located along the Saint-Charles and Montmorency rivers also structure this spatial organisation. The schema shall be revised every five years. The Quebec City Agglomeration Council sets then a draft which is based on the model adopted in 1985; it sets several priorities: improving the competitiveness of industrial and commercial zones, making the agglomeration ever more attractive for skilled workers and entrepreneurs, increasing the size of the technology park, facilitating accessibility to jobs and services, ensuring residential growth (to accommodate more than 57,000 new residents) and the expansion of the urbanisation perimeter (by 712 hectares) to the detriment of the agricultural zone, in particular the lands located on the east side of the territory,[20] notably the Terres d'Espérance.

An advisory commission is entrusted on July 7th 2015 with the mandate of organizing the related consultative process. In order to fulfil the essential requirements for transparency and democratic publicity, a notice is made available in the Municipal Bulletin press conferences are held on October 5th 2015 and on April 27th 2016 and public information sessions are held on May 9th and 12th 2016 (they are webcast and made available online; the May 12th session is viewed 633 times as of November 2nd 2017).[21] Stressing the influence of new media in the development of a public opinion, communications are also disseminated on digital supports according to different strategies for capturing and framing public attention, a survey is circulated from October 8th to November 22nd 2015 (which 203 people respond to) and a webinar is organised on May 25th 2016 (it is attended by 86 people live and 373 citizens offline as of November 2nd 2017).[22]

The mobilization of a public

The advisory commission also engages in direct debate and dialogue with the citizens. Opinion hearing sessions are held on June 14th, 16th, 17th 2016 (52 live interventions 59 written memos, 30% of which are produced by citizens acting individually and not as members of collective bodies) and this accelerates the mobilization of a public which evaluates through investigation and debate the problem of the rezoning of the Terres d'Espérance and try in a collective effort to identify a range of possible

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20   Ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation, Direction régionale de la Capitale-Nationale, "Avis Sur Le Projet de Règlement Numéro PC2016-034 Édictant Le Premier Projet Du Schéma d'aménagement et de Développement." 2016, https://www.affmunqc.net/fileadmin/publications/ministere/acces_information/Diffusion_information/2019/2019-103_avis_non_conformite_SAD_quebec.pdf.

21   Ville de Québec, "Schéma d'aménagement et de développement - Séance d'information du 12 mai 2016", 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZSDpMC-Be8.

22   Ville de Québec, "Schéma d'aménagement et de développement - Séance d'information en ligne du 25 mai 2016", 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GRDrR-B1aA.

solutions to prevent it.[23] Attesting to their ability to position themselves and form counter-powers to public policies and actions, they engage in meaningful evidence-based argumentation within these institutionalised arenas "where public problems […] come to be defined."[24]

Experiencing further modes of appropriating contents, producing discourses and getting information circulated, they also engage into other forums of expression and action relatively independent of the institutionalised arenas. Acting in more or less coordinated ways of claiming and defending values and interests, professors of journalism,[25] spokespersons for organisations aiming to increase citizen participation in democratic life (including the New World Institute),[26] agronomists and soil scientists,[27] ethno-historian, agricultural and environmental advisors,[28] develop their arguments in local and regional newspapers. Leveraging on full extent possibilities offered by new information and communication technologies,[29] they also organise on the Web the circulation of discourses whose echo is likely to short-circuit, counter or even discredit certain political discourses in the interactivity of a communicational flow that shapes, transforms and translates certain opinions from personal micro-networks into macro-networks. In 2105, the United Federation of Farmers launches a Web page dedicated to the safeguarding of the Terres d'Espérance; it is used to collect signatures for the petition "Let's safeguard the Sisters of Charity's heritage lands."[30] Backed by the expertise of Copticom, a team of public relations strategists fighting against climate changes, environmental issues and social inequalities, the Environment Council of the Capital Region, David Suzuki Foundation, Vivre en Ville, Équiterre, Nature Québec, Action Patrimoine, Craque-Bitume, Les Urbainculteurs and Les AmiEs de la Terre de Québec also get use of this informal and more or less interactive digital space to broadly disseminate their analysis of the SOM poll (a

23   John Dewey, *Le public et ses problèmes*, trad. par Joëlle Zask, Folio. Essais (Paris: Gallimard, 2010).

24   Daniel Cefaï, "Publics, problèmes publics, arènes publiques…: Que nous apprend le pragmatisme ?", *Questions de communication*, n° 30 (31 décembre 2016): 25-64, https://doi.org/10.4000/questionsdecommunication.10704.

25   Jean-Claude Leclerc, "Une étonnante ville philanthropique dans la capitale | Le Devoir", 2014, https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/chroniques/426709/la-ferme-des-soeurs-de-la-charite-de-quebec.

26   Michel Lessard Bernard Vachon, "Sacrifier l'agriculture pour la densification urbaine | Le Devoir", 2015, https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/428062/terres-des-soeurs-de-la-charite-sacrifier-l-agriculture-pour-la-densification-urbaine.

27   Lauréan Tardif, "Les Soeurs de la Charité causent un mouvement citoyen", 2015, https://www.lesoleil.com/2015/02/09/les-soeurs-de-la-charite-causent-un-mouvement-citoyen-49899be4042f53bbfa0c79b2d5221e4c?nor=true.

28   Vincent Galarneau, "Quel avenir pour les terres agricoles de Québec? | Le Devoir", 2016, https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/transports-urbanisme/474404/quel-avenir-pour-les-terres-agricoles-de-quebec.

29   Fabien Granjon, "Citoyenneté, médias et TIC: Trente années de liaisons covalentes, au sein de la revue Réseaux", *Réseaux* n° 184-185, n° 2 (8 août 2014): 95-124, https://doi.org/10.3917/res.184.0095.

30   Union des producteurs agricoles – Capitale Nationale, "Sauvegardons les terres patrimoniales des Soeurs de la Charité", Petitionenligne.fr, 2015, https://www.petitionenligne.fr/sauvegardons_les_terres_patrimoniales_des_soeurs_de_la_charite.

Quebec research firm specialized in data collection, analysis and visualization) conducted on June 3rd and 4th 2016, which highlights a massive public opposition (70%) to the rezoning of agricultural lands.

After this initial round of the consultative process the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing rejects the draft schema on the grounds that it does not comply with the government orientations relating to the protection of the agricultural territory, the conservation of territories of interest and the integrated management of resources. The project is therefore amended, a press conferences is held on April 25th 2017, public information sessions are organized on May 9th and 11th 2017 (webcasted they are viewed 450 times as of November 2nd 2017)[31] and opinion hearings are held on August 29th, 30th and 31st 2017(65 live interventions and 91 memos,70% of which are produced by citizens acting individually and not as members of collective bodies).[32]

As the rezoning of the Terres d'Espérance is still on the agenda, several collective bodies chose to channel the energy of their action by directly challenging representatives of government, such as the Order of Agrologists of Quebec which addresses an open letter to the mayor of Quebec City.[33] Voix Citoyenne launches on social networks on May 14th 2018 the campaign "The Great Movement to Protect Agricultural Lands in Urban Quebec".[34] Leveraging on more radical modes of political action, 200 citizens and farmers furthermore demonstrate on June 1th 2017 with the support of the Environment Council of the Capital Region, ProtecTerre, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Union paysanne and Stop Oléoduc in the borough of Beauport as a sign of opposition to the Terres d'Espérance rezoning. Investigative journalists report on these actions in specialized magazines[35] while citizens[36] and spokespersons for neighbourhood committees contact the sensationalist press, etc.

