10 The generic city

Examples from Jakarta, Indonesia, and Maputo, Mozambique

Morten Nielsen and AbdouMaliq Simone

Introduction

Urbanity as a form of redemption, of starting anew, has long been at work in cities nearly everywhere. Through the dissolution of existing urban forms and technologies and the replacement by carefully planned environments, the emergence of cities that offer citizens full access to ideal futures based on a near-perfect constellation of the corporeal, material, and technological elements of urban life is envisaged. Crucially, such utopic urban models necessarily operate on the basis of a paradoxical doubling or "twinning": as a system of reason, utopian urbanity is incapable of realizing its own promises (Grosz 2001). The fulfillment of a projected future essentially dissolves urbanity's utopic systematicity and thus puts an end to its own problem-solving capacities. Hence, in order to preserve its capacity to reboot the city, urbanity needs to constantly double itself as an exterior and always deferred stranger. Attempts to simultaneously escape history and realize the purportedly deep-seated capacities of a nation or city are particularly evident in contemporary Africa and Asia.

Based on ethnographic data from Maputo, Mozambique, and Jakarta, Indonesia, this chapter explores recent processes of urban gestation where infrastructural configurations, some old and some new, seem to develop though the internal twinning of the existing city. Across sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, the spatial layouts of urban environments are currently being reshaped through the construction of entirely new "parallel cities" from scratch rather than rehabilitating the existing built environment.[1] Often initiated by private real-estate developers and large-scale construction consortia, these spatial reconfigurations, if successfully implemented, aim at serving the interests of a cosmopolitan property-holding elite while completely bypassing long-honed, if often messy, practices of urban management on the ground of sub-Saharan African and Asian cities today. Alternatively, they constitute bets for young lower-middle-class households demonstrating faith that they will eventually be at the core of the "real city."

In the first instance, Mozambique's worn-out capital, Maputo, will serve as an apt example of this recent process. We chart how infrastructural potentialities associated with recently projected parallel cities affect the configuration and dynamics of already existing urban spaces. Often located at the physical limits of established urban spaces, parallel cities are essentially designed as secluded islands with independent systems of security, social services, and high-quality infrastructure (e.g. road net, electricity, and sanitation). Given the lack of human and financial resources, the Maputo municipality has de facto surrendered entire sections of inner city neighborhoods to foreign entrepreneurial developers seeking to profit on the increasingly lucrative real-estate market. Hence, as we will claim in this chapter, these recent and relatively inconspicuous processes of urban take-over crystallize (and are rendered possible through) a peculiar "twinning" of the conspicuous infrastructures of emerging parallel cities. We argue that the gestation of new infrastructural configurations articulates a symmetrical "twinning" of seemingly opposing principles. As a paradoxical kind of urban "fetus-in-fetu," as it were, the twinned symmetrical relation is constituted through the enveloping of the city's overall layout and aesthetics by its more recent and potentially detrimental anti-twin.

At the same time, in looking at Jakarta, one of the world's fastest growing urban regions, the massive carving up of the existing landscape prompts the proliferation of unsteady interfaces everywhere, which make more visible the frictions between different settlement and city-making practices and also temporalities. The "familial" form at work is less a twinning process than a reference to a "people" (*rakyat*) that is somehow expected to subsume all of the vast changes taking place – many of them with highly uncertain consequences and replete with injustice. Nevertheless, the concerted and monumental effort to homogenize Jakarta through highly standardized built environments confronts the intricate and plural singularities of efforts undertaken to ensure a capacity on the part of lower-, working-, and lower-middle-class residents to adapt and transform the city according to their own terms. They know they cannot sit still and so have to continuously redescribe their aspirations and capacities into new formats, which also unsettle the status quo, so that there are different kinds of unsettling at work – only provisionally stabilized, and then through the invocation of the "people." For what is at work is not the variation of a self-modulating whole but a re-invention of the modes of connection through which different actors construct and cohabit specific spaces of operation. Whether incremental, impetuous, or disjunctive, the initiatives undertaken by these residents iterate new potentialities informed yet at the same time detached from what the social constellation of efforts was capable of before. *Rakyat* becomes a *generic* infrastructure detached from any particular evidence; the notion never has to be proved empirically. A wide range of details might be invoked to demonstrate its failure or diminished existence, but, in the end, this demonstration doesn't seem to matter. Such a situation also seems to point out inversely that the "details" – for example, private ownership, collective tenure – are free to associate with whatever conceptual infrastructure or mode of existence available to make use of them.

