subjects. More than this, however, Leach would describe the imagination as a space of emergence; anthropology is a kind of knowledge-making in that space, but for the research subjects, too, a creative mis-repetition, a creative addition, occurs in the mutual attempt to make sense, to 'synthesise' with the other or join in mutual possession. If we are to understand the imagination then we must recognise that we are talking about specific, located, conditioned actions, Leach elaborates, for particular synthetic makings. However, while we must trace the conditions for particular imaginings to emerge, we must also recognise that imagination is not determined by these conditions but introduces a space of possibility. As we have seen, it is a space in which anthropologists and research subject might jointly craft a kind of communication based on a kind of mutual possession. But not this supra-cultural exchange alone. For the Reite, myth is in the land as a kind of person. To do this knowledge anthropological justice is not to define the imagination *against* reality or a kind of compensation or lack or even as something separate. Rather, imagination causes land, person, history itself to emerge as mutually possessed makings among human beings in relation.

Chapter 13
Infrastructural Imaginaries: Collapsed Futures in Mozambique and Mongolia

Morten Nielsen and Morten Axel Pedersen

It is probably no exaggeration to claim that most contemporary studies in the social sciences treat imagination as an a priori capacity by which social life is perceived, expressed and acted upon. A good example is Charles Taylor's well-known work on 'social imaginaries' (2002) in which the imagination emerges as a template for thought and action: an all-encompassing horizon of meaning that is required in order for human beings to make sense of the world (cf. Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen 2009: 6–7). In the introduction to a volume on social imaginaries, Gaonkar (2002) outlines the underlying assumptions behind this understanding. Social imaginaries, he suggests, are:

> first-person subjectivities that build upon implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices. They are embedded in the habitus of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols and the like. They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are the means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world. (Op. cit.: 4)

Anthropological studies of the imagination have argued that social imaginaries aid people to make sense of changing social, political and economic circumstances by straddling the divide between an uncertain present and an unknown future (Crapanzano 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Masquelier 2002; Vigh 2006). A good illustration of this approach can be found in Crapanzano's book *Imaginative Horizons* (2004), where he makes the argument that imaginative possibilities are conditioned also by what lies beyond the immediately given and resists total articulation, a 'hinterland' that human beings might never reach. The imagination emerges as a creative and driving force that potentially transcends the phenomenologically given parameters of social life.[1] Unlike Sartre's concept

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1   Crapanzano is thus in line with Carnelius Castoriadis who, in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987), formulated an 'ontology of creation' with emphasis on the indeterminate nature of the social imaginary. On imaginary indetermination (or underdetermination), see also Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen (2009).

of the imagination as an individual act of detachment from the world (1948), then, anthropology has tended to treat the imagination as a purposeful mode of social engagement. As Tim Ingold puts it, imagining '*is* an activity; it is something people *do*. And as an activity it carries forward an intentionality, a quality of attention that is embodied in the activity itself' (2000: 417, italics in original). Imagination, in short, is what allows humans to recalibrate their perception to an always-shifting social environment via a dialectics of introspective deliberation and extrospective involvement (Vigh 2004). More precisely, most recent anthropological studies of the imagination share the belief that the flexibility and open-endedness of the human imagination is (at least in principle) in sync with a recalcitrant exterior world that resists full articulation.

Via ethnographic accounts of how people learn and refine practical social skills anthropological studies of the imagination have thus made possible a new and improved understanding of the seeming universal human tendency to recalibrate individual pathways to partially known and gradually changing social milieux. Yet, this anthropological success story rests on several important if largely implicit and therefore often unexamined ontological assumptions regarding the general relationship between subject and world (Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen 2009: 8–11). The imagination as a subjective capacity for engagement is assumed to imprint the dynamic totality of the surrounding world onto individual subjects, as they move through it via their continuous and creative adaptations.[2] Here, the imagination operates 'from the subject and out'. The world acquires its meaning from the creativity of different individuals, who are charting new pathways through partially known social words. And the tacit assumption behind this theory of the imagination is that a given subject's (interior) imaginative capacities help to make sense of the (exterior) social world outside by creating an interior mirror version of it.

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2   As an apt example, we might take Vigh's recent analysis of racial conflicts and urban youth in post-war Guinea-Bisau (2006). In order to examine the unstable processes of social differentiation, Vigh introduces the notion of social imaginary, which, in this context, is understood as relating not only to a historical narrative. Rather, as Vigh puts it: 'Instead of merely being related to the way we see ourselves as having cut a path through time towards our current situation, our imaginaries play an essential part in shaping our self-images as social categories and framing our realm of possibilities. It is through the social imagination that we locate ourselves in the world, position ourselves in relation to others and seek to grasp our potential and anticipated future; that is, the sphere of our existence which we have not yet experienced but which we nonetheless act towards in anticipation' (op. cit.: 483). This is a convincing analysis of the heterogeneous ways in which subjective experiences fold themselves around recalcitrant worlds and in so doing open up new pathways towards unknown social horizons. Still, the question is whether this and other anthropological theories of imagination offer a sufficiently robust analytical framework to generalise across the full spectrum of ethnographic variations.

Our aim in this chapter[3] is not to make any direct critique of this dominant anthropology of the imagination. Rather, *we wish experimentally to reverse the correlation between interior and exterior human worlds* by conducting a comparative ethnographic analysis of failed infrastructure projects in the Mozambican capital of Maputo (Case 1) and the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar (Case 2), namely the allegedly collapsed plans to build a new Maputo City Centre on the Island of KaTembe, and the defunct plans to construct a new 500 MW power plant in Ulaanbaatar's Uliastai district. Following a discussion of some of Kant's and Bergson's writings on the relationship between imagination and human perception, we proceed to explore in the two ethnographic cases particular processes of 'involution' where the exterior world is 'enfolded' within subjects as sets of imaginary effects. In so doing, we hope to show that the imagination can be understood not merely as an individual's subjective capacity for making sense of the world, but a creative force that is internal to matter itself. Human perception, we argue, works by slicing up parts from a whole, and there is for this reason only a difference of degree (rather than in kind) between that which is perceived and our subjective sense-making practices. In other words, *imagination does not always operate and move from the subject outwards but also from the world inwards*.

A World of Images

For Kant, the imagination was to be understood as a 'secret art residing in the depths of the human soul' (1996: 214) that allows us to bring to mind that which is not entirely present to the senses. It is through the use of our imaginative capacities that we are able to produce synthetic formations of knowledge comprised of ideas, experiences and things. The imagination operates independently of the processing of sensory material into products of experience (say, as concepts or recollections) and is therefore essentially 'freed' to produce reflections upon a sensory manifold without determining its status or final meaning. The power of imagination lies in its mediating role between sensibility and reason – between the 'is' of nature and the 'ought to be' of morality (Kneller 2007: 158).

