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WEAVING AN OPEN WORLD / EXPERIENCING URBAN UTOPIAS

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR URBAN EXPERIMENTS IN THE SPIRIT OF TIM INGOLD

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UTOPIA – FROM PLACE TO TIME, TO HOPE

Reinhart Koselleck undertakes an interesting analysis of how the notion of utopia changed from a spatial category (an island, a Nowhere) into a temporal one – namely, the future. His aim, then, is to study the temporalisation of utopia, and its semantic transformation in the history of philosophy.

If, following Koselleck's suggestion, we focus on the content of utopias, we can trace recurring motifs which have featured in them since Antiquity. One such motif is the belief that society can be designed and planned: rationally, morally and spatially. This kind of rational planning of rules governing social life is, of course, legitimised by science (for instance, for Karl Marx, what cannot be scientifically justified is simply utopian). Another belief characteristic of utopias is one about the possibility of a rational self-control which is voluntarily accepted, since it results from shared moral foundations or moral pressure (often also from an upbringing aimed at creating the new human enthusiastically giving in to this social self-control). Whatever differences one might

trace between particular utopias (concerning, for example, the role of common goods, private property, position of women, architectural solutions, and the role of power), they are all undoubtedly marked by rationally justified planning and prior cognitive conceptualisation of the postulated order and its subsequent material realisation. Utopias present definitive, closed, and final models. Thus, an unchangeable, eternal vision has taken over the idea of the city – a place which, after all, is open to spatial and social change, inclusive, and welcoming to newcomers, for instance merchants. The city may be surrounded by walls and moats, but its gates are open and permeable. In its daily life, it is unclosed and diverse.

After the alleged islands had been described, after the happenings taking place in the Nowhere had been recounted, the disputes over and fascination with these stories turned to the question of whether these projects could be realised. Koselleck, following Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, evokes the notion of *figmenta utopica*. Unlike *figmenta vera* (accounts dealing with the truth: something admittedly made up, but nevertheless probable in the existing world) and *figmenta heterocosmica* (that which is possible in all possible worlds, or rather in a multiplicity of worlds), Baumgarten's third group of accounts, *figmenta utopica*, 'utopian accounts', deal with what is impossible in any conceivable world. It is this last group of accounts that Baumgarten thinks should be excluded from literature. 'The dark shadow of impossibility of realisation loomed over utopia beginning from the first critiques levelled at More and up until the 19th century. However, as we shall see, in the 19th century this objection would come to be posed under a new banner'.¹

Since the French Revolution, we observe an ever wider use of the notion of utopia, which started to refer not just to projects for an ideal world but also to strategies of political behaviour. 'Utopians' has become a term denoting those who want to realise things that are impossible. Koselleck demonstrates how the scope of what is utopian has been changing throughout history:

*If someone has a perfect plan and thinks he or she can give grounds for it, then these grounds can lead to the opposite of what was intended. Bentham was reacting already to the French Revolution and to what might be called the temporalisation of utopia. The possibility of realising visionary constitutional projects and their pertaining societal models no longer referred to a point in space but to the future. People who had been called utopians or adhered to what might be described as utopianism did of course intend to realise their plans. Thereby, the dimension of the future has been introduced to the notion of utopia. It was is no longer a spatial Nowhere but a temporal implication, which has become a conceptually essential part of utopia.*²

This brings it closer to the present.

¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć: Studia z semantyki i pragmatyki języka społeczno-politycznego*, transl. Wojciech Kunicki, Jarosław Merecki, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2009, p. 275 (this text has not been translated into English; for the German original, see: Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 255). Cf. also: Reinhart Koselleck, 'Temporalization of Utopia', in: Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, transl. Todd S. Presner et al., Stanford University Press, Stanford 2002.

² R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć*, p. 276 (*Begriffsgeschichten*, p. 256).

Thus, Koselleck shows spatially understood utopia changing its meanings to include a future-oriented thinking about the impossible. At the same time, he also shows utopia's changing structure. For while all spatial utopias might be verified by experience, provided that we find that particular place, 'such test of experience is impossible when it comes to utopias of the future. The future is impossible to reach *in situ* through any experience',³ Koselleck notes. The notion of utopia is thus changeable, it is subject to historical relativisation. After all, much of what was once impossible becomes attainable today. This is a question not only of technological progress but also of what we can demand in the public space. Yet a more resolved and unwavering understanding of utopia is still associated with unattainability. And if we try to realise such a project, we should expect negative results.