The *generic*, adopted from the work of François Laruelle (1999, 2011), refers both to the condition of being "anything whatsoever" and the condition

of being "nothing beyond what one is." As such, no matter how the details of city experience and components might be explained, it will be insufficient to indicate what these details might be and how they might act. It doesn't mean that anything we might identify as an entity or actor has a capacity or being on its own, separate from other things, or that it is impermeable to being affected and connected into all kinds of arrangements and structuring. Rather, Laruelle is suggesting that we might view infrastructural arrangements, which are usually seen as combining, rearticulating, representing, and enjoining, as also a process of subtracting and *detaching*, so that a more maximally definitional term is converted into a more minimally definitional one.[2] Instead of seeing such detachment as exclusion or segregation, we might also see it as grounds for viewing urban spaces in new ways, of keeping things out of analytical connections, and to think of the potentials of the supposedly useless, marginal, or anachronistic in different ways (Galloway 2014).

So while various multilateral institutions assemble intricate data sets to document the massive infrastructural deficits of cities as evidence of their progressive dissipation, the city may persist as a detached, ineluctable gathering up of details from which nothing can really be abstracted. It is as if urban inhabitation takes place in the gap, others might say trap, between systems of time–space distancing with uninterrupted communicative interaction and systems of logical distancing, where things remain close to each other but no longer communicate.

In this chapter, then, we trace genericity across two otherwise disparate urban domains. In Maputo, a generic form of the city asserts itself as an unmarked twinning of an ideal that might never be realized, whereas in Jakarta, the force of a minimally defined "people" metastasizes across a fractured urban landscape. In both instances, the generic has an a priori function for a given domain or set of elements without imposing a universal (transcendent) dominance. As a form of "limited universalism," if you like, it intervenes in unknown territories that are thereby transformed but not fully subjected to the force of the generic.

Detaching the city (Jakarta, Indonesia)

Jakarta is one of the world's most restless cities. Restless in the massive transformations of its built environment, the profusion of small initiatives undertaken for the endurance of popular neighborhoods, and the speeded-up circulation of both residents and capital across the highly differentiated districts of this urban region of nearly thirty million people. Embodying heighted accumulation, consumption, dispossession, inventiveness, and brute force, trajectories of urban development on various scales and circuits intersect in multiple ways, producing dispositions in the built and social environment not easily subsumed under a single overarching logic or mode.

Infrastructure is not simply the roads, the buildings, the pipes, or the wires; it is also a particular formatting of stability, a means of coagulating liquid

relationships among materials and objects with apparent solidity and definition. While infrastructural products may be replete with technical specifications, the enactment of infrastructure entails a complex process of assembling sentiment, authorization, finance, and labor. It has to disrupt and implant, anticipating as much as possible the ramifying implications of this duality.

In Indonesia, the generic notion of the people, the *rakyat,* provides an increasingly vague but nevertheless enduring sense of the egalitarian that does not exist as a concept but more a formatting of feeling, a sense of commonality repeatedly rehearsed but also something that has to be repeatedly denied and fought against. But as this generic form does not sum up, does not stabilize for "sure" or for "good"; it focuses attention on the details of the volatile grounds on which urban transformation takes place and provides an occasion for continuous redescription of those details into different kinds of narratives about what *might* be taking place.

