

Unscripted futures: Making room for the openness, uncertainty and radical potential of tomorrow

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Can a rhizomatic urban planning mobilize a “nomadic war machine”

Tord Bakke

In urban planning – as in all similar disciplines - methodologies are transformed through an influx of ideas and objectives stemming from the broader field of science, politics and public administration. The input is shaped in an intra-disciplinary conversation about implications, pragmatics and best practices to meet these changing ideals and goals. Such a transformation is however more of a surface proceeding, the underlying premises are seldom dealt with and tend to stay the same. To open the discipline towards new possible futures, the disciplinary conceptual orthodoxies has to be confronted.

This paper points towards a reconceptualization of urban planning based on the framework developed by Deleuze and Guattari which could bring in a much needed openness and an empowering alternative to the current urban development regime. The initial questions are what would such a planning procedure look like and where do it depart from the praxis of today? Focal points are directed at the concepts of the multitude, flows, intensity, topologies of desires, and possible lines of flight. Such a discursive turn could – in the lingo of D&G deterritorialize urban planning, turn it away from the regimentation of physical layouts as means of social disciplining and bio-politics; a trajectory in line with current trends towards a focus on urban vitality, affects, assemblage and a post-identity politics universality.

Planning – more than being a mere blueprint for future transformations of the material surroundings - generates illocutory- or performative statements which are immanent in the process. Statements which in themselves change social relations, topologies and the perception of what's at stake. This is urban planning's unchecked potential for urban interventions and mobilisation - where planning can effectuate new constellations and a creation of a potential new multitude.

Hardt and Negri – following D&G - describe the trend (and necessity) of activist groups being leaderless – acephalic. In their perspective “strategy” and “tactics” are invoked as a conceptual pair to distinguish between modes of authority and leadership. We know of “strategical planning” and “tactical urbanism” which play partly on the same dichotomy. Here the relation between urban planning methodology and political organization can be brought together and the former altered to bring about participatory processes with real impact on decision-making.

Imagining radically different futures is impossible when sticking to the same basic conceptual framework and operating within the same discursive formation. The ambition should be to lay the foundations for alternative ways of organizing the urban procedure which might open up new possible futures: an urban development where planning facilitates a micropolitics, a consolidation brought about by a multiplicity forming a “nomadic war machine”.

Trajectories of Practice Across Time: Moving Beyond the Histories of Landscape Architecture

Dane Carlson and Mariel Collard

We propose to imagine that landscape architecture as we know it--controlled in scale, scope, and values by capital and clients-- is dead. The critical landscape practices that it failed to become are built by embeddedness within the ever-shifting processes and relationships that constitute landscape through knowledge-making, coalition-building, design, activism, making, maintaining, repairing, adapting, unbuilding, policy-making, redesigning, remaking.

This body of practice cannot be framed through the accepted histories of landscape architecture. We propose that it cannot claim a unique history for itself as landscape architecture has done, but must be situated within landscape (no modifier) as a continuum of shifting relations tied across past, present, future.

We frame this argument through the lens of practice by examining several examples in North America that engage with time by intentionally situating their work within this deep time continuum and its trajectories. Present and future iterations of critical landscape practices can be built through horizontal exchange with non-eurowestern worldbuilding practices such as these and their sovereign caretakers. For landscape architecture we propose practice tied not to the static, power-driven, formal histories of the discipline as it was, but to trajectories of action in the landscape continuum.

As landscape practitioners, we do not have our own history to claim. No history belongs to us. We belong to a continuum of landscape practice spanning past, present, and many futures.

This argument is deeply indebted to the peoples who fight against the ongoing colonial apocalypse.

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3 "Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-Futurist Manifesto." *Indigenous Action* , 20 Mar. 2020,

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Complicated Remembrance in the Global Age: The Case of Malmö

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As of this year, the total number of migrants worldwide is at an all-time high (UN World Migration Report, 2020). In a world where more people than ever before migrate, there will increasingly be memories of somewhere now located elsewhere. Thus, the memory amassed in a landscape could be seen as part of a network of globalized memories, as diverse as the population in place. Meanwhile, calls for physical representations of memory have been increasing over recent decades, as part of what Huyssen (2003) termed the “memory boom”, via what Doss (2010) describes as a “memorial mania”, and Hoskins (2014) calls “an increasing obsession with commemoration and memorialization”.

In this presentation, I examine the future of remembrance in the urban landscape using two recent examples of public art: Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz’ project *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* (2007-), and the so-called Zlatan-statue (2019) by Swedish sculptor Peter Linde, both on view in the city of Malmö during 2019. Through viewing the artworks as examples of commemoration in times of global change, I examine the ‘permanent temporariness’ / ‘temporary permanence’ of Rakowitz project (a temporary exhibition since included in the city’s permanent collection), and Linde’s statue (erected as permanent sculpture, only to be vandalized, toppled and removed), ending with some thoughts on the unscripted future of remembrance and public art in the global age.