Far from a limited set of innate and universal categories by which the world is perceived, the stuff of the imagination on Kant's model emerges as 'a maximally broad and heterogeneous ambit of phenomena in which the workings of the imagination, seen as a process rather than a distinct field, can be detected' (Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen 2009: 12). Indeed if, as Kant claims, the imagination

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operates as a dynamic interface between sensibility and reason, the subject is emptied of all substance and emerges as a function of the syntheses that are being established through the power of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) (Kant 1996: 404).[4] Rather than functioning as a locus of detached reflection, the Kantian cogito is a contact zone where immediate sensations interlink with memories and accumulated knowledge in novel ways. The (interior) unity of the subject emerges as an imaginative effect of the syntheses between sensibility and reason, for the impressions or 'pictures' (*bilden*) generated by this unity are neither of the order of appearance (pure representations) nor strong manifestations of 'that which is' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988: 30). Indeed, the creative power of imagination derives precisely from this meditation between moral-cum-logical knowledge and immediate and intuitive sensations.

It follows that, surprisingly as it may seem to the father of transcendental idealism, Kant's cogito is essentially void, for 'all that remains of the subject is the "I" as an "empty form" … This is so because the form of time, which is the "form of the internal sense" permits no *substantial* presentation' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988: 30, emphasis in original). Now, while Kant has been criticised for denying the possibility of an 'original intuition' it is just this 'weakening of the subject' (ibid. 1988: 31) as the motor of the imagination that we find especially pertinent in his model and here wish to explore anthropologically. Indeed, we are going to suggest that a close ethnographic exploration of the temporal aspects of imaginative processes may allow us to understand in better detail how and why it is this that the 'pictures' (*bilden*) that emerge in the imagination of a given person *are not entirely determined by (let alone contained within) a purportedly universal human cognitive make-up*. Before doing so, however, we need to discuss in some detail the relationship between perception and memory as discussed by Henri Bergson (1913; 1965; 2001; 2005). While paralleling the Kantian divide between sensibility and reason, Bergson's theory of human perception opens towards a reconfigured relationship between world and subject where human perception is always already included in (rather than detached from) the flux of life. Accordingly, with Bergson, we arrive at an understanding of imagination as an involution (as opposed to mirroring) of the 'outside' world.

Bergson's (2005) theory of the relationship between perception and memory in a sense starts out where the Kantian understanding of the 'empty' subject stops, namely in the gap between our understanding and the world itself. In place of Kant's distinction between moral philosophy (reason) and practical knowledge (sensation), Bergson introduces the well-known opposition between 'realism' and 'idealism', arguing that both are equally incapable of explaining the gap between

sensation and reason (2005: 26–7).[5] Whereas, he explains, realist epistemologies assume that external perception is capable of allowing us to access things 'in themselves', as it were, and thereby aspire to know the world objectively 'as it is', idealist epistemologies (including Kant's transcendent idealism) hold that external perception is defined by the spiritual projections of representations that are taken to constitute the reality; in other words, perception is subjective.[6] The problem, according to Bergson, is that both end in the same impasse, which is how to connect the 'exterior' world with the subject's 'interior' understandings of the former. Whereas idealism argues that our so-called 'belief systems' uphold our impression of some kind of order in the world (as we are denied access to things as they truly are), realism faces the impossible task of accounting for subjective representations which can only appear 'miraculously' given that human perception is governed by the environment (Bergson 2005: 22–8). To straddle this chasm between seemingly incompatible positions, Bergson's proposes a solution that is 'deceptively simple' (Middleton and Brown 2005: 66): what we experience are neither things as they 'really are' nor reflections of individual accumulated knowledge; but simply 'images':

> Matter … is an aggregate of "images". And by "images" we mean a certain existence, which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing* – an existence placed halfway between the "thing" and the "representation". This conception of matter is simply that of common sense. (Bergson 2005: 9–10, italics in original)

Both realists and idealists would agree that the world presents itself to humans as a 'panorama of images, made up from a complex array of colours' (Middleton and Brown 2005: 67). Bergson's 'deceptively simple' point is that these images should be taken at face value – the world is precisely what it appears to be: an 'aggregate of images'. But crucially, these images are not mere representations or models of a reality fundamentally inaccessible to us, as the idealists would have it. Rather, for Bergson, images are extended in space and thus partially independent of our perceptions, for as he puts it, 'an image may *be* without being *perceived* – it may be present without being represented' (Bergson 2005: 35, italics in original).

With this notion of 'images' as ontological properties of the world, the site and the power of the imagination are displaced in relation to the subject. For, if perception constitutes a contraction or 'slicing up' of reality, this means that there is only a difference of degree between being and being perceived, or rather, between matter and the perception of matter (Ansell Pearson 2000: 142). Perception is

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4   In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that '(s)ynthesis as such … is the mere effect produced by the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) which is a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition whatsoever, but of which we are conscious only very rarely' (1996: 130).

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5   This distinction is revealed, for example, in the split between Descartes's geometrical extensivity and Berkeley's pure mentalism.

6   Put crudely, this distinction could be taken as a metonymic description of the opposition between 'direct realism' (Gibson 1966) and, basically, the large majority of anthropological approaches to the 'imagination' described in the previous section.

internal to matter, as it were, since the image that presents itself to us is 'already there' in the object (Deleuze 1995: 54). For Bergson, reality is an undivided flux of innumerable 'vibrations' from which momentary snapshots are cut out.[7] Nothing is hidden beneath the surface; the colours one perceives are not a representation or 'duplication' of a purportedly true and original *ding-an-sich*.[8] Perception merely isolates a part from the whole that is 'more than, but not ... different from, that which is actually given' (Deleuze 1995: 78) – as when one hits a piano key and sees the vibrations of the string just as the sound of the note reaches one's ear (Deleuze 1995: 128–9) Thus, given its prior existence in matter, the image is not defined by interiority but rather by exteriority. Consciousness is not *of* something: it is itself deduced from matter.

Interestingly, Bergson also claims that 'every perception is already memory. Practically, we perceive only the past, the pure past being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future' (2005: 150). Considering the discussion so far, this statement seems somewhat odd. As we have just established, to Bergson, human perception is oriented towards the present as series of immediate contractions of the surrounding world. So why this prioritisation of memories and the 'pure past'? In order to understand this crucial aspect of Bergsonian time, we might fruitfully return yet again to the Kantian discussion of imaginative power introduced at the beginning of this section. By clarifying the impossibility of both 'realism' and 'idealism', Bergson refuted the Kantian opposition between reason and sensation. Still, Bergson maintained that the human sensory system serves as a necessary interface between matter and mind, a '*place of passage* of the movements received and thrown back, a hyphen, a connecting link between the things which act upon me and the things upon which I act' (Bergson 2005: 151–2). This involves a certain process of slowing down or hesitation – a 'zone of indetermination' – as the vibrational flow of inanimate matter is confronted with the vibrational resistance of the sensuous system. Thus the coming into being of images involves a twofold process: that of perception which puts us 'at once into matter' and that of memory which puts 'us at once into the mind' (Deleuze 1988: 26). This distinction is important as it paves the way for Bergson to claim a precedence of the past as the ontological premise for all present experiences.