Rakyat is something referred to as residents diversify the use of the small landholdings, collaborate in neighborhood improvement projects, invest in entire floors of cheap apartment buildings, and try to explain their contradictory behavior as they circulate through different roles in different political, ethnic, religious, or commercial associations. It is particularly evident in how they refer to the ultimate value of land: land in the last instance is the property of the *rakyat*, no matter how much it is bought and sold and grabbed and ruined.

Consider the details of plots that sit side by side throughout the city and think what can be made of them. What kind of overarching rubric could be available to sum them all up? The inadequacy of overarching explanations doesn't mean that nothing changes about these details or that land is not consolidated into massive undertakings driven by the maximization of ground rent. It simply means that infrastructural projects also entail complicated twists and turns that attempt to momentarily hold all of these details in place so that particular spatial imprints can ensue. While neoliberal development may appear to run roughshod over Jakarta's landscape, the prolific range of details remain formatted with this elusive, generic sense of the "people" that informs the ways in which people of all class and residential backgrounds both actively do something and, often, do nothing as a means of shaping their living conditions.

Some acquire land that hibernates for years in parcels too small to fall under legal injunctions to immediately develop it and too large to immediately do something affordable. Some land has been subdivided so many times that the original family owners have lost track of which members are responsible for what and have long lost the paper trail. Some land retains the same occupants, function, or commercial operation for decades, with only minimal repair or renovation, and their appearance is that of relics that will crumble to dust before the land is sold or used for something else. Some land witnesses a constant turnover of unrealistic plans and bad debts, of disputes and financial miscalculation. Some land witnesses cautious, incremental yet determined additions, the emplacement of a steady accrual of "facts on the

ground" (such as buildings put up without permits or in violation of zoning regulations) and enhanced capacity.

Some bits of land are like pieces in games of political chess, acquired in bulk through various complicities and favors and dispensed for political loyalty, seats on company boards, or to shore up a faction in the police or military. Some land represents the long-term savings of entire districts, which, faced with various problems of flooding or rapidly escalating costs, have acquired something that enables them to continue to reside together. Some land is simply the perfect vehicle to clean corrupt money. Some land was agglomerated in large land banks decades ago and subsequently developed at various different rhythms according to intricate calculations about construction and labor costs, bond rates, consumer markets, and anticipated outlays of bulk infrastructure. Some land has been acquired because of a prevailing sense of exigency, the owners simply wanting a stake in the market regardless of likely profitability. Some land seems haunted, lush and overgrown, sitting in prime locations like a void in some aspiration. Some land is preoccupied with games of hide and seek – factories pretend to be boarding houses, boarding houses pretend to be factories, offices pretend to be single family homes, single family homes pretend to be offices. The varying mixtures of use rights, de facto ownership, adherence to or blatant disregard for legality, speculative acquisition, or the withdrawal of land from markets altogether presents an ambiguous complexion of both fortitude and vulnerability.

So the generic is an infrastructure outside the incessant need to divide things, outside the fundamental epistemological maneuvers that cut the world into specific existent conditions and then bring in the analytical tools needed to account for them. Concept, cause, and case are equilibrated on a plane where each, in the last instance, exerts equal weight. Even as Brenner and Schmid (2014) rightly claim that the city is not the embodiment of urbanization and that urbanization has now achieved a planetary scale in terms of the intensity and extension of urbanization processes (the urban as a force in itself), might the details of specific city lives and materials also simply act in ways that have nothing to do with such overarching processes of urbanization?

After all, the *details* of what residents do with each other belongs to them, not just as a reflection of what takes place when they act but as components for their arriving at their own conclusions about what is possible or not. Government agencies and other large institutions may have the capacity to aggregate these details – provided they are paying attention – into specific overall patterns, which then inform planning and budgetary decisions. Yet, both formal and informal mechanisms of working with these details within localities are critical aspects of governance. Sometimes these interstices of detachment, between the abstractions of governance and the details of everyday management, generate infrastructural voids, where nothing seems to be happening but, within the apparent opacities, much experimentation takes place.