As has been argued by e.g. Olsen (2019) art has the possibility to “intervene in the social and material processes of city-making”. Similarly, I argue, social, political and material processes in the contemporary city also has the possibility to intervene when it comes to art. Ingram has noted how “art is a way of enacting and experimenting with events” (2019). However, in some cases the tables are turned, the event instead finding a way to interact with the art, evident in these examples.

"Unscripting Europe": Using Future Scenarios to Rethink EU Territorial Inequalities

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In principle, the EU promises citizens equal rights and opportunities. However, it is questionable whether different places in Europe are treated fairly in reality: European citizens' ability to enjoy those rights and opportunities are still affected by where they live and work.

The IMAJINE project is a Horizon 2020-funded research programme tasked with exploring issues of territorial equality and spatial justice across the EU's member states. However, significant environmental, social, political, and economic uncertainties mean that the inequalities of tomorrow may not look like those which can be researched empirically in the present or recent past.

Therefore IMAJINE includes a foresight component, creating plausible future scenarios for the Europe of 2048. Each of these generates a distinct version of territorial inequality - from a world where climate change and ongoing pandemics have driven people from cities and coastlines back into rural living, to one where life has been so thoroughly digitalised that citizenship is decoupled from geography and many inequalities occur in virtual space, among people living in close physical proximity.

Can an imagined future help us to see potential opportunities and threats beyond those we can expect, predict, or extrapolate from the present and past? This paper will present the four initial scenarios generated by the IMAJINE project, and discuss their use in "unscripting" existing thinking, helping people to see how the inequalities and injustices of the future may be entirely different to those of today. The paper will discuss the construction of meaningful, well-defined scenarios for such a broad topic and stakeholder group, and the process behind effective, time-sensitive scenario creation in a time of quarantine and lockdown.

Dystopian and utopian tales of hydrological extremes: building scenarios of societal responses to unprecedented events

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Abstract

What is today an unprecedented hydroclimatic extreme may soon become the norm. This will have widespread socio-economic consequences and affect the ability of different societal groups to recover from, and adapt to, rapidly changing hydroclimatic conditions. There is thus the need to decipher the relationships between the potential impacts of, and recovery trajectories from, future, unprecedented hydroclimatic extremes across different societal groups. Political ecologies of water have been effective in unravelling and critiquing the processes of exploitation and the choreographies of power shaping uneven exposure to hydrological extremes. Yet, political ecology scholarship has placed less attention to what this critique reveals about the future. Here we invoke a more experimental political ecology that integrates critical analysis with scenario thinking to unravel the politics of utopian and dystopian futures of unprecedented extreme events. This requires creating new forms of knowledge that integrate analyses of the past - structural causes and political processes of risk accumulation and differentiated recovery trajectories - with plausible future hydroclimatic extremes grounded in numerical climate projections. Eschewing prevailing technocratic views on disasters, we specifically seek to integrate the physical characteristics of the extremes with examinations of how culture, politics, power, and policy visions shape societal responses to unprecedented events. This approach, at the nexus between social and natural sciences, has the concrete advantage of providing an impacts-focussed vision of future hydroclimatic risk, beyond what is achievable within conventional disciplinary boundaries.

Young citizens' vision of a sustainable future: expectations and political implications

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Following the protests that took form on School strikes for climate from 2018, in September of 2019, the coordination for climate change in the County Council of Trøndelag (Norway) put forward a workshop with young citizens to gather their input for a new strategy on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Although, the active involvement of this segment of the population in the process for policy creation and consultation was a novelty, worth of a more profound study, in this presentation the focus is put on the outcomes from one of the workshop activities. Particularly, one exercise that tasked the creation of a story about one day in the life of a young citizen in 2030. The workshop included 43 participants divided into 7 groups, and as a result, seven short stories were produced. These stories present some of the expectations about future lifestyles that the participants held during the workshop and were part of the input for a local political body. They describe practices, objects, and arrangements that are both oriented to technological solutions and a few requiring more radical behavior changes. However, most of these expectations are well aligned to prevailing ideas on consumption, energy transitions, and circular economy based on business as usual targets. Without making assumptions about the process through which the participants have gained knowledge about their expected futures, and as a mode of conclusion for this presentation, a discussion about the ontological design of interventions that could enable more radical future thinking is presented.

«Rural futures»

Chris McCormick, Design and architecture Norway (DOGA)

The year is 2040. What has happened? Where do we live, and how do we inhabit where we live? Has the pandemic had any long-term impact, and if so how? And what about climate change? Who are making the planning decisions in our towns, and who has the influence to change and develop the way we live together?

What the future holds is uncertain and there are many important questions to be answered, not least questions related to how we develop our built environment. To be able to answer them, we must think in a completely different way to how we have done so to date. There is a tendency to plan for the future based on concepts and stories from our past. Simulated models of the future are often formed from an ever-growing network of complex algorithms. Relying solely on the past to make decisions for the present and the future is only to see part of the picture.