A different approach was adopted by Ernst Bloch,⁴ who spoke about concrete utopia as a convergence of the future – or more precisely, a hope for a better future – with a present desire and concrete action. 'It is a mystical convergence', Koselleck writes, 'which removes temporal tension and by virtue of the permanence of utopian hope wants to activate a concrete ability to transform every situation'.⁵ This kind of thinking allows for a new look at utopia today. That is why I consider it worthwhile to ask: has the time come when we can observe a removal of the temporal tension and certain shifts on the scale of potentiality? Do we today treat utopianism as a belief in the possibility of social change seen less as a conceptual plan that is then implemented and more as a hope for the transformation of every situation that we have thus far been unable to independently shape to our liking? In introducing the category of hope to our thinking about utopia, we simultaneously open up all those interpretations which involve theories of action, agency, and experience – interpretations that are concerned not so much with what is not there or what is possible as with our potentiality. In other words, what is released by hope is the becoming. 'Reality is changing so rapidly', we are reminded by Koselleck, 'that utopia needs to hurry to catch up with it'.⁶ I suggest examining his proposition from the perspective of the Anthropocene and our current climate fears. To adopt this viewpoint is to turn our attention to thinking about the potent and at the same time adversary impact of our actions on the environment. And if that is the case, we have no choice – we have to hope that 'the utopias need to catch up with reality in order to prevent such a catastrophe',⁷ to give future generations a chance.

Perhaps this is precisely the reason why when we think of the utopian city today, what comes to mind are neither fanciful megastructures, nor Le Corbusierian visions, nor cities as finite projects. This apocalyptic mood prevents us from

3 R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć*, p. 281 (*Begriffsgeschichten*, p. 261).

4 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986 (originally published as *Geist der Utopie*, Duncker & Humblo, München 1918). Cf. Ernst Bloch, 'Rzeczywistość antycypowana, czyli jak przebiega i co osiąga myślenie utopijne', transl. Anna Czajka, *Studia Filozoficzne* 7–8, 1982; the translator of the latter text is also the author of the most extensive Polish monograph about Bloch: Anna Czajka, *Człowiek znaczy nadzieja: O filozofii Ernesta Blocha*, Wydawnictwo FEA, Warszawa 1991.

5 R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć*, p. 288 (*Begriffsgeschichten*, p. 267).

6 R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć*, p. 289 (*Begriffsgeschichten*, p. 267).

7 R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć*, p. 289 (*Begriffsgeschichten*, p. 268).

looking to a fantastic, high-tech future, since we are not sure if there will be a future at all. It is not by chance that when prompted about utopian cities, scholars tend to quote all those urban initiatives that are realised owing to informal relationships, grassroots activities, and self-organisation of various minorities which – despite appalling conditions and overwhelming feeling of hopelessness – still strive to shape and organise their immediate worlds, homesteads, lifestyles, and new ways of dwelling.⁸ In a spontaneous, efficient, and creative way, they make use of discarded materials or transform abandoned buildings. One might say they work with the material, make the impossible possible, and the useless useful. Introducing order to the disordered, with no ambition of total control over things, they nevertheless make use of them, giving them new life. These informal cities – this ‘architecture without an architect’ – are often likened to ‘pirate utopias’ (Hakim Bey) and ‘pirate urbanisation’ (Abdou Maliq Simone).⁹ They also include refugee camps, quasi-cities that spring up in temporarily demilitarised zones – makeshift, built in the rush of the state of emergency, extremely unstable, and yet continually existing and functioning.

FROM PLANNING TO REALISATION

Modernity has convinced us that we should regulate the social world by means of controlling nature and adjusting ourselves to the world of culture, and that human impulses and feelings ought to be reined in and harnessed for the benefit of society. According to this modern way of thinking, any manifestations of a spontaneously active social world which is regulated from below and self-organising are deemed impossible and therefore utopian. People need to be controlled from above, power needs to be oppressive, buildings need to be designed first, then built according to plan and populated with residents.

Can we, then, still claim to be invariably modern when we think about informal cities as utopias? Let us see if our way of thinking changes, if we follow Tim Ingold in abandoning the building perspective in favour of the dwelling perspective. Although Ingold does not write about cities, his findings might nonetheless prove useful in attempting to rethink urbanity.