For Bergson, then, memory is a totality within which an innumerable amount of memory-images co-exist in different degrees of contraction. When a memory is formed, it detaches itself from its object but continues to co-exist with the present as a virtual image in and of itself. Each act of recollection implies a leap into a pure past. Thus memories do not pass out of time but out of the present; they are 'impassible' in Deleuze's term, for they cannot pass away (Lawlor 2003: 54). As Deleuze (2002)[9] writes:

> [A]n actual perception surrounds itself with a cloud of virtual images, distributed on increasingly remote, increasingly large, moving circuits, which both make and unmake each other. These are memories of different sorts, but they are still called virtual images in that their speed or brevity subjects them ... to a principle of the unconsciousness. (Op. cit.: 112)

Imagining from the World Inwards

Let us now return to the question of the imagination and the anthropological purchase of the Bergsonian theory on images, memory and time outlined above. As we explained in the Introduction, most anthropological studies of the imagination have been premised on the more or less tacit assumption that imaginative possibilities are predicated on the subject's capacities for purposeful (intentional) creativity. Now, in making the above reading of Bergson's ontology of images, we hope to have sketched a different anthropological approach to the imagination which focuses instead on how perceived images derive from momentary hinges made across the flow of matter and memory.[10]

Consider the figure below, where we schematically map out the differences between the conventional anthropological (phenomenological) understanding of

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7   To describe the part–whole relationship between image and reality, Bergson uses the example of the chrysalis, which is 'motionless on the surface, in its very depth it lives and vibrates' (op. cit.: 204). Deep within the chrysalis, the larva creates vibrations that make the hard outer case gleam. What the spectator perceives as light of qualitatively different colours is, thus equally, the quantitatively continuous vibrations of the larva.

8   As Lawlor has argued (2003: 5), Bergson insists on the concept of 'image' because it implies vision and a dependence on light. Considered as luminosity (propagations of energy), the individual image becomes available to perception 'not by more light being cast on it, but by a diminution of light, a darkening of its contours' (Ansell Pearson 2000: 142). In other words, if images might fruitfully be considered as emissions of light, representations are essentially subtractions or selective filtering of light.

9   In his *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze explains how past and present are logically co-existing. If a new present were required, he argues, in order for the past to be constituted as such, a (former) present would never cease to exist and we would therefore never arrive at a new one. 'No present would ever pass were it not past "at the same time" as it is present; no past would ever be constituted unless it were first constituted "at the same time"' (op. cit.: 81). Consequently, if the 'pure past' did not co-exist with the present, it would be difficult (if not outright impossible!) to explain the passing or transformation of any present. Based on this particular reading of Bergsonian time, it might be concluded that no present exists that is not preceded by a past. Or rather, 'there has never been a present experience that is prior to its memory' (Lawlor 2003: 55).

10   Crucially, while we have here focused on the relationship between (human) subjects and world, this theory of images pertains to nonhuman-nonhuman interactions and interfaces as well. After all, as Colebrook as recently explained (2002: 87–8), '[T]he image is neither actual nor virtual but the interval that brings actuality out of the virtual. The plant "images" or perceives the sun towards which it turns, allowing for the becoming of photosynthesis; and it is to be a plant nothing more than this becoming, experiencing or imaging'.
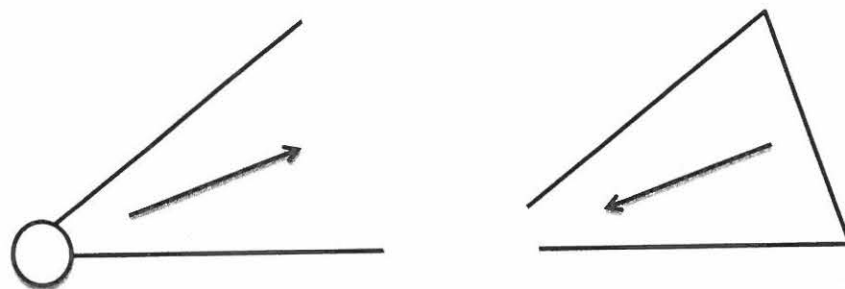
Figure 13.1   A schematic outline of the imagination 'from the subject outwards' (left) and 'from the world inwards' (right)

imagination and a Bergsonian (non-phenomenological) one (see Figure 13.1). The left image depicts an understanding of the human imagination that takes its point of departure from the momentary and gradually changing perspective of the subject. The right image might be taken to constitute a tilted Bergsonian cone. Irrespective of whether turning towards perception or the 'pure past', a subjective perspective is a contraction or a 'slicing out' of a larger continuous whole.

Note that, whereas in the left model, the subject emerges as the premise for the creation of images of the world, in the model to the right, the subject as locus and a source of the imagination is absent. This reflects what we consider to be the central lesson of Bergson's, namely that the human subject merely serves as a 'zone of indetermination' that connects pure past with immediate perceptions: memory (and, we might argue, imagination) does not come *from* perception but *to* perception, for the past does not derive from the present as much it arrives at it. Sidestepping chronological linearity, the past emits virtual memories like electric currents that reach us as cascades of images when they are actualized in the present.

Whereas intuitive theories of human decision-making will claim that actions directed towards the future are guided by a logic of causal connectivity (moment 'A' leading to moment 'B' and so forth), Bergson inverses the procedure by arguing that a future-oriented action requires a leaping 'into being-in-itself, into the being in itself of the past' (Deleuze 1988: 57). Far from imaginatively probing the obstacles between myself and my willed outcome to establish a meaningful path between a series of consecutive actions (that is, a plan), my search for lost recollections involves 'jump[ing] the interval of time which separates the actual situation from a former one which resembles it; and as consciousness goes back to the earlier date at a bound, all the intermediate past escapes its hold' (Bergson 2005: 146). In contrast to conventional chronology where the future is an effect of progressive linearity, Bergson's philosophy thus stipulates that the future is, in some way, independent of what has already (causally) occurred. Depending on the immediate sensations and affects arising from the 'slicing' up of reality

(i.e. 'interior' perception as part of the 'exterior' world), different regions of the pure past are activated and come to structure the subject's temporal orientation. According to Deleuze, this process implies a fundamental 'cut' by which the present becomes detached from the pure past and projects us into a completely unknown future (1994: 88). At the same time, however, this cut also serves to assemble time because *all* the events of the pure past are here detached from *all* of the events of the future.[11] At any given moment, time splits into two heterogeneous and asymmetrical emissions: 'one toward the future, making the present pass, and another toward the past, coexisting wholly with the present it was' (Turetzky 1998: 217). While maintaining the stabilising effects of linear chronology, the eternal return of the 'cut' installs in the present a virtual openness towards a future that is unconditioned by the past.

