

ARTICLES

FIVE PRESSING QUESTIONS ON THE IDEAL CITY

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Cruz Garcia & Nathalie Frankowski*

INTRODUCTION

Over half of the world's population currently lives in cities, and numbers are expected to double by 2050.¹ With the tireless and continuous urbanization of human land occupation and its accelerated social, economic, and environmental transformations, the city has become the unavoidable center of displacement, refuge, wealth, administration, violence, potentialities, and threats. Ever since the heyday of settler-colonialism, the city has been at the core of the imaginaries of the Urbanocene, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantatiocene, or Chtulucene.² Although they are concrete indexes of the material accumulation of wealth, cities are also formal displays of income inequality, segregation, and other manifestations of a poverty that is increasingly urban.³ The paradox of the urban condition is that the

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¹ *As Urbanization Grows, Cities Unveil Sustainable Development Solutions on World Day*, UN NEWS (Oct. 31, 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1050291>.

² See generally Donna Haraway, *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chtulucene: Making Kin*, 6 ENVTL. HUMAN. 159, 159–65 (2015); GEOFFREY WEST, SCALE (2017).

³ According to the UN's World Social Report the relationship between city size and economic inequality has been documented in many parts of the world. "Chen, Liu and Lu (2018) find that overall urban

city is simultaneously the ultimate solution—against the pressing social, political, and ecological challenges of our time—and the largest problem—with a global urban footprint growing at an unprecedented rate beyond any known scale.⁴

With the urban condition finally achieving a definite global “triumph,” is it possible to reimagine the city in the face of urgent historical challenges? If everything from social mobility to sustainability—cities consume close to two-thirds of the world’s energy and account for more than seventy percent of the global greenhouse emissions—to poverty—by 2030 half of the world’s poor will be living in cities—is being urbanized, can the urban condition be reformulated as to respond to humanitarian, climate, and disaster risk?⁵ Can the thinkers and “makers” of the city alter the current state of wealth accumulation and urban disparity following the same models of growth, gentrification, market deregulation, and land legislation that

inequality is significantly and positively correlated with population size in China. Baum-Snow and Pavan (2013) establish a strong positive relationship between city size and wage inequality in the United States.” U.N. DEP’T OF ECON. & SOC. AFFAIRS, WORLD SOCIAL REPORT 2020: INEQUALITY IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD 118 (2020). In 2018, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) also found that the larger the population of a city, the higher its degree of income inequality. *Id.* “[W]ith urban poverty growing much faster than rural poverty, poverty is being urbanized.” See Box 2.8: *Addressing the Urbanization of Poverty*, U.N. SYSTEM CHIEF EXECS. BD. FOR COORDINATION (May 27, 2005), <https://unsceb.org/content/box-28-addressing-urbanization-poverty>.

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Over the past two centuries, a major change has been taking place in the distribution of the world population: the increasing and unprecedented concentration of people in highly urbanized areas known as urban agglomerations. The largest of these agglomerations, at the top end of the urban hierarchy, are those with 10 million inhabitants or more, and have become known as megacities. Thirty-three megacities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Northern America account for 7 per cent of the world’s total population in 2018.

Dep’t of Econ. & Soc. Affairs, World Urbanization Prospects, U.N. Doc. ST/ESA/SER.A/420, at 55 (2019).

⁵ “Over half of the world’s population lives in cities, and this is likely to increase to over two thirds by 2030. Cities use a large proportion of the world’s energy supply and are responsible for around 70 per cent of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions which trap heat and result in the warming of Earth.” Maimunah Mohd Sharif, *Cities: A ‘Cause of and Solution To’ Climate Change*, UN NEWS (Sept. 18, 2019), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046662>. See generally CHIEF EXECS. BD., ONE UNITED NATIONS, CATALYST FOR PROGRESS AND CHANGE 7–39 (2005), <https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/one-un-report.pdf>.