“ENVIRONMENTS ARE NEVER COMPLETE BUT ARE CONTINUALLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION”¹⁰

Ingold’s point of departure is a series of extremely interesting questions about the lines between artificial and natural worlds. Why, he asks, do we consider

8 Examples of literature on this kind of urbanism include: Justin McGuirk, *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*, Verso, London 2014; Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, London – New York 2007; Katarzyna Wiącek, ‘Architektura bidonwilles w Casablance’, *Kultura Współczesna* 102 (3), 2018, p. 180–181.

9 Hakim Bey, *T. A. Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, Autonomedia, New York 2003; Abdou Maliq Simone, ‘Pirate Towns: Reworking Social and Symbolic Infrastructures in Johannesburg and Douala’, *Urban Studies* 2, 2006.

10 Tim Ingold, ‘Building, Dwelling, Living: How Animals and People Make Themselves at Home in the World’, in: Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, Routledge, London – New York 2000, p. 172.

human-erected buildings to differ from constructions of animals? What makes us identify artificial with man-made? And further, ‘where, in an environment that bears the imprint of human activity, can we draw the line between what is, and is not, a house, or a building, or an instance of architecture?’¹¹ Or, for that matter, between a house and a cave or a yurt. These questions obviously derive from our thinking in terms of project and its realisation. After all, we assume that humans are intentional authors of their own projects and cognitive constructions which they then realise. Consequently, worlds are first designed, then made, and only then inhabited – this assumption lies at the basis of the distinction we make between architecturally transformed environment and nature.

The belief that it is precisely the form which is the ultimate aim of projects and concepts is rooted in fundamental dichotomies of anthropological thought, those between culture and nature, history and evolution, and project and realisation. The forms that the human mind envisions, the projects it designs (be it in the imagination or in real material) stem from humans’ engaged being, their immersion in the world, their dwelling in it, their practical relations with their surroundings. In short, they stem from the human experience of environmentality (more so than simply the environment). Yet humans live in particular surroundings that have been set up by earlier generations. Consequently, our ways of dwelling are inscribed in our bodies, bodily practices, and concrete skills and dispositions. As Ingold explains,

by adopting a dwelling perspective – that is, by taking the animal-in-its-environment rather than the self-contained individual as our point of departure – it is possible to dissolve the orthodox dichotomies between evolution and history, and between biology and culture. For if, by evolution, we mean differentiation over time in the forms and capacities of organisms, then we would have to admit that changes in the bodily orientations and skills of human beings, insofar as they are historically conditioned by the work of predecessors (along with the enduring products of that work, such as buildings), must themselves be evolutionary.¹²

We can thus say that dwelling is a process: dwelling means living in a space that is continuously transformed and at the same time open, unlike the final and ready space envisioned for the utopian city. The dwelling perspective eliminates the distinction between planning, designing, making and using. Indeed, the activities of residents that make up dwelling are not categorically different from the activities that make up building. The dwelling perspective is close in this respect to the childhood experience of building a house, a shelter, a fort, or whatever else the children call it. For them, the very activity of building is in itself play. Once the house/fort is complete, playtime is over. Simply sitting in the house/fort is, after all, not an especially enthralling process. There’s no end to improving, transforming, reconfiguring the fort. The point is the process, not the product.

¹¹ T. Ingold, ‘Building, Dwelling, Living’, p. 174.

¹² T. Ingold, ‘Building, Dwelling, Living’, p. 186–187.

If we were to insist that the activities associated with dwelling begin after a project, and a design, is realised, then we have to recognise that there is a certain moment in which the action of building ends, yielding the concrete result that is the finished building. Is that really the case? Is this the moment that we call architecture? In his examination of art history, Stewart Brand claims that 'the whole idea of architecture is permanence'.¹³ And yet, which of the mediaeval cathedrals can be called completed? Which one was constructed in full according to an original design? Buildings get expanded, other buildings get added to them, their uses change. All these transformations of historic structures continue to this day. Looking from a wider perspective, we can easily see that buildings are a part of the world, and the world itself ceaselessly changes and is continually transformed. A building is, therefore, a process.

If modern efforts to draw up a comprehensive plan for the construction of the city as a conclusively harmonious vision of ideal order used to be called utopias, this was precisely because, taught by historical experience, we knew full well that cities are not born ready-made in the ideal plan of a genius architect or urbanist. Rather, they are a process of dwelling, settling, building, reconstructing, demolishing and destroying. They are the arena both of social or political struggles and of natural processes: storms, gales, acid rains, volcano eruptions, and earthquakes. The city is a complicated whole comprising many parts that do not always cooperate, do not always harmonise, if only because each of the city's components is determined by its purpose, uses, and the properties of the material from which it was formed. We can therefore safely say that the new conceptions of utopian cities arise from discarded dystopias.