After this second round of the revision the draft schema shall again be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval. It is again rejected (October 19th 2018). Another schema is drafted (heritage

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31   Ville de Québec, "Schéma d'aménagement et de développement - Séance d'information du 11 mai 2017", 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dXEduiq3p8&t=2s

32   Ville de Québec, "Prise d'acte du Rapport de consultation publique relatif au premier projet de Schéma d'aménagement et de développement révisé de l'agglomération de Québec", 2017, https://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/docs/pv/rubriques/sommaires/Planification_coordination_amenagement_territoire_environnement/2017/PC2017-033.pdf

33   Ordre des agronomes du Qubéec, "Les terres agricoles des Sœurs de la Charité: une ressource à conserver. Lettre adressée par l'OAQ à Monsieur Régis Labeaume", 2017, https://oaq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2017-07-05-Lettre_terresagricoles_soeurs_Charite.pdf

34   Voix citoyenne, "Grand mouvement pour protéger les terresagricolesen milieu urbain au Québec", 2018 https://www.facebook.com/events/647236458960625/

35   Anne-Marie Poulin, "200 personnes marchent contre le dézonage de terres historiques", La Terre de Chez Nous, 12 juin 2017, https://www.laterre.ca/actualites/en-region/200-personnes-marchent-contre-dezonage-de-terres-historiques.

36   Voix citoyenne, "Terres agricoles: le schéma d'aménagement sous la loupe", *Le Soleil*, 2018, https://www.lesoleil.com/opinions/point-de-vue/terres-agricoles-le-schema-damenagement-sous-la-loupe-8522ff943253273d295969346150a070

sites and nature reserves are clearly referenced in the schema, several lots are clearly listed in the agricultural zone, etc.); however, the rezoning of the Terres d'Espérance is still on the agenda.

With the ambition of structuring and expanding coalitions Voix Citoyennes addresses on August 26th 2018 an open letter to all representatives of the Quebec Municipal Commission and invites the director of Nature Québec and the president of the Jean Garon Institute to chair a debate on September 10th 2018 during the regional electoral process. One hundred and four co-signatories, including Voix Citoyenne, Institut Jean-Garon, Protec-Terre, Nature Québec, Union paysanne, Mouvement pour unevilleZéro-Déchet, Craque-Bitume and Transition Capitale-Nationale also send an open letter on September 24th 2018 to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing while one hundred and twenty-five co-signatories also write to the Minister responsible for the Quebec City region on October 16th 2018. The Jean-Garon Institute broadcasts on its digital television channel interviews of spokespersons for the United Federation of Farmers,[37] Voix Citoyenne[38] and Protec Terre,[39] etc. Felling empowered Voix Citoyenne and the Jean Garon Institute try to meet the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; their invitation sent out on November 6th 2018 is however declined.

These multiple democratic engagements are worth the effort as the amended draft schema is again rejected on November 19th 2019 by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing after due consultation with other ministries.[40] The project is updated but the Terres d'Espérance are still at risk. The stubborn obstruction of the Quebec City Agglomeration Council is beyond comprehension. Disciples of degrowth (notably the Group of voluntary simplicity) raise their voice on CKIA-FM[41] and Voix Citoyenne deploys yet other unconventional modes of expression and action in setting up the event "Let's dream about the Sisters of Charity's heritage lands" (November 3rd 2019) in association with various artists who perform and with Protec-Terre which share its expertise in agroecological social utility trusts. Far from being mutually exclusive, these diverse evaluative and critical actions are often combined as evidenced by retiree Michel Houle

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37   *Un administrateur de l'UPA dénonce le dézonage agricole aux côtés de l'Institut Jean-Garon !*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOQX6wRKTPs.

38   Institut Jean-Garon, "Terres des Sœurs de la Charité - sauvées pour le moment", Institut Jean-Garon (blog), 25 octobre 2018, https://institutjeangaron.ca/2018/10/25/simon-begin-recoit-monique-gagnon-porte-parole-de-voix-citoyenne/.

39   *Les Fiducies d'utilité sociale agricoles: un levier collectif écologique*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxaXK10RAuQ.

40   Ville de Québec,"Schéma d'aménagement et de développement révisé, Seconde version de remplacement, Modifications apportées à la version finale du SADR adoptée le 4 juillet 2019, Réponses à l'avis gouvernemental transmis le 4 novembre 2019", 2019, https://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/apropos/planification-orientations/amenagement_urbain/sad/docs/SAD-12-2019-tableau-modifications.pdf

41   Groupe de simplicité volontaire de Québec, "Le dossier des terres des soeurs de la Charité, En toute simplicité", 2019, https://gsvq.org/?download=%2F2019%2F09%2Fen-toute-simplicit-CKIA-FM-2019-09-06-1567778461.mp3&nocache

who altogether tables at the end of 2020 the petition "Acquiring the Sisters of Charity's heritage lands in order to improve Quebec's food autonomy"[42] while engaging in other political actions alongside La Ville que nous voulons and Les AmiEs de la Terre.

Justifications in a domestic polity

Public justifications get polarized around domestic orders of worth. Concerned by the impact of rezoning on the forms and contours of the Terres d'Espérance that bear witness to "the region's history of more than half a millennium",[43] the actors stress the cultural value of "this unique natural and historical heritage site (among) the distinctive landscapes of the Quebec City area",[44] its "territorial identity".[45] In a domestic city that provides the community with a sense of identity and continuity based over time on shared experience and collective memory, they also question the anthropologic dimensions of these lands that have organised space and social life over time and that account for "the existential and social relationships that individuals in groups"[46] weave with a territory. They question the links of filiation and of affiliation resulting from a feeling of belonging to this territory that has become the symbolic extension of the successive generations that have occupied it, transformed it. They pay tribute to past generations, notably the Sisters of Charity that have developed over centuries important health-care facilities and chaplaincy services. Highlighting so the cultural dimensions of this territory, they call for recognition of its cultural heritage value: "the agricultural lands of the Sisters of Charity are part of Quebec heritage!"[47] "lands of the Sisters of Charity are part of our heritage,"[48] they play a significant role in "the life quality of citizens and their sense of belonging to a community."[49] They wish accordingly to pro-

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42   Michel Houle, "Terres des Sœurs de la Charité: nourrir la capitale", 2021, https://www.lesoleil.com/2021/01/22/terres-des-surs-de-la-charite-nourrir-la-capitale-f343e74c98031bbd2582c3d9b3e5a283?nor=true.

43   Québec Arbres"Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

44   Comité pour une densification respectueuse, Association pour la protection de l'environnement du lac Saint-Charles et des Marais du Nord, Protec-Terre "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec.