have been increasing during the last four decades?⁶ Can a city founded on the grounds of economic disparity and racial segregation evolve into an ideal city? Are cities like Pittsburgh—with blatant indexes of inequality particularly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic—doomed to perpetual disparity? Is the only solution for disadvantaged communities to flee from the city or can the city radically change like it has never done before? Would the upcoming era of *Utopiacene* create a multiverse of ideal urban conditions and radical imaginaries to operate within and counteract the *Becoming Black of the World*?⁷

As urbanists, architects, sociologists, economists, and policy makers face an increasingly urban future, the need for reference models and new imaginaries to challenge the status quo become indispensable both at the local and planetary scale. Would a critical look to the ideal plans of an era obsessed with urban dreams offer possible solutions to the future of the city? What about the heroic plans of the Modern Movement with the city in the park and its housing for the proletariat? Is there something to be learned from the Constructivist housing schemes in metallurgical towns outlined by the OSA Group during the early years of the Socialist Republics? Can the Metabolist superstructures dealing with demographic explosion conceived in Japan after WWII teach us something? Can we share the Situationist dreams of the Unitary Urbanists foreseeing a decentralized city-as-playground for human-players emancipated from work? Could we rediscover the brutally honest social housing projects of Team 10 with their belief in architecture to make a *utopia of the present*? If we look to the past, where can we find other ways to be modern that are Black, indigenous, or trans? Where are the Utopias of the “other”?

In a century of dialectical tension, with a prematurely announced End of History, the robust state of the city has eroded into dangerous domains for entire populations. The city finds itself in the midst of laissez-faire deregulation and populist opportunism that overlooks and abuses entire demographic groups in an increasingly privatized and over-policed turf of financial extraction in exchange of

⁶ See Emily Badger & Kevin Quealy, *Watch 4 Decades of Inequality Drive American Cities Apart*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 2, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/02/upshot/wealth-poverty-divide-american-cities.html>.

⁷ Achille Mbembe explains that the becoming black of the world happens after the “fusion of capitalism and animism” applies the forces that used to turn women and men from Africa into “human-objects, human-commodities, human-money” to the new man subject to the market and to debt transforming it into “human-thing, human-machine, human-code, human-influx.” See generally ACHILLE MBEMBE, CRITIQUE OF BLACK REASON (Laurent Dubois trans., Duke Univ. Press 2017) (2013).

volatile land-value speculation.⁸ Continuing a trend that started with the rise of the “market-enabled” project of neo-liberalism, what if we looked back to the 20th century just before the current system took over and distilled the utopian idealism of a global colonial progress of Eurocentric universalism?⁹ What if, after reflecting on the forgotten dreams of subaltern humanity, the ideal cities in the last hundred years—projects interrupted by the social, political, and economic effects of world wars—could offer the possibility to, at least, dream of better, more critical, and inclusive cities?

I. WHO GETS TO DESIGN THE CITY?

Until recently, Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Mellon University distributed a map on its admissions page that omitted Homewood, Larimer, the Hill District, Uptown, East Hills, Hazelwood, and Garfield, erasing with it the representation of some of Pittsburgh’s historically Black neighborhoods.¹⁰ What if this map is more than an involuntary impasse and instead the revelation of something far more sinister but not as caricaturesque? What if the map projected a real tabula rasa decade (or centuries)

⁸ Francis Fukuyama argues that “liberal democracy may constitute the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ and the ‘final form of human government,’ and as such constituted the ‘end of history.’” FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN*, at xi–xii (1992). That is, while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions. Here Fukuyama makes reference to Hegel’s concept of History “understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times.” *Id.*

⁹ See U.N. Conference on Human Settlements, *Report of The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)*, 9, 23, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.165/14 (Aug. 7, 1996) (highlighting the adoption of the “market-enabled” policy that welcomes the role and influence of private forces in global housing). The adoption of this policy has marked a notable erosion of the role of public institutions and their capacity to protect social programs. *See id.* The following quotes illustrate two points to support these claims. “We shall work to expand the supply of affordable housing by enabling markets to perform efficiently and in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, enhancing access to land and credit and assisting those who are unable to participate in housing markets.” *Id.* “Increasing the supply of affordable housing, including through encouraging and promoting affordable home ownership and increasing the supply of affordable rental, communal, cooperative and other housing through partnerships among public, private and community initiatives, creating and promoting market-based incentives while giving due respect to the rights and obligations of both tenants and owners.” *Id.*