In the remainder of this chapter, we explore the purchase of this Bergsonian approach for an ethnographic study on the imagination. In our two case studies, we describe concrete imaginary capacities from the 'outside in' and, in so doing, chart the contours of an anthropology that studies specific processes of imaginary involution.

Case 1: Collapsed Futures in the Pure Past: 'China Town' in Maputo

The KaTembe Bridge seems to have *always* been at the centre of political debates on urban development in Mozambique. Nielsen started doing ethnographic research in Maputo in 2004 around the time that Armando Guebuza was first elected president and he vividly recalls daily debates on TVM, the national television station, on the importance of connecting the city centre with the KaTembe peninsula. Currently, access to KaTembe can be made only by taking a small ferry that carries a maximum of eight cars and around 50 people to and from the peninsula on an hourly basis. The limited access has proven to be a serious impediment, not only to the 22,065 inhabitants living on the peninsula (Betar Consultores 2012: 3), but, equally, to an increasing number of entrepreneurs within and beyond the ruling Frelimo party, to whom KaTembe constitutes the next financial hub. In 2011, the Mozambican General Director of the Mozambican Investment Promotion Centre, Lourenco Sambo, finally announced that foreign investment necessary for building the KaTembe Bridge had been secured. Representatives of the ruling Frelimo government had signed a memorandum with the Chinese government on the financing of the bridge and a ring road around the city centre whose fragile road network was on the verge of complete collapse. A year later, the official loan agreement was signed by the Mozambican Finance Minister, Manuel Chang, and representatives of the Chinese Exim Bank, outlining that overall costs would

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11   This is the case, for example, when a moment in time is infused with the sensation that nothing (neither past, present nor future) will ever be the same again. This sensation, in effect, conjures up the whole of time.

add up to 725 million USD with the Exim Bank subsidising 95 per cent and the Mozambican state putting in 5 per cent. On 20 September 2012 the first brick of the bridge was laid and, with an expected construction period of three years, the KaTembe Bridge would be inaugurated in autumn 2015.

A few months prior to Lourenco Sambo's public announcement on the signing of the memorandum in 2011, Nielsen visited the KaTembe peninsula to meet with Alberto Nhone, the local head of the Regional Urbanization Department. Nielsen was told during the hour-long meeting, that the Chinese government would fund not merely the construction of the bridge but, quite surprisingly, also the building of a 'Chinatown' (Nhone's words). Nielsen was somewhat puzzled: while knowing a few of the state officials involved in the project relatively well, no-one had mentioned anything about the building of a Chinatown in KaTembe. As Nielsen was not able to confirm Nhone's statements, he did not push the matter further, and proceeded instead to focus on the planned relocation of 245 families that would be affected by the building project.

When Nielsen returned to Mozambique in 2012, he visited KaTembe once again, to resume conversations with residents living on the peninsula. At the time, it had just been announced that the project of building the bridge had been awarded to the China Roads and Bridges Corporation (CRBC), which would also be responsible for building the ring road around the Mozambican capital. As Nielsen was returning to the city centre with the small ferry, he noticed a black Toyota RAV with four Asian men dressed in elegant black suits and with their eyes covered by huge dark sunglasses. Despite feeling that he might be about to play a part in a Hong Kong gangster movie of questionable quality, Nielsen approached the car and tried to look as friendly and unassuming as he could. The young man sitting next to the driver rolled down the window and exchanged a few cordial greetings and comments about the brutal heat and the overcrowded ferry. After a few minutes, Nielsen mustered the courage and asked what they were doing. The young man's voice was constantly being drowned by the motor noise from the ferry so Nielsen had to put his head halfway into the car cabin in order to hear the response: 'We are building a Chinatown', the young Chinese man replied without hesitation. 'CRBC invited us here and we have been at KaTembe to locate a suitable place to build 2,000 houses'. Before he could continue, the portly man sitting in the back seat pulled his arm and signalled to Nielsen that the conversation would be momentarily interrupted. The young man listened in silence for a few minutes to the man in the back seat before he turned towards Nielsen again. 'My boss wants to know if you are in the construction business', he said, nodding towards the back of the car: 'We are also considering building one or two cement factories in KaTembe and we want to collaborate with someone who speaks the language'. As politely as he could, Nielsen declined the offer and after a few more minutes of cordial exchanges, the conversation was over and the young Chinese man rolled up the window.

Less than a week later, a good friend of Nielsen's, who was working in the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, forwarded a collection of internal

documents describing the involvement of private Chinese companies in ongoing and projected infrastructure projects in Mozambique in general and in KaTembe in particular. From these documents, it appeared that a project of building of a new city centre in KaTembe had already been drafted in 2011. Estimated at a total cost of 2 billion USD, the project would be carried out by the China Tong Jian Investment Corporation and comprise the construction of a new seat for the National Parliament and several additional public buildings and squares. Hence, to Nielsen's surprise, it seemed that the head of the Urbanization Department in KaTembe was correct when arguing that a town would be built in KaTembe. Although a new company had apparently been selected to carry out the ambitious construction project, it was not entirely off the mark when Nhone characterised the urban plan for KaTembe as the making of a 'Chinatown'.

While visiting the projected construction zones, residents would often tell Nielsen that they were not against the expected relocation. More than anything else, relocation offered the possibility of transforming illegal occupancy into formal property-rights as residents currently occupying land in the designated construction areas would be relocated to areas that were laid out in accordance with state-authorised urban plans (see Nielsen 2011b). Hence, even if it would imply moving to a different part of Maputo, many KaTembe residents considered relocation as worth the trouble. Of the 22,065 inhabitants living in KaTembe, very few (if any) had legal property-rights to their plots and people were worried that they would eventually be removed by force by corrupt state officials wanting to sell the land to members of the party elite or to one of the many real estate agencies trying to make a profit on the expected increase in land values arising from the improved accessibility to and from KaTembe. The area that was now destined for the projected construction zone was previously owned by Emodraga, a state-owned company that was responsible for dredging national harbours and rivers. When Emodraga recently moved its headquarters to Beira, its Maputo workforce was made redundant. As a way of compensation, the employees were allocated plots of land that were previously owned by the company in KaTembe but, crucially, without receiving Land Use Rights – the so-called DUATs (*direito de uso e aproveitamento da terra*) – to the plots. At the time, the Mozambican government had not yet established what Armando Guebuza, Mozambique's president, has recently coined an 'eternal friendship' with China, and the bridge to KaTembe was therefore not on the political radar as a realistic priority. Hence, neither Emodraga nor its dismissed employees found it worthwhile legalising the occupancies in KaTembe.