For example, the diffused markets of Kali Baru, close to one of the most important historical railway stations in Jakarta (which in past decades used to

be the point of arrival for the bulk of new migrants to Jakarta but is now ensconced in an overcrowded, volatile series of districts under intense threat of mega redevelopment), has spread like wildfire along tracks, thoroughfares, lanes, and creeks. It has become the center of a thriving printing business and is estimated to handle almost 50 % of whatever is printed in Indonesia.

The whole gamut of printing is available in almost any medium and almost any kind of production mode. Interspersed with this business is the possibility of buying almost anything in any quantity. In some ways, in a city that has some 137 shopping malls, areas like Kali Baru seem like an anachronism. Many other "traditional" markets and commercial zones in Jakarta are gone or are in rapid decline. They all had their singular characteristics and lures and these particularities enabled them to endure for years past their prime. But the onslaught of development has been too extensive, particularly as medium-scale enterprises, such as banks, automobile dealerships, restaurant chains, and supermarkets extend outward, escalating land prices and drawing commercially based revenues into municipal coffers.

When we asked different people about what has enabled Kali Baru to attain its edge and vitality, the common response was that this is a place "now big enough to take what we have and make something happen in ways we could never expect before" *and* "that leaves us alone to see what we do" *and* "that gives all kind of new people to work with." It is a place that doesn't "forget who we are" but still gives us the opportunity to "forget everything we did in the past." What is evident in these sentiments is that Kali Baru generically *redescribes* the singularities of other markets across the city into a new modality of operation – one which does not mirror each former or fading market in their entirety and collect them like some bricolage.

Rather, the driving features of the others are resituated in a distinctive structure of finance, distribution, production, and exchange. These pasts become components that enable an elaboration of multi-scalar and multi-perspectival economic transactions, where big business coincides with variously scaled and managed networks that are not subsumed by the "big bosses" in exclusive subcontracting arrangements. Instead, a plurality of ways of inputting goods, soliciting customers, filling orders, and configuring services remain detached from each other, enabling the particularities of other ways of doing things in other places to retain a certain autonomy, even if they persist only through various ways being folded into something that exceeds themselves.

Twinning the city (Maputo, Mozambique)

If a city can be withdrawn from the urges to actualize its provisional figuration, what are the moments in the operation of acquiring its genericity? How does the city that is held in abeyance manifest itself across the fractured landscapes and dysfunctional infrastructures from which it was once detracted? Since the generic city is also inaccessible to those who imagine it, it makes itself felt as an acute sensation that something is missing: the "people,"

the "centre," the "vibe," etc. Indeed, while moving along vectors that are no longer fully known, the generic city seems to have lost its relational intensities. Affects, spaces, and materialities can be discerned and still their visibility works through a sequencing of detachment and distance. Almost like Indra's net, the generic city is structured as an intricate configuration of contracted absences that hold together thin threads of urban desires. Looked at closely, however, the lines that give to the city's absences and voids a certain aesthetic immediacy and presence are themselves made up of singular dots and disconnected fragments between which flow an endless stream of incomputable materials and patternless data.

The city operates on itself, then, not merely through a process of retheorization based on the amassing of intricate data sets (*pace* Brenner and Schmid 2015) but also by attempting to conjure and manipulate a proliferation of things that are not determinable, what was in Jakarta manifest as *rakyat* – "the people." According to Laruelle, the generic is never in a relationship with anything else (1999) and so it cannot affix itself to the urban through immediate forms of causality, reciprocity, and exchange. Between the generic and the specific there are no connectors or "sutures of the materialism type" (Laruelle 2011: 258). Hence, while the generic is relatively unproblematic as it is always-already-given, the question is how it becomes possible to move between immanent genericity and the particulars of urban life.