¹⁰ Bill Schackner, *CMU Apologizes for Excluding Historically Black Communities from Tourist Map*, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (Feb. 5, 2020), <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2020/02/05/Carnegie-Mellon-map-homewood-Hill-District-Lincoln-Lemington-garfield-race-admissions-Pittsburgh/stories/202002050132>.

in the making? After all, is the now infamous map the only materialization of racist erasure?

Reports state that while Black Americans make up thirteen percent of the United States' population, only two percent of licensed architects are Black, with a whopping two-tenths of a percent being Black women.¹¹ A walk through the halls of architecture studios in architecture schools around the country reveals an even more evident lack of diversity, and Blackness in general.¹² The lack of Black students and faculty has been made evident by the many recent calls in architecture schools and institutions around the world in the wake of the resurgence of Black Lives Matter protests.¹³

The paper *Pittsburgh Inequality Across Gender and Race*, published in 2019, states that “Black women and men in other cities have better health, income, employment, and educational outcomes than Pittsburgh’s Black Residents.” How does the dire statistic regarding quality of life for Black residents of Pittsburgh relate to the evident lack of Black students (and the absence of local Black students) in the city’s only professional architecture program? How can legitimate anti-racist efforts coexist with Columbia University’s history of expansion projects that push a gentrifying Morningside Heights into a threatened Harlem?¹⁴ Can anti-racist, anti-capitalist, or abolitionist programs really be formulated in gentrifying institutions, in universities developing technologies for prescriptive policing, directly gentrifying Black neighborhoods?

This begs the question: can a more inclusive architecture and city be designed without excluding the experiences of Black residents and other racialized

¹¹ *On Race & Architecture*, CURBED (Feb. 22, 2017), <https://www.curbed.com/2017/2/22/14677844/architecture-diversity-inclusion-race>. “In 2007, African-American women made up a scant two-tenths of a percent of licensed architects in the U.S., for a total of just 196 practitioners. (The University of Cincinnati’s database of African-American architects reports an increase in that number, to 385, of a total 107,581 licensed practitioners in the U.S.)” *Id.*

¹² Kendall A. Nicholson, *Where are My People? Black in Architecture*, ASS’N OF COLLEGIATE SCHS. OF ARCHITECTURE (Aug. 14, 2020), <https://www.acsa-arch.org/resources/data-resources/where-are-my-people-black-in-architecture/>.

¹³ Since the protests in response to the police killing of George Floyd there has been a series of anti-racist calls and demands made by students and faculty across architecture schools around the world, including Carnegie Mellon University.

¹⁴ See Sofia Kwon, *Broken Windows Policing and Gentrification Not Only Harmed the Black Community, but Also Strengthened Columbia’s Reputation*, COLUM. DAILY SPECTATOR (Oct. 5, 2020), <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2020/10/05/broken-windows-policing-and-gentrification-not-only-harmed-the-black-community-but-also-strengthened-columbias-reputation/>.

populations? What potential imaginaries can be formulated if the profession in charge of designing the cities and buildings where we live and work is unable to welcome in its spaces the same populations it should be designing for?¹⁵ Can schools of urbanism and architecture envision more inclusive and anti-racist cities while keeping their exclusive faculty and student bodies? Can the most vulnerable parts of the population—the historically disenfranchised—dream of better cities, or is the design of collective living the task only for the caste of economically and racially privileged? How can architecture deal with the violent effects of segregation of the urban fabric, of race, of gender and sexuality, and of class while maintaining a clearly segregated profession hidden behind the impossible paywalls of powerfully elite universities that are also responsible of the processes of gentrification?