Although Nielsen heard this historical account several times from residents occupying land in the projected construction zone, it was quite rare that he actually met former Emodraga employees who had been allocated land as compensation for lost jobs. As Nielsen soon realised, the large majority of residents currently living in the area had apparently bought the plots from former Emodraga employees, many of whom had used the allocated land merely as *machambas* (cultivated fields) to grow crops for their families who were living elsewhere in

KaTembe. Perhaps somewhat naïvely, Nielsen initially assumed that the land transactions had occurred prior to the spreading of news regarding the projected construction project of the KaTembe Bridge and the new 'Chinatown'. Taking into account the increased uncertainty surrounding the occupancies in the projected construction zone, Nielsen considered it to be quite unlikely that anyone would invest in land – let alone commence building a cement house – knowing that it would most probably be removed. However, when meeting Felizardo, a retired war veteran who was living in a two-room cement house with his teenage daughter in the projected construction zone, Nielsen was forced to drastically reconsider his initial assumptions.

Felizardo had acted as middleman in some recent land transactions with Emodraga land but, interestingly, the potential buyers were not external real estate agents planning to make a profit of the booming land-market in KaTembe. Rather, the majority of interested buyers were other residents who had previously been occupying land illegally elsewhere in the peninsula. As Felizardo told Nielsen, as soon as it was announced that the area was likely to be projected as a construction zone, numerous residents had approached him wanting to buy land from former Emodraga employees. Having lived in the area for more than a decade, Felizardo was considered by locals as an expert on the genealogies of land ownership in KaTembe and he had therefore been used as middleman in several transactions between former Emodraga employees and potential buyers. With Felizardo, Nielsen visited several plots that had recently been purchased by KaTembe residents who had previously been occupying land elsewhere in the peninsula; although the large majority was living in small one- or two-room reed-huts, a few occupants had already laid the foundations for their future cement houses and, in one instance, a one-room cement house was nearly completed. With zinc plates covering the roof and wooden door, and window frames already in place, the house only needed plastering on the outside walls and tiles to be laid as a front terrace. Being somewhat bewildered about the situation, Nielsen asked these newcomers to explain the reasons for buying land even while knowing that they would most likely be relocated within the next few years. As Nielsen had expected, initial responses revolved around the prospects of acquiring formal property rights to land through a state-authorised relocation process. However, as he pushed the matter further, it was clear that to many of the newcomers who were now occupying land in the projected construction zone, relocation did not necessarily entail a physical move to another area in KaTembe. Although the magnitude of the construction project was without precedent in post-Independence Mozambique, national residents in KaTembe and elsewhere had vivid recollections of being exposed to the modernising aspirations of the governing Frelimo party; something that had often resulted in disastrous failures and a consequential worsening of an already fragile socio-economic situation. By occupying a physical space as politically saturated as the construction site in KaTembe, relocation paradoxically indicated a momentary stabilisation of the situation by steering towards an ordering of space that the government was clearly incapable of realising. Based on the residents' collective recollections of the *incapacities* of the state, the occupied spaces served as apt devices for potentially reconfiguring the unstable relationship between residents and officials.

It was during a brief conversation with Júlio, Felizardo's fast-talking neighbour, that Nielsen was first introduced to the surprising reverberations of the relocation process. As Júlio told Nielsen in a cascade of staccato sentences, the plot had been purchased less than five months ago and he had already invested a considerable amount of money in buying construction materials that were now piled up in a small reed-hut. 'As long as I am the owner of this plot, I decide who enters the house and who doesn't'. He turned his torso towards the sea: 'And if I don't want them [i.e. State authorities] to enter, they will leave empty-handed'. Felizardo laughed: 'Yeah ... When the Chinese come, they will find the New Man [*o Homem Novo*] running things here'.

To be sure, an immediate and straightforward reading of these occurrences would be that Júlio and his peers in KaTembe are fatally miscalculating the socio-political repercussions of the ambitious infrastructure project. Keeping in mind the Frelimo government's eager attempts to remove all hindrances in the way of foreign investments and, in particular, the growing presence of Chinese financial agents in Mozambique, it seems quite likely that the KaTembe Bridge and the projected 'Chinatown' will be built within a relatively short time-span. From this perspective, how else to interpret Júlio and Felizardo's reflections than as a kind of imaginative 'poaching' (de Certeau 1984) on the fringes of a political landscape that they are also fundamentally misconstruing? Although Júlio and Felizardo are deciphering with surgical precision the infamous relationship between politically stated objectives and their less than satisfying outcomes, their analysis of the current situation fundamentally underestimates the pace and determination of the Sino-Mozambican collaboration.

What we would take to be of crucial importance in this case, however, are *the imaginative possibilities that seem to arise from the residents' physical move into the projected construction zone*. From Nielsen's conversations with the two residents, it emerges clearly that the purchased plots in the construction zone afford residents a particular perspective on the local social universe that is quite unlike those of the surrounding areas. The zone near the seaside seems to constitute an intensified crystallisation of the Mozambican state that allows Júlio and Felizardo to confront any outsider with the force of the erstwhile socialist ideal (the 'New Man') that was to spear-head the ideological revolution in the years following Independence in 1975 (Mahoney 2003; see also Nielsen 2014b). By resuscitating the idealised image of the socialist hero, Felizardo momentarily reverses the unstable relationship between governed and governor. Confronted yet again by outside imperial powers, it is not the weak and increasingly paralysed State that will actualise the country's dormant revolutionary powers: at the Last Day, the national territory will be safeguarded by the unlikeliest of combatants, who are to be found among the illegal occupants in the projected construction zone in KaTembe.

What we argue, then, is that these imaginary capacities arise not as a 'template for thought' by which Nielsen's interlocutors made sense of the world (*pace* Taylor 2002). Rather, by physically moving into the projected construction site, new images are potentially becoming available to Júlio and his peers that might connect with their memories of prior occurrences. As an enfolding or *involution* of the flux of social life, the imaginary capacities arise as a contingent connection between immediate perception (say, the physical move) and individual and collective recollections (say, of the 'New Man'). In contrast to conventional anthropological approaches, we argue that the imaginary capacities arise *as a function of the world*, while the individual is, in a sense, the subject that is fortuitously positioned to actualise these capacities (cf. Nielsen 2011a; 2014a). We agree with Deleuze's claim that 'a subject will be what comes to the point of view, or rather what remains in the point of view' (1993: 19). Without fixing the imagination to the individual's subjective constitution, imaginary capacities can be seen as having a prior existence in the flux of life from which the object – or 'image', to use Bergson's term, is extracted. Whereas immediate impressions of the construction zone obviously hinge on residents' previous experiences (e.g. regarding conflicts over access to land, the history of failed state-authorised infrastructure projects, etc.), certain imaginary opportunities seem to arise from their practical engagement with the physicality of the area. In other words, *the concrete space affords particular imaginary scenarios* and therefore also of certain hitherto unrecognised possibilities. Interestingly, then, although the KaTembe Bridge and the 'Chinatown' might eventually be realised, the ambitious building projects endure as images of collapsed futures when gazed upon from within the politically saturated construction site.