45   Comité des citoyens du Vieux-Québec,"Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

46   Julien Aldhuy, "Au-delà du territoire, la territorialité?", *Géodoc*, n° 55 (2008): 35-42.

47   Union des producteurs agricoles de Québec,"Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

48   Mémoire individuel 066, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

49   Vivre en Ville, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

tect this territory; "the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the City of Quebec could declare these lands as cultural heritage lands (which) would allow the past and present social work of this Congregation to be witnessed,"[50] "the protection of these lands would guarantee the perpetuation of the memory of their charities among the population,"[51] "This would be a unique cultural heritage site to honour the memory of the Sisters of Charity."[52] They engage so to ensure their transmission to future generations: "These lands are a rarity, an endangered asset, a national treasure […]. A treasure to be passed on to future generations," "it is therefore important to preserve them in order to ensure the sustainability of this cultural heritage and its transmission to future generations", etc.

A green order of worth

Public justifications also polarized around a green order of worth. For the vast majority of actors, "protecting this agricultural land for local food production is in the best interests of the community;"[53] "farming (…) represents life, nature in all its complexity, beauty, generosity, the work of man in harmony with nature and above all, the survival of humanity;"[54] they

50   Mémoire individuel 077, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

51   Mémoire individuel 031, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/schema-amenagement-developpement-agglomeration-quebec

52   Mémoire individuel 077 "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017

53   Conseil de quartier des Jésuites, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65297

54   Mémoire individuel 076, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65346

stress its nourishing function that ensures optimum food safety. However, they intend to reorganise agricultural production in a collaborative manner and put forward new ideas and approaches in line with organic farming associated with ecopastoralism, recycling and composting, aromatic and medicinal horticulture,[55] etc.

Caring for others, they also intend to maintain this agricultural function to satisfy the supply of charities (Moisson Québec, Maison de Lauberivière, etc.), hospitals or schools with food, "in line with the traditional nourishing, therapeutic, social and community functions of these lands."[56] The focal on agriculture as an activity also aims to restore certain forms of sociability between people through "awareness-raising and educational activities,"[57] possibly co-organised with "Laval University (which) already has a research chair in food diversity and security as well as a chair in nutrition and health."[58]

Others wish to test new practices and ask for the opening of "a place of experimentation […] a place of training […] for the creation of businesses in the social economy […] an incubator for urban agriculture projects."[59] Social or professional reintegration projects could also be deployed there. Testifying to a desire to promote a virtuous way of doing or sharing, their arguments connect with the theses of social ecology which aims to create autonomous and resilient communities by means of concrete, collaborative and supportive local actions, in compliance with socio-environmental standards. This kind of socio-green engagement relates to a form social ecology which aims to set autonomous and resilient communities through concrete, collaborative and supportive local actions in line with socio-environmental standards.[60]

While the arguments initially mainly focus on the preservation of agricultural land, the implementation of more sustainable production practices, the justifications also address the issue of peri-urban green spaces. Several actors emphasise in that respect the importance of the positive externalities associated with these peri-urban green spaces; rainwater harvesting prevention, biodiversity conservation, the fight against heat islands reduction, biodiversity conservation.[61] Many ecological activists and environmental protection associations intend more concretely to

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55   Mémoire collectif, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65410

56   Ibid.

57   Mémoire individuel, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65422

58   Protec-Terre, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65322

59   Mémoire individuel, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65357

60   Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (London: Mit Press, 1996).

61   Québec Arbres "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016, https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65399

counterbalance the inadequacies of previous strategies of conservation that have isolated green spaces amid built areas. They wish so to develop green corridors between agricultural plots, wooded areas, wetlands (as a natural access to the river) and, more broadly, ecosystems, "a green grid that will make Quebec City an exemplary city."[62] Some set in that respect relatively precise objectives; "a minimum vegetation cover of 12% of the urbanised territory over the next 25 years and an average canopy of at least 40% over the entire territory;"[63] or even utopian ones: "Why not create a Central Park 2.0! Imagine a 660-acre green oasis in Quebec City!"[64]

In addition to these arguments which deploy a whole battery of realistic, measurable, achievable objectives, other actors similarly pursue the same ideals by mobilising however more poetic registers testify to a form of idealisation of the contact with nature that connects with a desire for distancing from the nuisances caused by industrial civilisation: "Let us not deteriorate the beauty of the world. Let us design a great garden for next generations,"[65] "Let us heal the planet […] restore life on planet earth […] Detoxify the population (body and mind),"[66] "Communing with nature, resuming a normal and protected rhythm of life."[67]

Compromise in a civic polity

The arguments put forward in the public arena also claim for political changes: direct democracy, self-management and autonomy. The issue at stake in the debates are related to the modalities of access, use and collective management of the Terres d'Espérance; acting as if they consider themselves as their guardians, regardless of the legal regime that may apply to this territory,[68] they sort of take over the Terres d'Espérances claiming control over their management as they target a fair distribution of access, use and ownership of this territory.[69] Some actors suggest to pool assets to acquire the Sisters of Charity's lands; it would then be a matter of entitling a Council or a college of trustees to manage the Terres d'Espérance in line with certain social and ecological objectives, in the best interest of present and future generations. Getting the issue in the debate the government purchases back the Terres d'Espérance and announces the holding of a public consultation aiming to determine the

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62   Mémoire collectif, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017   https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65289

63   Québec Arbres, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016

64   Mémoire individuel, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016

65   Mémoire individuel 076, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017

66   Mémoire individuel , "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65268

67   Ibid.

68   Serge Gutwirth, "Quel(s) droit(s) pour quel(s) commun(s) ?", Revue interdisciplinaire d'études juridiques 81, n° 2 (2018): 83, https://doi.org/10.3917/riej.081.0083.

69   Ibid.

best possible project for the Terres d'Espérance. A collective of citizens get organized and work on a food forest design. While developing the agricultural function in accordance with environmentally friendly practices, they aim simultaneously to achieve other objectives: preservation of landscape qualities, fight against reduction in biodiversity, reduction in the canopy, global warming, soil erosion, etc. Moreover, "The presence of abundant vegetation and mature trees, especially in urban environments, is (moreover) a factor contributing not only to the physical health but also to the psychological health of citizens".[70] Moreover, "the educational mission of the Food Park would be another positive factor [...]".[71] This food forest would be managed collectively.

The generative dimension of this mobilization, the kind of action they wish to carry to get access and use of this territory threatened to be privatised, irreparably transformed or even destroyed seems indeed related to the notion of environmental commons;[72] which evokes the idea of natural resources managed by a community in line with collectively-defined rules for the benefice of the general interest.[73] Several actors explicitly refer to this notion: "The Sisters of Charity's land, with its cultural dimension and its location has a public good value,"[74] "The presence of this agricultural land in the heart of the urban centre is a unique common good that the entire population of the Agglomeration of Quebec should be able to access and enjoy,"[75] "It is a matter of complying with principles of social justice, feminism, ecology and democracy,"[76] "They shall be considered as a common good with great environmental, social and heritage value,"[77] "This agricultural territory is part of a collective heritage contributing to the quality of our environment and our landscapes,"[78] etc. In this case, the notion of common goods does not refer to non-exclusive and rival goods but altogether to a collective action, to natural resources managed by a community according to collectively defined rules, and to the well-being that a community can get from these actions.[79]

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70   Québec Arbres, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016

71   Mémoire individuel 009, Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2, 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65374

72   Marie Cornu, Fabienne Orsi, et Judith Rochfeld, *Dictionnaire des biens communs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2021).