Just like Paulo Freire proposed a Pedagogy of the Oppressed that questions the hierarchical model of traditional education,¹⁶ we must demand and outline an Urbanism of the Oppressed that not only takes into consideration disadvantaged populations in the ratification process of the public forum or to show faces of diversity (tokenism), but that pursues a radical democratization and opening up of the educational institutions that have been central to the legitimization of the design professions. Forms of Black, transfeminist, intersectional, indigenous, and Latina critiques of architectural pedagogy are only possible after a radical transformation of academic institutions. Radically inclusive and anti-racist architectures and cities will not be possible until the process of thinking, dreaming, and designing the future is not just a gentlemanly sport for a privileged few in ivory towers funded with the profit from gentrification and settler-colonialism.¹⁷ Housing for all will not be possible until the process of thinking, dreaming, and designing the cities we live in is also for all. Are institutions ready to be radically democratized through anti-racist pedagogies and the fundamental transformations that these processes entail?¹⁸

¹⁵ See Nicholson, *supra* note 12; Cruz Garcia & Nathalie Frankowski, *A Manual of Anti-Racist Architecture Education*, WAI (Oct. 25, 2020), <https://waithinktank.com/Anti-Racist-Education-Manual>.

¹⁶ PAULO FREIRE, *PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED* (2005).

¹⁷ See LA PAPERSON, *Land. And the University Is Settler Colonial*, in *A THIRD UNIVERSITY IS POSSIBLE* 25 (Univ. of Minn. Press 2017), <https://manifold.umn.edu/read/a-third-university-is-possible/section/561c45d2-9442-42d5-9938-f8c9e2aafcfc#ch02>; Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang, *Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor*, 1 *DECOLONIZATION* 1, 1 (2012).

¹⁸ We write more on the relationship between architecture schools, gentrification, and anti-Blackness. See Garcia & Frankowski, *supra* note 15.

II. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MODERNISM?

In his 1994 essay *Whatever Happened to Urbanism?*, author, architect, and theorist Rem Koolhaas questions the disappearance of urbanism, as a profession, at the moment “when urbanization [is] everywhere.”¹⁹ At the peak of neoliberal development, Koolhaas argues on the way to reject Modernism with its failed “alchemistic promise to transform quantity into quality,” that the dissatisfaction with the contemporary city has not led to the development of a credible alternative, inspiring “only more refined ways of articulating dissatisfaction.”²⁰ Instead of Urbanism, we are left with architecture, “ever more architecture,” a discipline that, Koolhaas claims “defines, excludes, limits, and separates from the ‘rest.’”²¹

But what if instead of neglecting the so-called utopian naivete of Modernism, we critically dissected its mechanisms while engaging with the idealistic attempt to blur the separation of architecture and the city? What if all we needed to “redefine our relationship with the city,” was to embrace our relationship, both, as its makers and supporters?²² What if as a profession architecture refused to train architects for the perpetual commodification of architectural objects in detriment of the (radically inclusive) urban duty? What if architecture as a collective profession declined to design autonomous houses for the rich, racially-segregated suburbs, prisons, police stations, detention centers, and border walls, and instead, with a new diverse, critical, and ambitious faculty and student body shift its attention to the potentials of the city?

What if through an anti-racist and anti-colonial dissection, Modernism—the most ambitious project of Urbanism in the 20th century—could be stripped from its colonial footprint and distilled into a blueprint for ambitious city dreaming? After all, Le Corbusier and the International Congress of Modern Architecture (“CIAM”) was provided with a rubric where the four values of “working, dwelling, transportation, and recreation” took the form of siteless Contemporary Cities for Three Million Inhabitants, Plan Voisins in the middle of a congested and polluted Paris, or the Radiant Cities of mix-use housing blocks laid out on parks anywhere in the world.

¹⁹ REM KOOLHAAS, *Whatever Happened to Urbanism?*, in S, M, L, XL 959 (1995), https://urbanismouno.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/arch432_koolhaas.pdf

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *See id.* at 971.