Case 2: The Vanishing Power Plant: Collapsed Futures in Peri-Urban Ulaanbaatar

In a peri-urban zone located in the north-eastern corner of the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar, an area known as Uliastai from the small river that runs through it, the social life of several households have since 2008 been continuously effected by the reverberations from a power-plant never to be built. Known as 'Power Plant #5' by officials and residents alike, the plan and later tender was made by Ulaanbaatar's city planning office in 2008–2009 as part of a wider national strategy to beef up Mongolia's energy production capacities in light of the steadily growing capital city. Ulaanbaatar has more than doubled its population since in the early 1990s and the electricity consumption has grown with more than 5 per cent per annum during the same period. In addition there have been rapidly increasing foreign investments in the Mongolian mining sector over the last decade, culminating with global mining giant Rio Tinto's multi-billion investment in the Gobi desert's Oyo Tolgoi deposit, which is poised to be the world largest copper and gold mine and

to account for more than a third of Mongolia's BNP in 2020, as well as growing Chinese bilateral aid and resource extraction (Pedersen and Bunkenborg 2012).

Foreign Direct Investment was indeed the reason why Pedersen began researching this particular peri-urban locality in the first place. It was during the early stages of the research project on Chinese infrastructure projects in Mongolia and Mozambique that he conducted with Mikkel Bunkenborg and Morten Nielsen from 2009 to 2012 (see Note 3), that Pedersen first heard rumours from officials a Chinese company had won the planned Power Plant #5 tender, which was now going to be constructed 'close to water, somewhere to the east of town'. After having spent several afternoons driving around Eastern Ulaanbaatar's derelict Soviet-era industrial wastelands, Pedersen and Bunkenborg finally came across a man who claimed to 'know a lot' about the plans for a power plant in this part of Ulaanbaatar. The man was the middle-aged head of a household which had relocated its *ger* (yurt) from the crowded northern edges of the city in the hope of finding better pastureland for its livestock (10 or so sheep, and a few cows). As with thousands of other former pastoralists who have migrated to Ulaanbaatar since 1990 (see Bruun and Odgaard 1996; Sneath 2004) this household now supplemented their small stock of animals by suitcase trading and various odd jobs (Pedersen and Højer 2009). Yet, there was also another reason why the household had decided to move to Uliastai, namely the promise of electricity and, by implication, the promise of resident status and entitlement to land:

Morten: Are you from the city or from the countryside?

Household Head: From the city. We don't have our own land, so we are hoping to get it here.

Morten: Formerly you stayed inside someone else's fence?

Household Head: Yes, for many years we paid for that. Then we decided that we wanted to have our own land, so we came here. We have been here long now, since last March.

Morten: So, is it a good place?

Household Head: Well, many families have left now. The reason is that they stayed here for too long time without electricity. As long as there is no electricity, people are not sure about their land. They doubt whether officials will give them permission for it.

Morten: So what about that power plant? Have you heard whether it will be built?

Household Head: I heard next Spring.

Morten: You mean that it is going to be built?

Household Head: Yes.

Morten: Here?

Household Head: Yes.

Morten: Really?

Household Head: Is it not going to?

Morten: I don't know.

Household Head: I don't know either. People say different things about it. Some have been saying that a power plant would be built here for years now. I don't know. There is a sign that says a power plant will be built here.

Morten: Is there a sign that says that? Precisely where is this sign?

Household Head: There is a sign just to the south from here on red board that says Power Plant #5 will be built here. There is also a sort of net there.

Morten: Might you have to move if the plant is built? Are you afraid to be kicked out?

Household Head: Why would they kick us out? They have already marked a spot for it. We really want it here. We were hoping so much that electricity would come, but it hasn't. Do you know what's going to happen? Will there be electricity? Are you going to build the plant?

We seem here to be faced with a 'productive poetics of ignorance'. Far from inhibiting communication and more generally the space of imagination associated with the power plant, it was almost as if our joint *lack* of knowledge about Power Plant #5 fed into and drove forward our conversation (cf. Højer 2009). Certainly, like an archaeologist of the future searching for 'cracks' that 'com[e] from the future as a sign of the future' (Ansell Pearson 1999: 120), Pedersen spent the rest of that day looking for the red sign that presaged the power plant to be. Yet, even though he walked several kilometers along the swampy bank of the Uliastai stream, he did not manage to find it. And, since all this happened during his last day of fieldwork that year, Pedersen had to leave Mongolia without having resolved the issue. Fortunately, Bunkenbirg was staying for an additonal week, and assisted by a local translator, he was able to continue the search. And finally, after several additional hours of looking, his quest bore fruit.
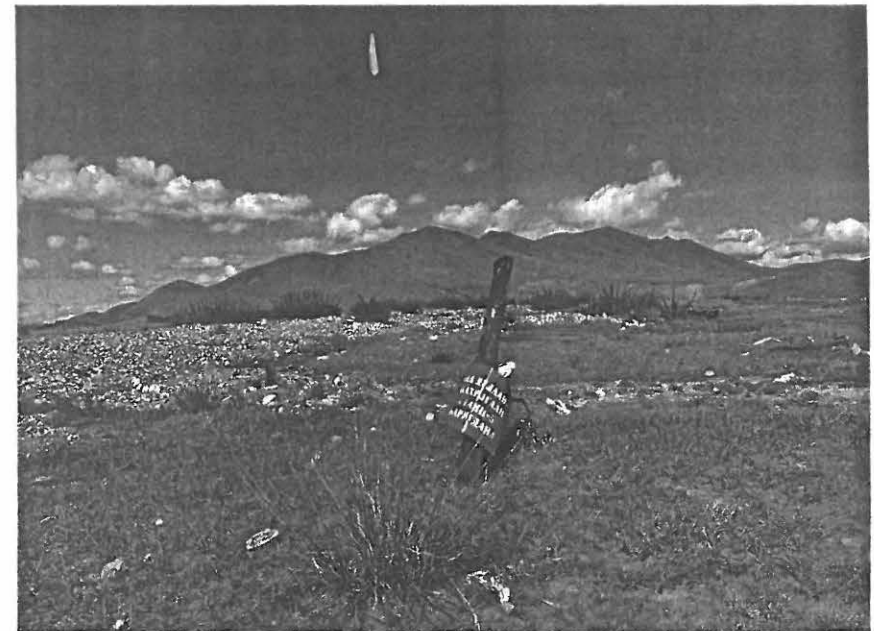

Figure 13.2   Signpost with the inscription 'Power Plant #5 to be built'
Source: Photo by Mikkel Bunkenborg

This unremarkable sign was the closest Power Plant #5 ever came to acquiring a material manifestation in the peri-urban neighbourhood of Uliastai. Yet, in spite – or perhaps because – of this limited degree of physical materialisation, the power plant still appeared to loom large in people's minds. In fact, it was almost as if the ghostly image of Power Plant #5 was 'haunting' Uliastai's residents, like a ghost of the future that kept returning to the present in the tragic desire of attaining a finality that was never to be.