The generic is a determining condition; it is, as Srnick tells us, "a type of determination which is itself indifferent to what it determines, while maintaining its radical immanence to what it determines" (2011: 170). Consequently, if the generic city does not assert itself as a transcendent force, it can only be approached by attempting to configure the specificities of the urban as if they were determined as such. In so doing, things and dispositions are experimentally aligned in order to momentarily suspend imposed limitations on the specific and thereby attain an urban aesthetic that is in accordance with the generic city. As we suggested in the introduction to this chapter, this can also be considered as an act of *twinning* the urban, where a dual entity is produced through an identical copy. Still, the twinning of the urban does not result in a relationship of similarity. By reconfiguring the specificities of the urban so as to be in accordance with the generic city, a copy is produced that is now a stranger to its twin. While being completely identical to its double, the twin (or "clone," as Laruelle calls it) emerges as an instantiation of the foreclosure of the generic city to the urban. It arises from the materials, urgencies, and calculations of the urban but operates in accordance with its own mode of being, which is precisely the hypothesis of the generic city. Indeed, it is in this regard that the generic is a form of "limited universalism," which intervenes and transforms another domain as a weak a priori force.

For why is it that certain urban operations and movements cause a constant oscillation between twinned-out spaces and positions? When is it, we might ask, that the urban produces an identical but dissimilar twin? If national capitals are paired with mercantile cities in their vicinity, it is often to

allow extranational trading centers to operate unhindered by the cumbersome regulations of government. Although often cast as shadowy sister cities that cede power and official jurisdiction, they are, in fact, more like independent city-states engineered as "islands of immunity and exemption" (Easterling 2007: 10). Across such twinned-out spaces, the city emerges as a topography of affects, economic deliberations, and political sensibilities that never manage to fully stabilize. Marked by contrasting but mutually dependent urban desires, the urban doubles shadow each other in a never-ending battle for influence, power, and resources. Indeed, while the twinned-out city is less than two, it is certainly more than one.

But do the inadequacies that come to feed the parallel growth of the urban arise merely from the mutual mirroring of desires? If they do, the expansion of a twinned-out city would have at its core a lack that could only be expressed through the medium of a fractured and partially shared vocabulary. Could it not be that the insufficiencies and absences that keep the urban doubles orbiting around each other are, in fact, the very cause of their existence? Rather than the twinning of the urban generating a lack, which is then eternally reproduced, the urban is twinned-out in order for its *genericity* to assert itself. Considered as such, the city needs the absences, the inadequacies, the lack, and therefore it bifurcates as two-in-one.

Take, for example, the twinning of Maputo, Mozambique's hard-tried capital. Here, the projected (but still unrealized) building of a parallel city serves a double purpose. While offering the national political elite an appropriate scenery for staging widely held fantasies of urban extravagance and global outreach, the parallel city actualizes new potentialities in the existing politico-material infrastructure of the national capital. To municipal officials, foreign investors and local real-estate agents, the parallel city is a mirage, which is already reconfiguring what the existing capital might be. Municipal architects working at the barely functioning Department for Urban Planning are increasingly referring to the planned parallel city as a modular form, which ought to be used also to structure and upgrade existing neighborhoods in the old "cement city" (*cidade de cimento*). As a generic "twin" of the building physical project that is still manifest only as a shielded lot on the outskirts of the city, the projected parallel city thus generates new and potent insufficiencies at the heart of the urban fabric: rather than charting what the existing city already is, it indicates what it might never become.

In many ways, the twinning of Maputo reflects a form of "surgical" development that is rapidly spreading across the sub-Saharan continent (cf. Bergesen 2008). With little or no economic benefit to the wider society, financial investments are concentrated in secured enclaves that are ring-fenced against the expected inefficiencies of the local economy. In contrast to earlier "socially thick" economic models focusing on the national development state, these enclave investments (e.g. oil extraction and logging) are particularly noteworthy for their ability to bypass the frame of the nation-state altogether. As Ferguson argues:

(C)apital "hops" over "unusable Africa," alighting only in mineral-rich enclaves that are starkly disconnected from their national societies. The result is not the formation of standardized national grids, but the emergence of huge areas of the continent that are effectively "off the grid."