Did not Modernism find—aided by both, colonial and decolonial forces—traction all around the world, from South America, to India, to Japan, to the Soviet Union? Is there something to be learned in the projects by the Organization of Contemporary Architects (“OSA”) with its Social Condensers, decentralized and anti-hierarchical planning, and experimental communal housing blocks?²³ In an era whitewashed by pragmatic solutions, gentrification, further policing implicit in the concept of smart cities, and growing inequality, can we dream of new ways of making ideal cities? Can we conceive radically queer and Two-spirited cities, Afrofuturist plans, ecologically just urbanisms of indigenous solidarity, transfeminist communes? Can we eliminate the condition of urban poverty through radically inclusive urban plans?

Can Moisei Ginzburg’s Narkomfin and Le Corbusier’s Unité d’habitation with their communal laundries and kitchens and their duplex apartments with large windows and double height ceilings provide a prototype for dignifying collective living in the contemporary city?²⁴ Can the utopia of the present of Team 10 offer models for children-friendly housing blocks where streets-in-the-air act as safe urban playgrounds?²⁵ Would the Ecological Arctic Towns of Ralph Erskine offer a model for collective living in the now more common extreme climates?²⁶ Can the Constructivist Seljony Gorod, Kisho Kurokawa’s Agricultural City or Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City offer models for agro-urbanism?²⁷ What about all the other radical imaginaries displaced by institutional influence of these canonical figures?

²³ For more on Social Condensers and the experimental projects developed by the OSA and other Constructivist organizations, see Michał Murawski, *Revolution and the Social Condenser: How Soviet Architects Sought a Radical New Society*, STRELKA MAG (Sept. 25, 2017), <https://strelkamag.com/en/article/architecture-revolution-social-condenser>; and Andrew Willimott, *Perestroika of Life*, ARCHITECTURAL REV., (Sept. 22, 2017), <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/perestroika-of-life>.

²⁴ For an account on the utopian ideal of Ginzburg’s Narkomfin, see REM KOOLHAAS, *UTOPIA STATION* (2003).

²⁵ Team 10 declared that it was interested in building architecture because “only through construction can a Utopia of the present be realized.” Their projects often incorporated streets-in-the-air inspired by Children’s play. For more information, see ALISON SMITHSON, *TEAM 10 PRIMER 3* (1968).

²⁶ Lola Sheppard & Mason White, *The Untapped Promise of Arctic Urbanism*, METROPOLIS (Jan. 10, 2017), <https://www.metropolismag.com/cities/planning-cities/untapped-promise-arctic-urbanism/>.

²⁷ Opposed to many of the urban projects discussed before, these three projects by Russian Constructivist architect Moisei Ginzburg (Seljony Gorodo), Kurokawa’s Agricultural City, and Broadacre City by Frank Lloyd Wright show forms of urbanism that focus on clear agrarian components. For an account on some of these projects see Charles Waldheim, *Notes Toward a History of Agrarian Urbanism*, PLACES J. (Nov. 2010), <https://placesjournal.org/article/history-of-agrarian-urbanism/>.

Where are all the other Modernisms of communality, solidarity, anti-capitalism, and anti-racism?

III. WHAT IF POST-MODERNISM NEVER EXISTED?

When historian and theorist Charles Jenks announced that the fall of the Captain WO Pruitt Homes and L. Igoe Apartments in St. Louis, Missouri marked the “precise moment in time” of the “death of modern architecture,” a whole profession prepared for a paradigm shift.²⁸ Accentuating the underlying struggles of ambitious state-sponsored housing projects around the world, the Post-Modernist doctrine ridiculed the so-called heroic ambitions and utopian projects of the Modern Movement with their reliance on centralized power and public funding.²⁹

A turn toward neo-liberal policies, the privatization of large development projects, and unresolved social issues created a poisonous cocktail that intoxicated architecture and threatened to eradicate urbanism as a profession—because who needs urban planners when developers bring in the drawings and the money? The perceived shortcomings of Modernism with its classist Cartesian Grids, wide boulevards, and garden city-blocks motivated a whole generation of disgruntled

²⁸ CHARLES JENCKS, *THE LANGUAGE OF POST-MODERN ARCHITECTURE* 9 (6th ed. 1991).