73   Alberto Magnaghi, *La biorégion urbaine: petit traité sur le territoire bien commun*, trad. par Emmanuelle Bonneau, vol. 1 (Paris: Eterotopia France Paris, 2014).

74   Protec-Terre, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65383

75   Mémoire individuel, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65291

76   Québec Solidaire Capitale-Nationale, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 3", 2017 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65423

77   Nathalie Côté, "Terres des Sœurs de la Charité: un bien collectif", 2017, http://www.droitdeparole.org/2017/06/terres-soeurs-de-charite-bien-collectif/.

78   Union des producteurs agricoles de Québec, "Mémoire déposé dans le cadre de la phase 2", 2016 https://participationcitoyenne.ville.quebec.qc.ca/25450/widgets/102874/documents/65404)

79   Magnaghi, *La biorégion urbaine: petit traité sur le territoire bien commun.*

Concluding remarks

Mobilising various forms of knowledge and judgements, experiences and practices that stress the multi-dimensionality and irreducibility of the issues (way of seeing the extent of the territory, of envisaging its current and future management, etc.) related to the agri-urban territory, the revision of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema concomitantly confronts market expectations (liberalisation of trade, profitability of invested capital, etc.), industrial requirements (optimal use of available resources, rational management of the territory, productivity of agriculture, etc.), social concerns (support for the next generation of farmers, preservation of sociability, etc.), cultural heritage objectives (protection of buildings, historical and cultural frameworks, etc.) and environmental priorities (development of green zones in the city, protection of agricultural and forest land, preservation of ecosystems, etc.) that cannot be understood in terms of consensus, congruence of motivations or aggregation of commitments. In the presence of a disagreement multiple actors forming a community of conviction engage in discursive experiences, confront their observations, expose their argumentation to judgement and criticism. Worrying about the impact (the trivialisation and degradation of the environment) of the rezoning on the organisation of the forms and contours of the Terres d'Espérance which are privileged witnesses of the history of the region, they test opportunities for new forms of coordination and cooperation that aim to curb urban expansion, to prevent standardisation of landscapes while moving towards more sustainable production methods and consumption patterns, releasing pressure on agricultural lands and natural resources, counteracting the fragmentation of local ecosystems in order to enhance collective wellness.

By committing themselves to accelerate a change of paradigm towards a more socially and ecologically responsible society, they call shared preferences, civic senses of the just and the good with the intention to set rules of access, use, management and collective control over these historical, cultural, aesthetic and ecological tangible and intangible resources. By promoting these new approaches, the actors seem to develop certain forms of territoriality relying on values such as conviviality and solidarity that bring back to date the question of the commons. Beyond legal (property regimes), economic (non-exclusive reified resource) or naturalizing visions, the commons considered in their double material (land, forests, rivers, fields, etc.) and immaterial (values, codes and social representations, knowledge and know-how, etc.) dimensions, can indeed be conceived as the outcome of an experimental and instituting activity, profoundly democratic, capable of generating social, political and economic dynamics of self-government based on a collective setting of rules (experiencing in common and acting together) of communing.[80]

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80   Christian Laval et Pierre Dardot, *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXIe siècle* (La

With fortitude and determination, these actors carry out numerous actions that succeed in influencing the outcome of the revision; when passing on February 2020 the final version of the Greater Quebec City Area land use planning and development schema, the Quebec City Agglomeration Council concludes indeed with the non-rezoning of the Terres d'Espérance and announces the setting up of a public concertation around a project that could meet the expectations of a public, of a local community.

Fabien Jakob holds a law degree, a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in law, an executive master's degree in business administration and a master's degree in international relations. He is currently pursuing his academic career in socio-geography. His publications focus on both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. He is a member of the Sociology of Arts and Culture Research Committee of the Swiss Sociological Society (CR-SAC / Foko-KUKUSO) and of the Centre de recherche en aménagement et développement in Quebec.

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CPCL

PRACTICES

Double Feature: Counter-Practices of World City Monumentality in the Age of the Anthropocene

Enrico Chinellato — Department of Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy
Contact: enrico.chinellato2@unibo.it

Or Haklai — Department of Cultural Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
Contact: or.haklai@mail.huji.ac.il

ABSTRACT

This article examines the representational strategies of the world city in the age of the Anthropocene by concentrating the discussion on the notion of monumentality. By introducing the concept of 'world city monumentality', which can be defined as the projected anticipatory representation of the city's desired global future embodied in the skyscraper, we attempt at illuminating on how monumentality is contested by its counter-practices, as significant artistic forms of experiential engagement in public space. To do so, we trace a critique of a distinct world city monument, the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, Israel, by presenting our site-specific fictive intervention titled "Double Feature" (2021) as a case study.

1. The Anthropocene, the world city, and its "anxiety of representation"

The Anthropocene, a notion introduced by chemist Paul J. Crutzen to describe our current geological age,[1] has been often paired with acknowledging urbanization processes as significant evidence of the impact of humans on the planet. Indeed, urbanization is one of the central elements of the epoch in which we live. The very existence of urban forms and processes of human settlement, especially cities, can be seen as a fundamental feature of the anthropogenic age, as it marked a shift from the centrality of man as a species to that of the city as a key global phenomenon. Since its inception, economic globalization—i.e., the global movement of capital—accompanied by the emergence of a global culture, has profoundly altered the social, cultural, political, and spatial reality of nation-states and cross-national regions, and reshaped forms of urbanization, the city, and the practices of city-making across the world. In her seminal work "The Global City" (1991), Saskia Sassen argues that although an international economic system and an overall world economy have existed for centuries, it is only since the late twentieth century that we have arrived at a distinct situation in which the global economy is located within national territories and their urban formations.[2] For the first time, many cities around the world share a global culture, which has critically transformed their histories, their adaptive schemes, and their future developments, while also dramatically reshaping their self-representational strategies. A phenomenon that falls under the notion of the world city. The term is not exactly new. Patrick Geddes had already introduced the concept as early as 1915 in his classic "Cities in Evolution."[3] However, his understanding of what a world city was remained unclear until it was later reprised and elaborated by urbanist Peter Hall (1966), who also first contextualized it within the historic multiplicity of phenomena that characterize globalization and its impact on the forms of urbanization: a shift from the city as the godly image of the world to that of many nodes structural to a network of dislocated yet ever-expanding centers of global financial power, "dispersed production,"[4] and high-technology depending on capital flows, extraction practices, and wealth creation. Or, as Hall straightforwardly wrote, a global hierarchy of competing "cities in which a quite disproportionate part of the world's most important business is conducted."[5]

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1   See Crutzen, Paul. "Geography of Mankind." Nature 415 (2002): 23.