Take for example, Enhmaa, a middle-aged woman living with her children some 500 meters to the north of the site, who had also been the person to draw attention to the site in the first place. Of all the people that Pedersen and Bunkenborg met in the neighbourhood over the three-year period stretching from 2009 to 2012, it was Enhmaa who seemed to know most about Power Plant #5, and it also was she who took the greatest interest in it. Little wonder. Having originally moved to Uliastai from central Ulaanbaatar in 2006 in the promise of land and improved income opportunities, Enhmaa soon found herself in dire straits as she was physically assaulted by some relatives whose livestock she and the children's father had arranged to look after (a common practice in Mongolia) and as the latter turning increasingly to drink. It was during the summer of 2007, as she found herself struggling to get by alone with the children with no source of income and food,

that she was approached by an important-looking men, who offered her a job as a caretaker for the 'organisation' (*baiguullagga*) planning to build a new power plant. Soon after, Enhmaa moved her *ger* into the fenced compound (*hashaa*) the organisation had put up. She could almost not believe her luck, she said, as she unlocked a chest and produced the following drawing:
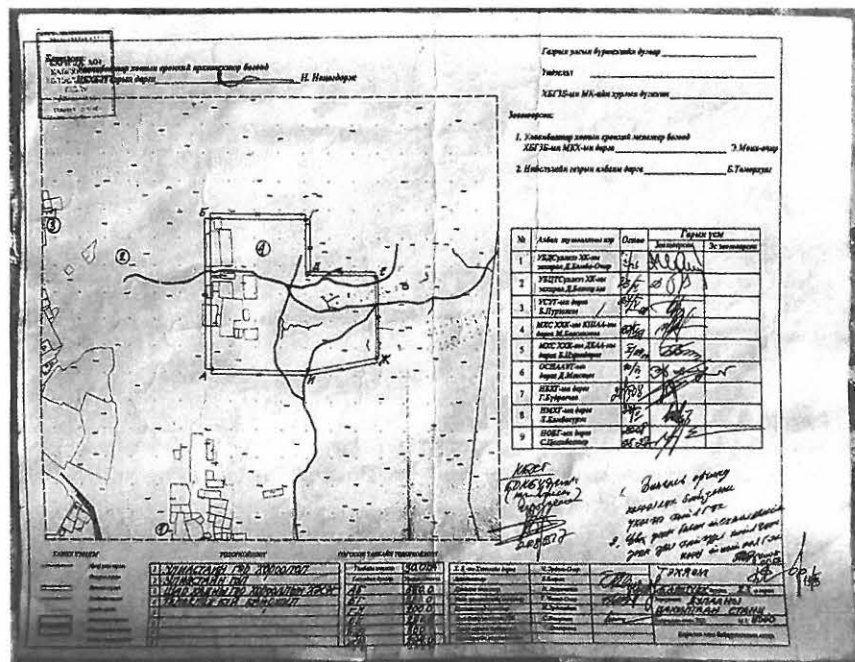

Figure 13.3   Drawing of Power Plant #5 plans at Uliastai
Source: Photo by Mikkel Bunkenborg

The following summer Pedersen returned to Mongolia. Determined to invest the necessary time and energy that was needed get to the bottom of things, he held a number of meetings with government officials and energy consultants associated with different international organisations. From these and various online news sources Pedersen learned that the plans had stalled. It was true that, in the previous year, a Chinese company had been selected by Ulaanbaatar's Energy Authority to build a new power plant in the city's Uliastai neighbourhood. But since then, this plan had come under severe criticism from several sides, including the World Bank (whose specialists were not at all convinced about the technical capacity, let alone financial viability, of the Chinese company, which, they objected, had only won the tender because they were the only bidder), and

the Ministry of the Environment and various environmental NGOs whose stake holders expressed shock and anger about the fact that someone would even consider building a power plant atop the city's main fresh water reservoir. To be sure, 'Power Plant #5 is going to be built' (after all no-one was denying the need for energy), but it was going to happen via a new, improved tender managed by the World Bank, and at a location most definitely *not* in Uliastai, but in western Ulaanbaatar at a convenient site right next to the existing Power Plant #3. (In any case, a Mongolian energy consultant told Pedersen, it would be very difficult to build any large structure on the boggy grassland that flanks the Uliastai River to both sides).

The great majority of residents in Uliastai seemed to concur with the gist of this assessment. Upon his return, Pedersen was thus met with numerous statements such as: 'Well, I heard at one time that a power plant was going to be built here, but then people apparently decided not to do it anyway'. And yet, unlike just a few years back, this consensus did not entail many residents leaving or even considering moving away. On the contrary, several entirely new rows of *hashaas* with *gers* and wooden houses under construction had sprung up so that the perimeter of the city now reached right up to the stone that marked the location of the now defunct power plant to be.

When Pedersen asked what thoughts people had about future access to electricity and other amenities associated with official resident status, he was struck by how carefree people's answers were. The power plant, it appeared, was not needed for these people to imagine a viable future for their households in the neighbourhood. Instead, residents seemed to hinge their hopes on more general economic development and political processes, such as the exceptionally high levels of economic growth in the Mongolian economy (nearly 20 per cent p/a in 2012) and the fact that local parliamentary candidates from all parts of the political spectrum had promised to speed up the legalisation of unregistered households on Ulaanbaatar's fringe. Indeed, Pedersen was told, a cluster of households across the river had been connected to the grid following the last election after having voted for a particular candidate. What is more, another rumour had it that the large plots of land upriver that were being fenced in the months prior to the election were owned by businessmen and senior officials secretly supporting one of the big political parties. While these *hashaas* were ostensibly going to be used for vegetable farming, in reality their owners were really waiting for the election to finish to be rewarded with permissions and infrastructure allowing them to build new garden townships for Mongolia's new middle classes.

Enhmaa, however, was as confident as ever about the plans. 'You know', she told Pedersen as she poured him a cup of salty milk tea, 'my bosses are not bad people. They call me every now and then to ask how I'm doing. Recently, I had to go away for a while because my brother died in a car accident. In the meantime some people moved here. But then they [the bosses] called me and told me that that I would not lose the land. They said something would be built here for sure'. Pedersen asked Enhmaa whether those people who had moved to the place during

her absence would have to leave again when the power plants was going to be built, to which she concurred:

> Yes, they do. No land in this *horoo* [sub-district] was given to people because of the big organisation and the power plant. Those families are not allowed to live here. But they are stubborn and disobey me. I keep telling them not to, but they build *hashaas* and houses just next to here. I tell them "Stop it" in a quiet way, but they call me "Pig" and "Dog".

Enhmaa sighed, 'It is a hard job to be the caretaker! But when things start to be built here next June, it will become better'. Pedersen asked what was going to happen next June. Without responding directly to his question, Enhmaa said, almost to herself, 'I can watch this place until then, even if it is hard. After all, I have been doing so for five years now. And since I have been working for them for so long time, I am thinking perhaps the bosses will give me a flat here once the power plant is made'.