“Rural futures” is an applied research project in Norway using future scenario methodologies as a way of forming a more informed knowledge base for making decisions about how the places where we live and work are planned, designed and constructed.

Inspired by the “[Future laboratory](#)” and “[Factory of the future](#)” projects hosted at DOGA in 2019, Rural futures will engage with two different groups of young adults, “[Ungdommens distriktspanel](#)” and “[2020x](#)” to explore radical future possibilities, challenge them and discover steps to take that can contribute to a better future for generations to come.

Many district municipalities in Norway have major challenges in creating and maintaining businesses for local employment. In addition, migration from rural to urban areas amongst the younger part of the population is having a straining effect on local economies and social resilience. By using future scenario thinking and methods, perhaps we can find innovative and radical ways of dealing with these challenges?

By the 28th October the project will have run workshops with the aforementioned groups of young adults and will have gleaned a diversity of insights and information that will include the following:

- The overarching collective visions and trends for the future seen through the eyes of the younger generations living in regional Norwegian districts.
- Future scenario methodologies that combine with creativity from the arts (theatre / improvisation) and experience design.
- Backcasting. The exploration of working back from the vision of the future, applying critical thinking from diverse perspectives (architecture, planning, politics, private and public sector, citizens) and determining the key barriers, needs and steps to be taken.

In essence this project will explore the usefulness and potential of applying future scenario methods to local and regional planning processes. In addition, there will be a mapping out of the process, resource needs and the competence required to initiate such an initiative.

'Boyz n the Hood': Rap music as an alternative tool for analyzing and re-imagining post-industrial cities

MSc Anna Myllymäki

While the attention of the planning community along with the rest of the world is fixed on dealing with the ongoing pandemic, a different kind of human catastrophe has been unfolding in front of our eyes. Noticeably absent from the myriad of webinars and zoom-lectures concerned with the making of a “post-pandemic city”, the current racial turmoil in the US has not incited much buzz from the planning community, spare for an open letter signed by a group of American planning professionals. The letter names “redlining and the construction of freeways and toxic industrial development in poor and Black and Brown neighborhoods, among many others” as having a significant role in the development of racial inequality, calling for the utilization of “sound data and public input” (Draper-Zivetz, 2020). When discussing marginalized groups, one of the most prolific yet overlooked sources of data and public input have been the rap musicians. While some academic studies have emerged in the field of art interpretation and its use for urban research, rap music is often disregarded for its ‘philistine’ nature, and few ventures into exploring the spatiality displayed in rap lyrics have been made. This paper, based on my 2020 Master’s thesis in the faculty of Urbanism at TU Delft, Netherlands, will study rap music as an alternative source for data and its potential in the reimagination of urban spaces. Starting with a review of contemporary scholar writings on rap music, its lyricism and roots in African American socio-cultural practices and space, leading to an analysis of visual, sonic and lyric examples using the hermeneutic research method, I uncover the significance of place in ways hidden from algorithms and GIS-programs. Rap music has potential to offer us an alternative angle of entry in the planning process and help in establishing a collective consciousness of a place.

Key words – alternative data, hermeneutic research, rap music, racial inequality, poetic urbanism

References

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Playing With The Futures You Didn't See Coming: High-Agency Participatory Scenario Activities, On and Offline

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As Thomas Schelling wrote, "One thing a person cannot do, no matter how rigorous his analysis or heroic his imagination, is to draw up a list of things that would never occur to him." Yet 2020 reminds us how often events can blindside us, and how important it is to "think the unthinkable".

In turbulent times, past events are a poor guide; we may need to inform our decision-making by making analogies to imagined futures. Scenario planning and other foresight practices, by emphasising explorations of plausibility over confident prediction of a single future, can enrich our perspective on what awaits.

How, then, do we transport an ever wider community of people to a place where they can safely and usefully play with plausible futures? We must find activities and create opportunities where people can engage in participatory, futures-focussed storytelling - as creators of scenarios, not just consumers.

In this session, we'll share three radically open-ended activities which have been used on- and offline to explore uncertainty and systemic change. Each favours a dynamic which is exploratory rather than instructional or didactic; we aimed to create activities where facilitators cannot anticipate or control all outcomes.

In "[Library Island](#)", the task of running a small community's library service swiftly brings players into contact with issues of colonial history and political authority; in "Coalandia", managing finite fossil-fuel resources raises questions of information flow and pacing of systemic change; and real-time politics is simulated in "the Council Game", where players can even lobby the game's facilitator to change the rules, echoing the kind of norm-breaking and systemic threat which can be witnessed in 2020's political upsets.

We'll share examples of the games in action, their impact and methods of assessment, as well as exploring the deeper links between open-ended play and foresight work.