2   Sassen, Saskia. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2013).

3   Geddes only mentioned the term in the title of the third chapter of Cities in Evolution. See Geddes, Patrick. *Cities in evolution: An introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics.* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915), 134.

4   Sassen, *The Global City*, 325.

5   See Hall, Peter. *The world cities.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

Although it is easy to see the relevance of this phenomenon within the discourse of the anthropo-centered impact of humans on Earth, this specific scenario much problematizes the concept of the Anthropocene, understood as 'the act' of a species (humanity) upon nature[6] that can be measured geologically. It leads us instead to definitions such as Capitalocene, introduced by scholar Jason W. Moore (2016), which seems better suited to describe evidence of the activity of 'social beings' and human organizations on Earth—primarily capitalism—of which current patterns of global urbanization are certainly one of the most severe instances. Leaving aside unresolved terminological quarrels, this view transcends the dualism of human and nature by asserting that they have an interdependent generative relationship and, more interestingly for us, it renders urban formations a product of capital and material wealth movements, appropriated through extractive practices and labor, and eventually reinvested into real estate processes.[7]

Now, with cities relentlessly adjusting their identity to that of the world city, wishing to conform their image to the global model, there emerge a problematic "anxiety of representation,"[8] accompanied by a condition of 'placelessness' determined by "de-territorialization."[9] Indeed, in their attempt to climb and hold on to the numerous world-system rankings,[10] cities and their development processes are driven by intense competition, leading to the projection of authoritative and dominant icons of wholeness and exceptionality. A projected status quo that is materially and symbolically reflected within their own spatiality, organizations, and built forms, ultimately levels out the rich differences of local specificity and incorporates them into the logics of capital by standardization and homogenization.

The discourse outlined until here converges with the discussion on monumentality and memory which, similarly to the critique of global culture and the world city, has been at the center of contemporary scholarly debate. To contextualize, let us quote the words of cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen (2003), who wrote that "today we think of the past as memory without borders rather than national history within borders." He continues, "memory is understood as a mode of re-presentation and as belonging to the present," thus suggesting that "our thinking and living temporality are undergoing a significant shift, as modernity brought about a real

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6   Moore, Jason W. The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 594-630.

7   Moore, Jason W., ed. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, history, and the crisis of capitalism.* (United States: Pm Press, 2016).

8   Vickery, Jonathan. "The past and possible future of counter monument." *IXIA: the public art think tank* 351 (2012), 5.

9   Sassen, *The Global City*.

10   One well-known example of world city indexing is provided by the "GaWC – Globalization and World Cities Research Network," a think tank based in Loughborough University in Leicestershire, UK, researching on the relationships between world cities in the context of globalization. Recent classification (2020) of world cities indicates London and New York as class Alpha ++, the "most integrated with the global economy". See "The World According to GaWC 2020 report," accessed March 11, 2022, https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2020t.html.

compression of time and space yet also expanded horizons of time and space beyond the local."[11] In this regard, the phenomenon of globalization in the Anthropocene age has also brought to the fore a critical shift in understanding the carrier of memory par excellence, namely the monument, as well as monumentality itself, its meaning, and how it is practiced.

It is our intention with this paper to examine representational strategies of the world city by concentrating the discussion on the notion of monumentality, as relating to its spatial and aesthetic expression, i.e., the monument. Accordingly, through the lenses of practice-based research informed by artistic and spatial disciplines, in the following section we will introduce the concept of 'world city monumentality,' which can be defined as the projected anticipatory representation of the city's desired global future, embodied in one of its most symbolic architectural typologies: the skyscraper. We attempt to briefly illuminate the concept by discussing one major feature of world city monumentality—verticality—and how monumentality is contested (socially, spatially, and politically) by its counter-practices, which hold much potential as artistic forms of experiential engagement in public space. To flesh out our argument, in the third section we will eventually trace a critique of a specific world city monument, the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, Israel, by presenting our site-specific fictive intervention titled "Double Feature" as a case study. Lastly, we will draw conclusions from the case study analysis.

2. World city monumentality and its counter-practices

For a start, let us first briefly clarify some major terms at play here, namely the monument and monumentality. The dictionary definition by HarperCollins tells us that a monument is a large-scale built form constructed to remember a particular event or a personality from the past.[12] The term is linked in the collective imagination to an element of the city characterized by a distinct iconography. Previous studies on monuments have already developed excellent criteria for investigating monumentality in its material and visual dimensions. Among many, Johnathan Vickery (2012) proposes the reading of tropes of monumental form via their positioning, location, material, form, and rhetoric.[13] Through these vectors, Vickery holds that we should locate a monument "as an empirical object, in terms of physical structure (often a massive stone or bronze sculpture); (also) as an aesthetic function of space (it conducts a commanding role in civic ritual or acts as a marker of a territoriality of civic

11   Huyssen, Andreas. *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory.* (Stanford: University Press, 2003), 6.

12   "Monument," HarperCollins English Dictionary, accessed March 11, 2022, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/monument.

13   Vickery, "The past and possible future of counter monument", 7.

space); and thirdly, as a genre of visual rhetoric."[14] Indeed, the monumental built form stands out as a resource of emphasis for formal solemnity and dimensional hypertrophy. As Cecil Elliott (1964) wrote, "since the decision to establish a monument necessarily presupposes that its meaning will endure, the monument too must endure,"[15] thus posing a question of duration that would ensure the best performance of commemorative work. A monument, at least in its popular sense, would thus be built with materials designed to last over time, and would function as a mediator. However, today the very understanding of monumentality and its lasting signifiers have changed, as Elliott had already noted in the 1960s. There has been, in fact, a dramatic "increase in the expression of monumentality in buildings which are not, strictly speaking, monumental in purpose,"[16] which rather suggests, following Elliott, that we can understand as 'monument' all that which is dedicated and raised to an "idea of monumentality," or "the crystallization of the architectural ideals of an era."[17] Beyond the material dimension and visual representation, monumentality also poses an obvious question of political significance. Iain Hay et al. (2004) provide us with a convincing definition of the monument's role, writing that "[…] monuments are political constructions, recalling and representing histories selectively, drawing popular attention to specific events and people and obliterating or obscuring others."[18] Indeed, monuments and monumentalizing processes are essential elements of the construction of politics of memory and identity, as they "embody discourses that inevitably express selective points of view on the past"[19] in the present. Furthermore, in processes of monumentality, material representation and selective articulation of specific narratives—by means of inclusion and exclusion—are used by political authorities to convey dominant views of the past in the present as designed scenarios and social dynamics of a future desired by the few.[20] Andreas Huyssen had already located this utilitarian approach to monumentality processes in nineteenth-century nationalism, stating that "[…] the main concern of nineteenth-century nation-states was to mobilize and monumentalize national and universal pasts so as to legitimize and give meaning to the present and to envision the future: culturally, politically, socially. This model no longer works," he argues.[21]

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14   Ibid., 2.