In view of this dialectic and fluctuation of utopia and dystopia, today's (post-modern) urban utopia can thus be associated with rejecting universalist and functionalist claims in favour of diversity and heterogeneity, of inclusion for both urban subcultures and regional (or ethnic) traditions. This collage city, rooted in the power of self-organisation, is a whole comprising many parts, yet it does not squeal or grind; it is emergent in its own way, self-developing and self-managed. Ingold, however, does not believe in self-organising structures. He seeks balance between the project and a realisation that befits its conditions and follows the material; between episodic and processual features, and between organisation and continuity. He is not concerned with a direct relation between form and matter but rather with the relation between materiality and forces. Ingold puts forward a radical manifesto with the aim of abolishing the Western hylomorphic model, which has us thinking about an agent (architect, urbanist, social reformer) in whose mind exists a project, a form to be imposed on the matter. He is also critical the new humanities' ongoing debate on the agency of subjects. According to Ingold, authors like Bruno Latour are engaged in attempts at rebalancing the hylomorphic model when they argue that it is not subjects which act on objects but rather objects acting, being agents, being endowed with some form of agency,

¹³ Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*, Penguin, London 1994, p. 2.

like a speed-bump, whose agency substitutes for the agency of a living traffic policeman.

Ingold writes,

My ultimate aim, however, is more radical: with Deleuze and Guattari it is to overthrow the [hylomorphic – MMI] model itself and to replace it with an ontology that assigns primacy to the processes of formation as against their final products, and to the flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter. Form, to recall Klee's words, is death; form-giving is life. I want to argue that what Klee said of art is true of skilled practice in general, namely that it is a question not of imposing preconceived forms on inert matter but of intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated. Practitioners, I contend, are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose.¹⁴

FROM THE CITY OF SPECTACLE TO SELF-ORGANISING CITY

Does this train of thought within the contemporary humanities – focusing on processuality, relationality, flexibility of working with the material, and represented, on the one hand, by Ingold and Richard Sennett, and on the other, by authors like Latour, Alben Yanev and Rem Koolhaas – not predispose us today to look for utopia in places where, at first sight, processualities seem to perform splendidly?

Huge gaps and contrasts between cities are now more visible than ever before in modern cultural history. We thus have, on the one hand, the cities of spectacle. These are global megacities like Dubai, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro, Jakarta, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and many other megapolises located in Asia. We also have cities built from scratch, like the Chinese ghost cities, with apartments, shops, and restaurants, yet without residents or consumers. These megacities are all impressive, consumable, offering their temporary inhabitants superb, gigantic, stately or fancy architecture in the style of Zaha Hadid or other great starchitects (such as Koolhaas). Yet the inhabitants have no control over, say in, or impact on these cities. The modern megacities are spaces you visit, explore, rent, and photograph, but not spaces you inhabit, since spectacle wipes out all alternative ways of being in the city, save for the most spectacular ones. Modern cities are thus dominated by the building, not the dwelling perspective.

On the other hand, as never before in the history of modern culture, we are seriously considering the possibility that cities might be ending, that urban reality is a process of unavoidable change, environmental degradation, and rotting of the walls that so far seemed indestructible. We see cities bursting at the seams with the abundance of people, cities without boundaries, with no outside; spaces melting due to climate-induced overheating of the urban plastic, smog, and spilling garbage. This is the material/problem that today's city-dwellers

¹⁴ Tim Ingold, 'The Textility of Making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, 2010, p. 92.

have to deal with. There is also no planner in sight willing to bring order to the 'dis-order' of the informal, overpopulated, sprawling, and uncontrollable cities. And no one believes now that such potential planner could be effective. We are, then, forced to look for all those practitioners: 'wanderers, or wayfarers' who have experienced the materiality of today's cities, their substantiality, who have followed the materials. These people could be called urban alchemists, since – as James Elkins convincingly writes – the alchemical perspective allows for experiencing not a world of matter but rather substances, and to do so based on the substances' physical properties: appearance, touch, smell and observation of the processes of their transformations and transmutations. 'Alchemy is the old science of struggling with materials, and not quite understanding what is happening'.¹⁵