Pedersen felt that he was facing an ethical dilemma. How was he supposed to respond to what Enhmaa had just told him? Clearly, she was suffering from a delusion that a power plant was still going to be built in the neighbourhood, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. And sadly, her 'bosses' had evidently done nothing to dispel this misconception; perhaps, Pedersen told himself, because they – like the other speculators who had secured large *hashaas* around the river – needed someone like her to look after these sites of potential future profit. Surely, Pedersen reasoned, the time had come for Enhmaa to be confronted with the naked truth about Power Plant #5. While it was undoubtedly going to hurt to experience the collapse of an imagined future imbued with such hope, things would only be worse if she was left to waste her life chances and risk her health to protect the sinister and hidden interests of a more or less fictional organisation. Careful to adopt a tone of voice that was not too confident and self-assertive, Pedersen told her that he had heard officials saying that Uliastai was not suitable for a power plant and asked her if she had considered the possibility that Power Plant #5 was never going to be built in her neighbourhood. 'In fact', he reasoned, opening up another flank, 'I haven't been able to find out anything about the organisation that you work for. No one answers when I call the number you gave me'. To which Enhmaa replied, with a cool expression on her wrinkled face:

> Enhmaa: They are going to build #6 and decided not to build #5.
>
> Morten: Where did you hear about this? Did any officials talk about it?
>
> Enhmaa: We talk on the phone. And recently they came to take photos because they want to build foundations for #6.
>
> Morten: Who came?

> Enhmaa: My boss, the head of Power Plant #5 who takes care of heating. And the accountant and storekeeper. They said "We decided to build #6, #5 will not be built here, but near to power plant #3". They showed me one paper with a stamp on it and they said that that was the order.
>
> Morten: If they are going to build #6 here, who is going to do it??
>
> Enhmaa: They don't tell people like me about specific details. The reason why they decided not to build #5 is because there are many water pipes here because of the river.
>
> Morten: When did they make this decision?
>
> Enhmaa: This spring, in June.
>
> Morten: What they will use to heat it? Coal?
>
> Enhmaa: Not coal.
>
> Morten: Then what?
>
> Enhmaa: Something that burns. I don't know, for all I know it could be a nuclear plant!

On the face of it, and much like our Maputo case study, we see here an example of what happens when the 'annihilation of chances … leads to … the disappearance of any coherent vision of the future' (Bourdieu 2000: 221). Imprisoned as her social imaginary was on the socio-economic margins of a neo-capitalist and neo-patrimonial post-socialist state, Enhmaa and others could only act 'as if, when nothing was possible, everything became possible, as if all discourses about the future – prophecies, divinations, predictions, millenarian announcements – had no other purpose than to fill what is no doubt one of the most painful of wants: the lack of a future' (ibid.: 226). Surely, the reality behind the desperate hope that Enhmaa kept on clinging to was that the people from 'the organisation' were in fact only continuing to pay her meagre salary and tell her the latest news about plans for the power plant in order to buy some additional time and thus keep a stake in potential future investments in Uliastai.

Yet, as enticing and perhaps even comforting as this interpretation seems, it appears to us that the story of the vanishing power plant in Eastern Ulaanbaatar allows for an alternative reading. In making this point, we do not want to ignore the undeniable economic inequalities and political asymmetries of the present case study. On the contrary, it is fair to assume that, for Enhmaa and her peers, the capacity internally to map and thus also successfully to navigate the perpetually shifting social, economic and political landscapes of post-socialist Mongolia have

been severely hampered by the extreme hardships and radical uncertainties they have been subjected to. Yet, for this very reason, Enhmaa also personifies the non-subjectivist theory of the imagination outlined earlier in this chapter. Far from being a projection of the present into a clear future horizon 'from the subject outwards', the imagination here emerges as the opaque blur which emerges from an inherently unpredictable bundling of a cascading series of images 'from the world inwards'. After all, does not what we earlier called the 'productive poetics of ignorance' entail 'a zone of indetermination' (in Bergsonian terms) where more or less fictional narratives and speculations, as well as more or less sinister strategies and schemes pertaining to Mongolia's infrastructural investment boom, come together in a singular and yet bottomless vanishing point?

Little wonder, then, that so many people in Ulaistai (including someone as intimately vested in these issues as Enhmaa), gave the impression of being uninterested in sharing news about, or seeking out information and corroborating rumours about, Power Plant #5 and other infrastructural and political-economic developments in this neighbourhood writ large. In a situation where the efficiency and creativity of the imagination is a function of the degree to which the gates to the world remain as widely open as possible, ignorance truly is bliss. Certainly, this is the point we have tried to convey in both this case study and the previous one, namely that, in order for human consciousness to be able to extract the free-floating images of affects that the world continuously self-emits, the subject of imagination must, in a certain paradoxical sense, cease being a knowing subject.

Conclusion

Our contribution to the development and refinement of an anthropological theory of the imagination in this chapter has concerned the complex interplay between materiality and time (see also Nielsen 2011a; 2014a; 2014b; Pedersen and Nielsen 2013). A central contention has been that, as free-floating after-effects of futures that could have been but were never to be, the images and desires associated with the two infrastructural projects acquired their own lives in Maputo and Ulaanbaatar. Adopting Kant's vocabulary, one might have described these as 'pictures' (*bilden*), if it were not for the fact that these halo-like temporalities are fundamentally divested of human sensory input (let alone cognitive projection). After all, most stakeholders above acknowledge that the projects have irreversibly failed.

In this way, our comparative study of collapsed infrastructural futures in Mozambique and Mongolia ethnographically extends the Bergsonian understanding of time and human perception. As described, his concept of the 'pure past' challenged conventional understandings of human perception as an interior cognitive capacity or faculty. For Bergson, a given moment belongs to the 'pure past' as a dormant recollection that may potentially connect with any other recollections if actualised by the human perception. But what our case studies indicate is that such moments do not even need to be actualised (viz. to

have actually happened) in order to become the 'pure past'. In both Maputo and Ulaanbaatar, images of collapsed futures are 'sliced' from the messy political-economic vagaries of people's lives. Here, the capricious configuration of social worlds makes the future materialise as if having already collapsed. Irrespective therefore of whether the always-already collapsed future will actually happen or not – whether the two infrastructural projects at hand would materialise or not – the future precedes both past and the present as a 'pure failure'.

It is this emergent nature of the imagination – the fact that its images erupt from the 'cut' between a collapsed future (that has ceased to exist) and its continual after-effects in the present – that we have tried to convey by borrowing the mathematical concept of 'involution'. Loosely defined as 'creation of an extra layer by … making an inside of an outside and an outside of an inside' (Gell 1993: 39), involution blurs distinctions between inner and outer, cause and effect, and helps explain how materialities become repositories for temporal assemblages that stitch together past, present and future in new and often paradoxical ways.

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