15   Elliott, Cecil D. "Monuments and Monumentality." *Journal of Architectural Education* (1947-1974) 18, no. 4 (1964): 51–53, 52.

16   Ibid., 51.

17   Ibid., 52.

18   Hay, Iain, Andrew Hughes, and Mark Tutton. "Monuments, memory and marginalisation in Adelaide's Prince Henry Gardens." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 3 (2004): 201-216, 204.

19   Bellentani, Federico, and Mario Panico. "The meanings of monuments and memorials: toward a semiotic approach." *Punctum. International journal of semiotics* 2, no. 1 (2016): 28-46, 10.

20   See Massey, Doreen. "Places and their pasts." In *History workshop journal*, no. 39 (1995): 182-192.

21   Huyssen, *Present pasts*, 2.

Given these premises, how can we understand the role of monumentality in relation to the world city? What are the symbolic and embodied strategies employed by the world city to project its narratives, moved by the anxiety of (self-)representation in the global scene? In attempting to address these issues, we would like to introduce the concept of world city monumentality by looking at a particular quality of monumentality itself, which concerns much of its visual, rhetorical, and political dimensions. That is, verticality, and its translation into the most representative built typology of the world city, the skyscraper.

In his seminal text "Vertical," geographer Stephen Graham (2016) strongly advocated for a new understanding of global cities and their phenomena, one that would go beyond "flat perspectives"[22] and would rather take into consideration three-dimensionality as an instrument to look not only at cities' development dynamics but also at their representational strategies. For Grahams, the notion of 'verticality' (as an addition to the horizontal plane) is a key characteristic of the contemporary city and thus, we argue, of the world city, for the latter is "increasingly shaped across vertical as well as horizontal [networked] geographies of power."[23] Verticality also relates to a particular—and perhaps 'primal'—anthropic action on nature, that is, the control of the 'ground,' i.e., the earth's surface or, in the urban context, the street level. Graham stresses that the "'ground' itself, rather than being the product of natural geological processes, is increasingly manufactured and raised up as humans shape the very geology of cities in ever more powerful ways,"[24] to the point that we can speak about "multiple grounds": the one down below and the one up above. In such a scenario "power relations between the watchers on high and the watched below become ever more critical."[25] These "vertical metaphors" reveals not only the projection of articulated representations of hierarchies of "power, wealth, status, and happiness,"[26] but they also speak about an estrangement of the experiential bodily encounter – the one possible at the ground level.

To our understanding, the vertical metaphors of the contemporary city—as explained by Graham—well rhyme with the very spatial tropes of monumentality. The argument is that what is being monumentalized at the outset is "human exceptionality,"[27] as Donna Haraway would have it, over that of nature, and ultimately over human defeat — death. Indeed, "vertical metaphors are deeply embedded in the way humans conceptualize

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22   Graham, Stephen. *Vertical: The city from satellites to bunkers.* London: Verso Books, 2016, 22.

23   Ibid., 22.

24   Ibid., 24.

25   Ibid., 26.

26   Ibid., 29.

27   See Haraway, Donna. "Otherworldly conversations, terran topics, local terms." *Material feminisms* 3 (2008): 157.

and shape their lives and their worlds."[28] If this holds true, verticality, expressed through monumentality, exorcizes the loss of individual power and control, as well as the dissolution of planned future narratives. All these are symbolically conceptualized in horizontality and transience, which are opposed by an endless quest for height and permanence. This also means that, in implying timeless status and power, monumentalized verticality correlates with physical height above the ground.

Following this argument, the most evident built expression of monumentalized verticality in the context of the world city lies in the high-rise building type. This position has been backed by a consistent amount of literature in the last fifteen years, especially across the disciplines of urban theory and geography.[29] In discussing the phenomena of the global city, scholarship on skyscrapers highlights the "significance of tall building sites as a nexus of power made visible."[30] Indeed, we can argue about their role as monuments in that, by acting as "vertical storytellers,"[31] "they most eloquently narrate the chronicle of the built form as well as the social, economic, and political trajectories of cities,"[32] while also telling us about the "power relations between those who rule and decide and those who are subordinated, excluded, and marginalized."[33] For Graham, skyscrapers are "vertical symbols of the dominance of major corporations and capitalist business elites" which, in their "struggle to materialize corporate prestige in stone, steel, aluminum and glass" sees in the high-rise typology "a symbolic representation of the power, reach and identity of corporations themselves."[34] The anxiety of representation posed by the world city model thus leads to the design of (tentatively) memorable vertical silhouettes as means of urban or national branding, by defining the monumentalized presence of the city on world indexes. Indeed, skyscrapers act as a projected anticipatory representation of urban and national future, as a "promissory value"—according to Aihwa Ong—achieved by leveraging on fetishized economic and political competition between rival cities.[35] Therefore, we might speak of a collective, homogeneous, and standardized vertical morphology of architectural units,[36] which would

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28   Graham, *Vertical*, 30.

29   For a full coverage see Graham, Vertical.; Ford, Larry R. "World cities and global change: observations on monumentality in urban design." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 49, no. 3 (2008): 237-262. McNeill, Donald. "Skyscraper geography." *Progress in human geography* 29, no. 1 (2005): 41-55.

30   McNeill. "Skyscraper geography."

31   Charney, Igal, and Gillad Rosen. "Splintering skylines in a fractured city: High-rise geographies in Jerusalem." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 6 (2014): 1088-1101, 1090.

32   Ibid., 1090.

33   Ibid., 1090.

34   Graham, *Vertical*, 141-142.

35   See Ong, Aihwa. "Hyperbuilding: Spectacle, Speculation, and the Hyperspace of Sovereignty." In *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of being Global*. UC Berkeley. (2011): 205-226.

36   Staal, Jonas. "Monument to Capital." accessed March 10, 2022, https://www.uncubemagazine.com/blog/15508779?wt_mc=nluw.2015-04-17.content.linkartikel.

suggest that world city monumentality does not lays much on this or that "obviously identifiable toy-like skyscraper"[37] but it rather encompasses a much larger—indeed, global—phenomenon.

To summarize, world city monumentality, expressed through verticality, would imply a few specific qualities: (1) a rhetorical projection of present narratives towards a city's desired global future, as factual expression of control and power; (2) a memorable homogenization and standardization of formal and aesthetic features, adjusted to a global model; (3) a critical positioning to signal authorized representation of centrality in the urban system; (4) and an incremental distancing from the ground level, which estranges the bodily encounter and its relation to transiency.

Departing from this understanding, we would like to pose a seemingly broad question in order to initiate a reflection on an alternative category of monumentality analysis as discussed thus far. What kinds of practices can illuminate the rifts and contradictions between ideological visions of the future and critical material realities posed by the world city's self-representational strategies? Or in other words, how is the world city monumentality countered, diverted, re-imagined?