(2005: 380)

This economic rationality, based on the dissection and "enclaving" of national territories, is guiding also urban deliberations and strategies. In seeking to fast-forward into a future unhindered by the past, city builders have become enthralled by the idea of creating self-sufficient island-like enclosures on the outside of existing sub-Saharan African cities. Urban planning has always been deeply affected by utopian dramas staging the death of traditional cities and their replacement by pulsating and planned spaces where urbanites would live unencumbered by the entrenched legacies of already collapsed futures (Soja 2000). What seems to drive the making of a growing number of "city doubles" (Murray 2013) in sub-Saharan Africa, however, is not merely the utopian aspiration for a perfectly designed environment, but an urgent desire to create entire cities from scratch.

In the KaTembe Peninsula across the Maputo Bay, a Chinese construction consortium has won the contract of building an entirely new capital for the barely surviving Mozambican nation-state. According to urban planners working in KaTembe, the projected "China Town," as they aptly call it, will comprise more than 2,000 housing units intended primarily for the growing middle-class, as well as a number of official buildings and public plazas, including a "Heroes' Square" (*Praça dos Heróes*) designed by Chinese architects. Having previously been cut off from the city centre by the Maputo Bay, access to the Katembe Peninsula will soon be considerably improved. In September 2012, the Chinese Roads and Bridges Corporation commenced building what will be the most important infrastructure project in Mozambique since the country's independence in 1975. A 680-meter suspension bridge will connect the peninsula to the city center and thus allow thousands of wealthy urbanites easy access to the master-planned enclave city from whence they will be able to gaze upon the old and rapidly deteriorating city center that no longer constitutes a proper site for creating a viable urban future.

From their damp and dimly lit offices in the heart of the dilapidated capital, municipal cadres are struggling to re-imagine the city on the basis of a bifurcated urban infrastructure. Although the capital's new utopia is located on its outside, the old city centre has not yet been switched off. Like so many other cities across the continent, Maputo has opened up its urban infrastructure networks to private sector participation and many sectors have already replaced state monopoly with market-driven management (cf. Graham and Marvin 2001). Urban development has never been a political priority for the country's political elite, which is why the recent upsurge of private investments in urban infrastructure cannot be considered as a corollary of the retreat of public authorities from the management of their cities. In a very

practical sense, they were never really there. Hence, if urban infrastructure management never constituted a void to be filled, why do foreign investors invade this field with increasing pace and intensity? Could it be, we speculate, that the reason is to be found in the twinning of the urban? Without a doubt, when urban planners move between the projected "parallel city" in KaTembe and the derelict city center, generic imageries of the city travel with them.

In Maxaquene B, a densely populated neighborhood located near the bustling city center, a group of entrepreneurial Pakistani investors are buying up derelict high-rise buildings, which they upgrade before selling individual apartments to newcomers in need of relatively cheap housing. For more than a decade, these buildings have been abandoned by public authorities, which acted only to remove "problematic" individuals when the fragile social infrastructure was considered fundamentally threatened. According to municipal planners, they have de facto surrendered the entire block of high-rise buildings to the Pakistani investors. Without sufficient human and financial resources, the Maputo Municipality has been almost completely incapable of controlling the pirate-like seizure of the area.

Crucially, municipal officials are not opposing the presence of foreign investors. Although the infrastructure systems of the high-rise buildings are barely working, the sense is that the Pakistani investors have produced an operational urban machinery that functions in and by itself and, crucially, in a manner that derives its utopic drive from the generic form of the still unrealized "parallel city" in KaTembe. Water, electricity, Internet cabling, and sanitation are taken care of by the foreign investors. In addition, a team of security guards was recently contracted by the Pakistani developers, who do not accept disorderly behavior in their privately run public spaces.