²⁹ David Harvey argues that in reference of the articulation of the concept of Heterotopia by Michele Foucault, “it then became one means (particularly important within the canon of postmodernism) whereby the problem of Utopia could be resurrected and simultaneously evaded.” DAVID HARVEY, *Dialectical Utopianism*, in *SPACES OF HOPE* 182–96 (2000). Reineer de Graaf argues that

if we take the Piketty analogy to its full conclusion, we may wonder if there was really ever such a thing as Postmodern architecture at all. Perhaps what we witnessed was not a succession of architectural styles in a state of mutual polemic, but a shift towards a fundamentally different role of buildings altogether. If before the 1970s (roughly speaking) buildings were primarily regarded as (public) expenditure, after the 1970s buildings became mostly a means of revenue which fact ironically only contributed to further downward pressure on construction budgets. Once discovered as a form of capital, there is no choice for buildings but to operate according to the logic of capital. In that sense there may ultimately be no such thing as Modern or Postmodern architecture, but simply architecture before and after its annexation by capital.

Reineer de Graaf, *The Century That Never Happened*, *FUTURE ARCHITECTURE LIBRARY* (Apr. 24, 2015), <https://futurearchitecturelibrary.org/archifutures-articles/volum-2-the-studio/the-century-that-never-happened/>.

designers to search for immediate satisfaction in the humiliation of the concept of urbanism.³⁰

The birth of New Urbanism (so commonly practiced in Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University), the explosion of suburbia as a condition, the proliferation of gated communities, and the impoverishment of urban centers across the country provokes a *collective shame in the wake of the Modernist fiasco*.³¹ But, what if the presupposed concept of Post-Modernism is anchored on an empty foundation? What if Pruitt-Igoe, the so-called beginning of the end of Modernism did not fail because of its "purist language at variance with the architectural codes of its inhabitants," or because "events and ideology" determine the "success of the environment," but rather because it was a racially segregated project?³²

How can the failure of the social policy that drove the development to its implosion be blamed on the aesthetic makeup of its architecture? As an ideological system and the belief in a grander project for collective, dignified living, can Modernism exist solely as a set of buildings? What about the urbanistic implications of a city tangled in the threads of its hundred-year removal from its slaveholding-past (in the tail end of the Jim Crow era)? What about racial segregation in housing? What is truly Modernist about the expropriation of Black families to force them into

³⁰ The second chapter of our book on Narrative Architecture describes in detail how after the Second World War a generation of architects directed their critiques of Modernist Urbanism of Le Corbusier. See CRUZ GARCIA & NATHALIE FRANKOWSKI, NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE: A KYNICAL MANIFESTO (2020).

³¹ KOOLHAAS, *supra* note 19.

Modernism's alchemistic promise—to transform quantity into quality through abstraction and repetition—has been a failure, a hoax: magic that didn't work. Its ideas, aesthetics, strategies are finished. Together, all attempts to make a new beginning have only discredited the idea of a new beginning. A collective shame in the wake of this fiasco has left a massive crater in our understanding of modernity and modernization.

Id.

³² JENCKS, *supra* note 28.

Several slab blocks of this scheme were blown up in 1972 after they were continuously vandalized. The crime rate was higher than other developments, and Oscar Newman attributed this, in his book *Defensible Space*, to the long corridors, anonymity, and lack of controlled semi-private space. Another factor: it was designed in a purist language at variance with the architectural codes of the inhabitants.

Id.

Pruitt-Igoe without any form of support or long-term investment? Is the failure of Pruitt-Igoe architectural or political?³³ Can architecture exist outside of politics?