We argue that the emergence of 'weak' practices, or counter-practices, of monumentality seems well suited to address the nature of the world city and its practice of monumentality. Notions such as James E. Young's counter-monument,[38] Jochen Gerz's anti-monument, or Mechtild Widrich's performative monument[39] have already moved the discussion away from the monistic conception of reality as permanent and fixed, breaking historical master narratives by returning the obligation of memory-work from the monumental immovable form back to the citizen. Practices of counter-monumentality emerge as artistic strategies operating in the public realm of the city "by which the classic monument-form could be 'countered,' the power of its cultural demagoguery addressed or confronted, its cultural function deconstructed or subject to critical assessment."[40] They revolve around "the involuntary resistance of our aesthetic responses in seeing monumental form embedded in processes of change and forces of mutation [re-inscribing it] within the contexts of extreme ephemerality."[41] In broad terms, they reveal the intrinsic vulnerability of monumentality itself. Assuming this stance towards instances of world city monumentality is no intellectual exercise. Rather, it would mean to look at them by consciously and experientially discerning 'what is implied by this material object?'

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37   Graham, *Vertical*, 153.

38   See Young, James E. "The counter-monument: memory against itself in Germany today." *Critical inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267-296.

39   See Widrich, Mechtild. *Performative Monuments: The rematerialisation of public art*. Manchester: University Press, 2014.

40   Vickery. "The past and possible future of counter monument.", 2.
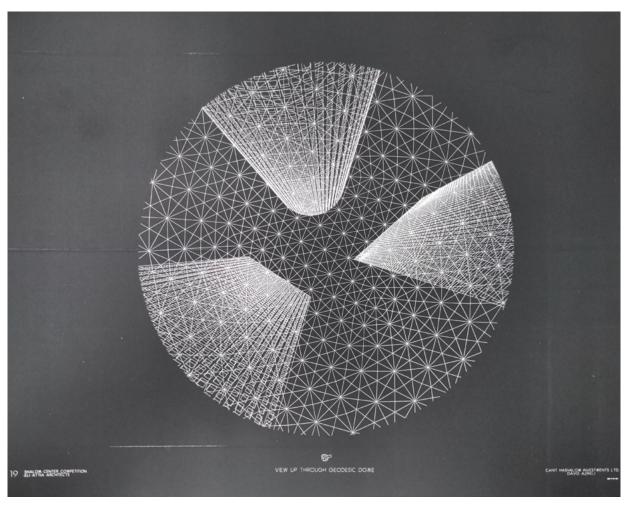
41   Ibid., 4.

FIG. 1   The Azrieli Center and the Shalom junction [credits: Ynhockey, CC BY-SA 4.0]

The following section is an effort to further articulate the discussion on the counter-practices of world city monumentality by presenting a critique of one typical example of a monument of the world city, namely the Azrieli Center in Tel Aviv, elaborated through our site-specific fictive intervention titled "Double Feature" as a case study of such counter-practices.

3. A case study of world city monumentality: The Azrieli Center, Tel Aviv

The Azrieli Center is a mixed-use skyscraper complex, built in 1999, situated at the Shalom crossroad, the most important intersection in the state of Israel and the entry gate to the city of Tel Aviv. The Center's three towers are designed as a 170-meter-tall extrusion of basic geometrical forms a circle, a triangle, and a square clad in a white-and-blue gridded façade.

The Center is the first skyscraper complex to be constructed in the area, with the intention of establishing a new central business district. Its creation, launched by real estate magnate David Azrieli, after whom it is

19 SHALOM CENTER COMPETITION
ELI ATTIA ARCHITECTS   VIEW UP THROUGH GEODESIC DOME   CANIT HASHALOM INVESTMENTS LTD.
                                                                                                                 DAVID AZRIELI

FIG. 2   Rendering showing the view from the mall's indoor spaces towards the towers,
           as presented in the official design submission by architect Eli Atti [credits: Credits
           Eli Attie Architects and Tel Aviv Municipality Archive]

named, was motivated by the 'little Tel Aviv's' aspirations to be a prominent world city. The city of Tel Aviv had a substantial economic downturn in the 1980s. Residents were fleeing the city, and companies were spreading into once residential neighborhoods. In this situation, the municipality demanded a significant project that would transform the city's image. With the intention of extending the existing commercial sector outside the city's historic core and in close proximity to transit links, local officials established a developing district adjacent to the Ayalon highway. The municipality treated the plot of land with special care, and in 1988 published an international tender titled "Tel Aviv Hashalom Center — Israel's Largest Commercial and Office Complex."[42] The tender stressed three selection criteria: the developer's reputation as a globally renowned entrepreneur, an exceptional architectural design, and, of course, a competitive price. The plan was presented to the tender participants by Moshe Lahat, mayor of Tel Aviv, as "the most prestigious project of the city of Tel Aviv, lifting the flag in joining the era of big and modern business districts."[43]

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42   From the tender's official documents, Lahat, Shlomo. TEL AVIV HASHALOM CENTER –
Israel's Largest Commercial and Office Complex, 001/27/2446 (1991).

43   Lahat, Shlomo. TEL AVIV HASHALOM CENTER Israel's Largest Commercial and Office
Complex, 001/27/2446 § Mayor's statement (1991). [authors' own translation from Hebrew]

Projection of the 2009 election's exit polls on the Center's façade [credits: News 13, Globus]

The skyscraper complex presents all the classic tropes of the monument-form in its founding vocabulary. The early design of the Center, chosen with the closure of the bidding in 1989, is evidence of this. Almost ten years of disagreements between developer David Azrieli—at the time regarded as the "Israeli father of shopping malls"—and architect Eli Atti, who initially conceived the complex as Shalom Center (the 'peace center') comprised its contentious origins. However, it is especially the competitive rhetoric used in its design statements that signals the will of its initiators to create and establish a permanent urban "marker"[44] of Tel Aviv's future – that of the city as global. The second page of the design submission, titled "The Nature of the Towers," declares, "one tower creates a marker or a statue, but a gathering or a group of towers creates a center and a focus." It continues, "the Center is perceived as a group of solid forms and as a mirage. The fine-textured surface of the towers makes them appear scaleless, solidifies their masses, and accentuates the verticality and purity of their forms. […] This ensemble of forms is like a gathering of different people into a harmonious whole, symbolizing the Center's name: Shalom."[45]

Even before their completion, the three skyscrapers entered the collective imagination. During the years before its construction, the Center has been a prominent source of debate in Israeli media and on Israeli television. The press coverage of the design competition and the legal disputes between Azrieli and Atti portrayed the Azrieli Center as Israel's greatest construction to date. From 1996 to 1999, until the project's completion in 2007, traveling along Ayalon highway evoked senses of prospect

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44   From the competition submission, Atti Architects, Eli. *Shalom Center Competition.* January 28, 1992.

45   Ibid, 12.

and anticipation among the general public. Much similarly to the practice of raising a monument, the construction of the Center became an "urban event,"[46] reverberating for years across the whole city and beyond. In fact, from the Center's earliest building stages, its prominent visibility has often been used to project slogans and ads onto its façade, particularly during the celebration of national events. For instance, on December 31, 2000, a countdown was projected onto the building's exteriors. However, instead of facing west towards the city's center, the projection was symbolically oriented towards the highway, with its lights reflecting on the buildings surrounding it, as to convey to foreign broadcasting media a huge national accomplishment. This practice would eventually be institutionalized as a rite. Every significant national event was thus shown on the towers' facades, from election results to Independence Day slogans, and even congratulations to Israeli star Gal Gadot on her film's successes.