Yet does this perspective not distort the image of all those city dwellers who inhabit the favelas, the *barriadas*, the districts which develop informally and live their own life, the garbage cities? Do we, in a romantic gesture of orientalisation (Edward Said), not assign alleged agency to subject who have been excluded from the cities of spectacle and left without livelihood? Aren't we not confusing creativity and the activities of Latourian actor-network with lack of alternatives and of prospects for a decent life? These questions are inspired by, among other sources, the experiences of Koolhaas during his 1998 research project in the capital of Nigeria. In Koolhaas' interpretation, Lagos became a model city of the future. This, the architect-cum-researcher claims, is how cities worldwide will function in 50 years, or even sooner. Lagos is 'a pressure cooker of scarcity, extreme wealth, land pressure, religious fervor, and population explosion, Lagos has cultivated an urbanism that is resilient, material-intensive, decentralized, and congested. Lagos may well be the most radical urbanism extant today, but it is one that works'.¹⁶ Koolhaas discovers that the city, despite the initial impression of chaos and utter disorganisation, blockage of traffic, and overcrowding, nevertheless works, propelled by some emergent force, by the uncontrolled 'sheer intelligence of the self-organising system'.¹⁷ This initial impression, it bears reminding, was corrected by another perspective – the bird's eye view. Afraid of Lagos' dangerous streets, Koolhaas first observes the city from a helicopter. As a matter of fact, Koolhaas' text about Lagos and Alaba is abundant with bird's eye view photographs, as it is namely this perspective that, according to the author, allowed him to notice the grassroots order. Thus, in the massive market of Alaba, Koolhaas sees a microsystem of justice, with its own courts of law and even a local prison. Yet, as Matthew Gandy has demonstrated, treating Lagos as 'the neutral space of research laboratory'¹⁸ (to use Koolhaas' formulation) is to depoliticise the urban space and to deprive it of the context of historical experience of urbanity. Kacper Pobłocki is

15 James Elkins, *What Painting Is?*, Routledge, London 2000, p. 17.

16 Stefano Boeri, Rem Koolhaas, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi, Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'To Lagos', in: S. Boeri, R. Koolhaas, S. Kwinter, N. Tazi, H. U. Obrist, *Mutations*, ACTAR Arc-en-Rêve, Barcelona 2000, p. 718.

17 Joseph Godlewski, 'Alien and Distant: Rem Koolhaas on Film in Lagos, Nigeria', *TSDR* 23 (11), 2010, p. 11.

18 Matthew Gandy, 'Learning from Lagos', *New Left Review* 33, 2005.

more blunt: ‘The “black collars”, as the local mobsters call themselves, are one of the most important city-making factors in the metropolises of the global South, albeit a factor that is utterly at odds with Koolhaas’ romantic vision of spontaneous urbanisation’.¹⁹

Where some researchers see social inequalities and a city of poverty, others notice a smoothly working self-organising environment. Fredric Jameson is even compelled to state:

*It is an extraordinary travelogue into the future, (...) to which may be added the question: is a new kind of space emerging – control space, junk space? And what does all this imply for the human psyche and human reality itself? (...) What does it imply for the future and for Utopia?*²⁰

Can we use Ingold’s proposition in order to avoid this type of orientalisation and aestheticisation of poverty, to demonstrate that the dwelling perspective is simply closer to our experience of the city, and to prove that real-life cities are tireless work on the part of their inhabitants, a constant process in the midst of unceasing realisation, a flexible space of change? I am unable to answer this question. Yet I find it profoundly important for a number of, mainly epistemic, reasons. I also consider it ethically indispensable. For whenever we think of ideal systems or ideal cities, a question looms about what sacrifices will have to be made (who will have to be excluded or removed from the city, what will have to be demolished), as well as who will be made responsible for future mistakes and for the perversions and failings of the experiment.

DOES ‘WEAVING AN OPEN WORLD’ HELP TO INHABIT CITIES?

Let us allow people to act in the city, to work with its materiality, to shape their immediate environment. The proposition made by Ingold is indeed radical. Let us stop using Euclidean geometry, which has us thinking about lines, circles and outlines in an abstract, conceptual, and rational manner. Let us imagine a drawing not as a geometric projection of some rationally conceived image but as a trace of a gesture. In his essay ‘Bindings Against Boundaries’, Ingold suggests an experiment: take a pen and draw a circle. Look at what you have drawn. What you see is probably the figure of the circle, a static perimeter which delineates in an empty space the division between the inside and the outside. Ingold calls this modern way of thinking the ‘logic of inversion’. He asks us to try to abandon this logic, or at least suspend it, if only for a while. Think of what you see as about the trace of the gesture of your hand which took a turn around while holding a pen. The modern logic of inversion usually makes us overlook this gesture. It is this logic that turns ‘pathways along which life is lived’ into boundaries within which life remains trapped, closed, and cut to line. Consequently, it outlines the space of the

¹⁹ Kacper Pobłocki, ‘Deliryczne Lagos’, *Magazyn Miasta* 11, 2015, p. 61.