Through a process of dissimilar copying, Maputo has twinned itself without the "twin-parent" and the "twin-child" establishing a relationship with each other. Returning again to Laruelle, we might say that the "twin-child" is a "duality, which is an identity but an identity which is not a synthesis" (1999: 143). Between the projected building of a "China-town" in the KaTembe Peninsula and the recent surrendering of an entire block of high-rise buildings to a group of entrepreneurial Pakistani investors, an awkward and twinned-out symmetrical relationship has emerged, which seems to figure the latter as a vague and malleable clone of the former. Hence, while the projected parallel city will be sealed off from the surrounding urban landscape and operate on the basis of a master-planned and independent infrastructural system, the high-rise buildings are located in the old city center where they are constantly affected by the contractions and relaxations of the surrounding environment. But it is precisely the flexible and only partial actualization of the enclave as "ideal form" in the old city center that reveals its tactical force. Again: the generic as a weak a priori force. Having sloughed off the conspicuous aesthetics of the parallel city, it can inconspicuously delineate new and hypothetical imageries of the urban without having to operate

through the brute materiality of the "twin-parent." No longer the deformed clone of a fortress-like "privatopia" (MacKenzie 1994), the constantly mutating "twin-child" is the modular form by which the city expands. The hypothesis of the generic city.

Conclusion

In *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles,* Mike Davis (1992: 232) describes how "(t)he city is engaged in a merciless struggle to make public facilities and spaces as 'unliveable' as possible for the homeless and the poor." Urban surfaces are consciously "hardened" (ibid.) against "bad citizens" who are aimlessly roaming the streets while "good citizens" are enclaved in high-security urban environments. As Harvey poignantly argues, the result of this exaggerated emphasis on separation is that the urban realm is being divided into a "patchwork quilt of islands of relative affluence struggling to secure themselves in a sea of spreading decay" (2000: 152). Still, while taking seriously Harvey's dystopic description of the urban condition, could it not be that the biggest challenge to the making of liveable and democratic cities lies not so much in the building of fenced-off enclaves as the release – or *liberation* – of an urban topography of absolute detachment? It is, in other words, at the precise moment when a social-cum-physical infrastructure asserts itself as a constantly mutating generic formula for engineering urban life that it becomes a "diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form" (Foucault 1975: 205). A move from the specificities of the urban to the hypothetical realm of the generic city.

As a weak a priori force – a "limited universalism" – the generic city is something that always seems to "take care of itself," regardless of the incessant conformities of imagination or spatial and infrastructural recalibrations that it prompts and ignores. Whatever urbanization appropriates from the detailed singularities of particular ways of living as part and parcel of imposing itself as a force in its own right, as that which constantly refigures what has value, the genealogies of cities need not adhere to specific inheritances or "familial obligations." Indeed, if the city is an intensive formation in that it is capable of generating "strange syntheses," where exchanges are freed from producing something recognizably useful, we may have to recognize it in another way: we may need to detach ourselves from the familiar images and vernaculars and let the details speak another language, which, we propose, is that of the *generic.*

Notes

1 In both sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, the number of "satellite cities" is growing explosively. In sub-Saharan Africa, exemplars include Tatu City, Nairobi; Malabo II, Equatorial Guinea; Eko-Atlantic, Lagos; Luanda Sul, Angola; Bagatelle City, Mauritius; New Cairo City, Cairo; La Cité du Fleuve, Kinshasa, Congo; and

Waterfall City, Pretoria, South Africa. In Southeast Asia, examples are Ciputra Hanoi Vietnam, BSD Jakarta, Grand Phnom Penh International City, and Muang Thong Thani (Bangkok).

2 In his lucid analysis of Laruellian non-philosophy, Galloway explains how the logic of subtraction might fruitfully be considered as a form of withdrawal: "(P)eople of color subtracted from structures of alterity; or the working class subtracted from alienated labor" (2014: 204). In both instances, the former is a more maximally definitional term than the latter.

Reference

Bergesen, A. (2008) "The New Surgical Colonialism: China, Africa, and Oil." Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Boston, July 31.

Brenner, N. and C. Schmid (2014) "The 'Urban Age' in Question." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38(3): 731–755.