If the dust of architectural destruction blurs the problematic foundations of Pruitt-Igoe, the form seems to confuse historians about the questionable origins of its programs and the dubious relationship with the principles of Modernism and its desire to make Architecture and the City one. In that regard, the problem of formalism is not so much about design, but about understanding. Post-Modernist historians have not been able to discern between Modernism as program (planning) and so-called Modernist forms.³⁴ Does Pruitt Igoe provide for work, recreation, dwelling, and transportation? Where, in these plans, is the city in the park? If Modernism, like most of the visionary projects of the avant-garde across the world, is meant for societal structure that is yet to be created (the perennial new beginning so present in socialist and syndico-anarchist projects),³⁵ how can its incompatibility with a momentary socio-political impasse be blamed on its strategies, ambitions, grids, ineffable spaces? Can a universalist architecture exist in a place that does not believe in universalist values?

³³ For more information on Pruitt-Igoe housing project see Colin Marshall, *Pruitt-Igoe: The Troubled High-rise That Came to Define Urban America—A History of Cities in 50 Buildings, Day 21*, GUARDIAN (Apr. 22, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/apr/22/pruitt-igoe-high-rise-urban-america-history-cities>; and Ian Volner, *New Documentary 'The Pruitt-Igoe Myth' Tells of the Rise and Fall of America's Most Infamous Housing Project*, POLITICO (Feb. 4, 2012), <https://www.politico.com/states/new-york/city-hall/story/2012/02/new-documentary-the-pruitt-igoe-myth-tells-of-the-rise-and-fall-of-americas-most-infamous-housing-project-067223>.

³⁴ Overlooking the racist housing policies behind Pruitt-Igoe Charles Jencks declared that:

Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final coup de grace by dynamite. Previously it had been vandalised, mutilated and defaced by its black inhabitants, and although millions of dollars were pumped back, trying to keep it alive (fixing the broken elevators, repairing smashed windows, repainting), it was finally put out of its misery. Boom, boom, boom.

JENCKS, *supra* 28, at 9 (1977). He then proceeds to blame the form of the building for its lack of success: “Good form was to lead to good content. or at least good conduct; the intelligent planning of abstract space was to promote healthy behaviour.” *Id.*

³⁵ During the early 20th century, Modernism in Architecture met with parallel political and aesthetic forces that dreamed about new worlds. Two texts by Boris Groys explore this drive towards societal change and its relationship to the avant-garde. See Boris Groys, *Becoming Revolutionary: On Kazimir Malevich*, 47 E-FLUX J. (Sept. 2013), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/47/60047/becoming-revolutionary-on-kazimir-malevich/>; see also BORIS GROYS, *THE COMMUNIST POSTSCRIPT* (2014).

In their desperate attempt to bury the idealist project of Urbanism, Post-Modernism and whatever that has been operating ever since promises a nostalgic movement that “either speaks to other architects and a concerned minority who care about specifically architectural meanings,” or “to the public at large, or the local inhabitants who care about other issues concerned with comfort, traditional building a way of life.”³⁶ Unaware of the lack of power and representation in each of these processes, a series of historical political failures are blamed on misinterpretations and misappropriations of Modernism.³⁷ But, if Pruitt-Igoe accurately embodies the death of Modern Architecture, what about its reincarnation in other ideal (and not so ideal) bodies?

IV. WHAT ABOUT OTHER FORMS OF IDEAL URBANISM?

If instead of being just a predetermined set of stylistic manifestations Modernism is the promise of a set of ideals and strategies to erase the separation between architecture and the city, then these ideals could be expressed in different forms.³⁸

In 1956 as Pruitt-Igoe is completed, Brasilia is under construction after Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek orchestrates the assembly of a new capital with the first government building by Oscar Niemeyer, and the “Plano Piloto de Brasilia” competition that Lucio Costa won the previous year.³⁹ Running parallel to Le Corbusier’s postcolonial plan for Chandigarh, Brasilia is another Modernist apotheosis: a tabula rasa minus the bulldozer running the old city.⁴⁰ Brasilia is the

³⁶ JENCKS, *supra* note 28, at 9.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ Le Corbusier declares in his canonical *Vers une Architecture* that “styles” are lies that architecture “has nothing to do with.” LE CORBUSIER, *TOWARD AN ARCHITECTURE* 15, 67 (John Goodman trans., 2007).