²⁰ Fredric Jameson, ‘Future City’, *New Left Review* 21, 2003, p. 66–68.

world. Having presented this experiment, Ingold goes on to formulate his aim, which is

to recover the sense of what it means to inhabit the world. To achieve this, I propose to put the logic of inversion into reverse. Life having been, as it were, installed inside things, I now want to restore these things to life by returning to the currents of their formation. In so doing, I aim to show that to inhabit the world – rather than to occupy it – is to live life, as we say colloquially, ‘in the open’.²¹

What this means is a world of processes and transformations, inhabited both by the observers of these processes and by the phenomena which the observers observe. It is, then, a question of focusing on inhabiting rather than occupying space; on movement rather than restrictions; on the medium rather than the surface; it is a question of tying the substance and the media together into living forms.

On the one hand, then, Ingold’s proposition is a part of the growing current of thinking about the city as an element of an ecosystem, whereby cities become one of numerous actors in a post-environmentalist transformation of the globe and as such need to be flexible, open, and readily responsive to changes.²² On the other hand, it strengthens the current that criticises the cities of spectacle and the closed and finite architecture of the global megacities. It facilitates conceptualising the city as a sphere of self-organisation, of weaving together and untying the knots of the world (and not of urbanised space). It also corresponds with Richard Sennett’s perspective that focuses on experiencing the world’s materiality. Tom Dyckhoff, who joins other authors in using the category of the city of spectacle, is critical towards it:

We should not be passive spectators. We should take part, and be transformed through the experience. We should be given the power to make our own places, our own towns and cities, our architecture. That is the only way we will truly feel attachment to and ownership of the land beneath our feet – by weaving the richness of ordinary human experience back into the production and experience of the landscapes we live in, creating little utopias in the city from which change might spread. And perhaps, in the burgeoning movements against gentrification in towns and cities across the world, or campaigns for affordable housing, a tax on increasing land values or the ‘right to the city’, something of the communal, subversive spirit we saw in Covent Garden and countless other cities in the 1960s and 1970s is returning. The question, today, as well as back then, though, is how to ensure these unstable

²¹ Tim Ingold, ‘Bindings Against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World’, *Environment and Planning A* 40, 2008, p. 1797.

²² The proposition is a philosophical version of the argument made by Agnieszka Bugno-Janik, Borys Cymrowski, Marek Janik and Justyna Łuksza, who write about urban commons, invoking Great Transitions as one of development trajectories, cf. Agnieszka Bugno-Janik, Borys Cymrowski, Marek Janik, Justyna Łuksza, ‘Urban Commons: Czy z utopii można zrobić rzeczywistość?’, *Kultura Współczesna* 106 (3), 2019. The concurrence of both conceptions shows one possible understanding of Ingold’s gesture of unmaking the opposition between history and evolution, between culture and nature.

*coalitions of such different peoples stick together; and even, once that fragile unity is achieved, what to campaign FOR, as well as against. Opposition is the easy bit. Coming up with an alternative to the entrepreneurial city, that's the rub.*²³

I read this as a hopeful call to build urban utopias, to develop our experience of dwelling. I think this is the reason why Dyckhoff refers to Sennett and his concept of jointly, socially developed rituals of dwelling, of city formation, of following the city's materials to understand its properties. Perhaps this will enable utopia to catch up with reality and prevent global disasters: climate, migration, economic and other catastrophes that have so far been driven with impunity by the ideology of growth.

Translated by Jakub Ozimek

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ABSTRACT: Referring to Reinhart Koselleck and his arguments, this article discusses the changing nature of utopias in terms of their categories and meanings, while using dialectics to explain their phenomenon and historical attempts to implement them, as well as the rise-and-fall process of utopias and dystopias. Following in the footsteps of Tim Ingold, the author asks whether 'dwelling perspective' (in contrast to 'building perspective') and radical rejection of the Western hylomorphic model may be useful to understand two contemporary, and yet contradictory urban trends: self-organising (informal) cities and spectacle cities. Can the former be recognised as utopias in the context of the latter losing their urban values (dystopia)?

KEY WORDS: utopia/dystopia, Tim Ingold, informal cities, spectacle cities, urban space