Brenner, Neil and C. Schmid (2015) "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?" *CITY* 19(3): 151–182.

Davis, M. (1992) *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles.* New York: Vintage Books.

Easterling, K. (2007) "Extrastatecraft." *Perspecta* 39: 4–16.

Ferguson, J. (2005) "Seeing Like an Oil Company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa." *American Anthropologist* 107(3): 377–382.

Foucault, M. (1975) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York: Vintage Books.

Galloway, Alexander R. (2014) *Laruelle: Against the Digital.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Graham, S. and S. Marvin (2001) *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition.* London: Routledge.

Grosz, E. (2001) *Architecture from the Outside. Essays on Virtual and Real Space.* Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Harvey, D. (2000) *Spaces of Hope.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Laruelle, F. (1999) "A Summary of Non-Philosophy." *Pli* 8: 138–148.

Laruelle, F. (2011) The Generic as Predicate and Constant: Non-Philosophy and Materialism," in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (eds) *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism.* Melbourne: re.press, pp. 237–260.

Lash, S. (2013) "Experience, Time, and the Religious: From Classical Subject to Technological System." *New Formations* 79: 104–124.

MacKenzie, E. (1994) *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Murray, M. J. (2013) "'City Doubles': Re-Urbanism in Africa." Paper presented at ECAS 2013, Fifth European Conference on African Studies: Multi-polar Urban Spaces in Africa: Everyday Dynamics, Creativity and Change. Lisbon, July 27–29.

Parisi, L. (2012) "Digital Design and Topological Control." *Theory, Culture and Society* 29: 165–192.

Parisi, L. (2013) *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics and Space.* Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Soja, E. (2000) *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Srnicek, N. (2011) Capitalism and the Inhuman: Conjectures on Capitalism and Organic Necrocracy," in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (eds) *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and* Realism. Melbourne: re.press, pp. 164–181.

Totaro, P. and D. Ninno (2014) "The Concept of Algorithm as the Key to Modern Rationality." *Theory, Culture and Society* 31: 29–49.

11 Ecologies in beta

The city as infrastructure of apprenticeships

Alberto Corsín Jiménez and Adolfo Estalella

Early in February 2014 we received an email inviting us to join a project that went by the name of *Atlas*, the purpose and contents of which remained mysteriously concealed from us. The message included a document that 'defined Atlas' and was structured into six headings or chapters: Map-Territory, Pause-Sequence, Myth-Ritual, Public-Private Space, Critical Object-Accumulation, and Ephemeral-Unfinished. The document resembled, perhaps, the catalogue of an exhibition-to-be.

Some forty people were copied into the original email, most of them belonging to a young cohort of artists, architects and cultural mediators that have over the last ten years coalesced around a project for 'free culture' activism in Madrid. These included architectural collectives Basurama and Zuloark with whom we had ourselves been carrying out fieldwork in the city over the past three years.

As it turned out, *Atlas* was the graduate research project of Madrid-based scenographer, Jacobo García. Despite his youth, García was already well known in various activist circles in Madrid for his creative re-appropriation of a number of occupied spaces in the city by using the language and resources of theatre. This proved to be a novelty in a city whose tradition of occupation had long been dominated by the discourses of political economy and autonomism. In this context, the symbolic and material resources of theatre offered a somewhat different repertoire of analytical forms with which to explore notions of public, private and common spaces; engagement, movement and participation; or affect, embodiment and care.

Over the following months, those who remained interested in the project were asked to produce a 'box' for one of the chapter headings in the *Atlas* document. These boxes would eventually be used to produce an installation performance for Jacobo's graduation viva at Madrid's School of Drama Studies. The call to put 'inside' a box some of the sources that characterized the work of well-known 'outdoors' activists was a provocation of sorts. However, as it evolved over time, *Atlas*'s explicit convocation of an urban-wide apparatus of free culture activism took issue with the very notion of the city as a 'source' for common life. The many collaborators that *Atlas* strategically mobilized had long been struggling and working in 'open-sourcing' their own