As the Center's verticality would seem to imply a condition of distance, inaccessibility, and apparent exclusion from the city's life at street level, the towers' presence cast an eloquent visual narrative of the city's desired future: its "entry into the upper echelons of the global economy."[47] Today, the three towers are one of the most iconic elements of the city's skyline—a world city monument.

3.1. Double Feature

In early 2020, as QUIZEPO Collective, we started a practice-based study and scholarly research on the current role of monuments, memory work, and their significance for contemporary artistic practices operating in public space. Our site-specific fictive intervention "Double Feature" (2021) is a result of our work on the topic, stemming from a response to a call for projects promoted by the Liebling Haus — White City Center association, based in Tel Aviv. Using the language of artistic practice in the form of a performative public installation, albeit unrealized, the project's ultimate aim is to articulate a critique of the monumental qualities of the Azrieli Center, as an instance of a counter-practice of world city monumentality. The intervention understands the notion of 'countering' as a way of inverting, subverting, and re-interpreting the fundamental representational strategies employed in monumentality processes by the world city, and in particular with the Azrieli Center, which we have identified in the previous sections. Accordingly, in designing the intervention, we worked through a process of over-projecting—and thus, ultimately over-writing—of three main rhetorical qualities of the world city monument: verticality, timelessness, and bodily estrangement.

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46   Ibid, 12.

47   Ford, Larry R. "World cities and global change," 253.

FIG. 4   Top view of the full-scale representation of the Azrieli Center façade on Rothschild boulevard [credits: the Authors]
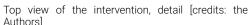
Let us briefly analyze the intervention's rationale. Working with the notion of projection as a way of reading the building in its aforementioned qualities, we started by extracting the literal representation of the towers' gridded pattern. By metaphorically countering the symbolic act of raising the monument with its direct opposite, that of its lowering its fall, the typical façade of the Azrieli Center is then reinterpreted as flattened in its graphical representation, and thus returned to the horizontal plane. As a critique of verticality, this specific action draws its reasoning from notable examples of the practice of counter-monumentality, such as the work of artists Krzysztof Wodiczko and Shimon Attie, among many. Likewise, we may also recall that this act has similarities with the many practices of activist and artistic contestation of the often violent and traumatic monuments that have taken place in recent years in many cities across Europe and the United States. By using performative visual strategies such as street-art and video projection, these practices effectively engaged in a process of re-signification of the contested monumental landscape vis-à-vis its original meaning, away from the destructive nature of 'classic' iconoclasm. Furthermore, what this action of 'generative disfigurement' brings about is the subversion of its temporality — which is also embedded in our very experiential understanding of the monumental form.

In this regard, because of its fictive nature, our intervention attempts to imagine real scenarios performed on Tel Aviv's urban public stage, holding

that these would stimulate the emergence of different narratives around the world city monument. Therefore, the ephemeral representation of the Center's façade is imagined as performed into a new encounter at the street level, returning to the urban ground by being spray painted full-scale on the ground surface of one of Tel Aviv most lively public spaces: the Rothschild boulevard.

As a dominant protagonist in the city narrative and everyday life, the boulevard—and the street in general—is often able to counter its own monumentality, because of its restless transient nature that "tends to erase monumental hierarchical orders"[48] as synthetized by the metaphor of horizontality. It is ultimately the collective act of walking on a monument, encouraged by the intervention, which allows a critical civic action through direct bodily understanding of the monumental form, its form and significance, while at the same time being playful and allowing people to walk, sit, and cycle on it.

FIG. 5   Top view of the intervention, detail [credits: the Authors]

FIG. 6   Imaginary scene of the intervention during its daily use [credits: the Authors]

As a way of countering the bodily estrangement caused by verticality, walking also functions as a fundamental way of measuring with the body, and thus brings a renewed awareness and understanding of an element of the city that would normally be addressed mostly through visibility. Lastly, the temporality of this encounter resides in the unavoidable gradual disappearance of the ephemeral façade's representation on the boulevard, thus subverting the attempted timelessness of the world city monument while locating the participating individual in its transiency. This promotes a materialized conscious process of rewriting alternative official narratives

48   Hénaff, Marcel. "Toward the Global city: Monument, Machine, and Network." *Journal of the Institute for the Humanities* 4 (2009): 22-33, 30.
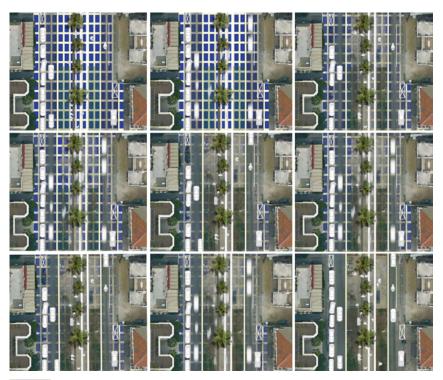
FIG. 7   Top view of the intervention showing its gradual disappearance over time [credits: the Authors]

by introducing a conflict, i.e., the projection of multiple narratives on top of each other, dissolving the fixity of memory work and monumental histories, returning them to public authorship.

To conclude, in attempting to outline a critique of world city monumentality, our fictive intervention was aimed at enacting a different approach to monumentality in the context of the world city. Artistic interventionism in urban space provided us with a means to transition from an affirmative monumentality practice—that of dominant permanence, clarity, and unity—to an interpretive and thus political one, ultimately aimed at questioning the power of monumental signification in public space. We pose this experience as a recommendation that could broaden the understanding of monumentality as a didactic participatory action, a civic process, and a future-oriented product of social dialogue. Perhaps this suggests a way to imagine a renewed agency of monumentality.

Enrico Chinellato is an architectural designer and Ph.D. student in Architecture and Design Cultures at the Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna. He holds an MA in Architecture (IUAV University of Venice; Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design of Jerusalem). He co-founded the interdisciplinary collective QUIZEPO (Venice; Tel Aviv) focusing on site-specific, temporary, and participatory artistic projects. Operating at the intersection of art, architecture, and memory studies, his research centers on the correlation between urban places and methods of artistic spatial practice, investigating their agency in recording, resurfacing, contesting, or projecting place-specific memories.

Or Haklai is an architectural designer and a MA student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Cultural Studies program. She holds a B.Arch. in Architecture (Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design of Jerusalem; IUAV University of Venice). She co-founded the interdisciplinary collective QUIZEPO (Venice; Tel Aviv) focusing on site-specific, temporary, and participatory artistic projects. Her research interests are centered on interdisciplinary and practice-based approaches across art, architecture, and urban theory. Her current research focuses on the city of Tel Aviv and the Azrieli Centre as the symbol of the shift toward a global city, examining its uses against cities' symbolism.

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