³⁹ *Brasilia: Preservation of a Modernist City*, CONSERVATION PERSPS. (Getty Conservation Inst.), Spring 2013, at 13, https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/newsletters/pdf/v28n1.pdf.

⁴⁰ “With independence in 1947 came the partition of India into two countries, India and Pakistan.” Peter Fitting, *Urban Planning/Utopian Dreaming: Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh Today*, 13 *UTOPIAN STUD.* 69, 71 (2002). “The state of Punjab was itself divided, and Lahore, the former provincial capital, found itself in Pakistan, leaving the Indian state of Punjab without a capital.” *Id.* “Rather than establish a new capital . . . Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to make . . . an entirely new city.” *Id.* This process led to the selection of the New York architect Albert Mayer (a lieutenant colonel in India during World War II). *Id.* at 72. Mayer worked with Matthew Nowicki, who died in an airplane crash in 1950 “throwing the project into disarray.” *Id.* After various consultations a team composed of Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry, Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret was formed. *Id.* Initially Le Corbusier would be the “architectural advisor” working with three senior architects but he “took charge of developing the master plan, designing the capitol complex, and establishing architectural control.” *Id.* Not only did Le Corbusier

Modernist dream of empty lands awaiting the order of the Cartesian Grid, the bucolic openness of urban landscapes, the efficient and fast mobility of avenues and overpasses.⁴¹ Brasilia (like Chandigarh) achieves the desired epiphany where Urbanism meets economic and political support, where great urban ambition meets great political power.⁴² Brasilia is a new beginning without the need of erasure. With its four Modernist values (dwelling, working, recreation, and transportation), Brasilia is both a challenge to all the prematurely announced defeats and a concrete and simultaneously problematic and exhilarating victory of Modernism.⁴³

Also, in 1956 Yona Friedman and Constant are working in two radically different cities. With his *Manifesto de l'Architecture Mobile*, Friedman envisions a city where the “sole task open to architecture consists in developing temporary techniques of construction that will bridge the gap between traditional construction (*i.e.*, static buildings that leave a “footprint”) and future systems inclining toward the pure sciences.”⁴⁴ If, through the Athens Charter and the CIAM Grille, Modernism argued for an urbanism of functional specificity, Yona Friedman and the GEAM write the script for an Indeterminate Town Planning.⁴⁵ Modernist specificity works

design the monumental Capitol Complex, he also designed “the 240 acres of the city itself as a place to live and work.” *Id.* at 73. In Brazil, then President Juscelino Kubitschek mobilized

an estimated 2 to 3 percent of Brazil’s GDP during his presidency to build a new capital city, Brasilia, in three years and ten months in a location in the interior of Brazil that was 725 kilometers from the nearest major city (Belo Horizonte), and 940 kilometers from Rio de Janeiro. When in 1956 the law authorizing the new capital was passed, this future capital was without roads, buildings, and electricity.

Sheldon Maram, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Politics of Exuberance 1956–1961*, 27 LUSO-BRAZILIAN REV. 31, 34 (1990).

⁴¹ For two accounts on the utopian plan of Brasilia and its colonial implications, see Martino Stierli, *Building No Place: Oscar Niemeyer and the Utopias of Brasilia*, 67 J. ARCHITECTURAL EDUC. 8–16 (2013); and Paulo Tavares, *Brasilia: Colonial Capital, The Settler Colonial Project*, E-FLUX (Oct. 14, 2020), <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/the-settler-colonial-present/351834/brasilia-colonial-capital/>.

⁴² For an in-depth exploration on the politics behind both capitals (Brasilia and Chandigarh), see Lawrence Vale, *Designed Capitals after World War Two: Chandigarh and Brasilia*, in ARCHITECTURE, POWER, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY 121–45 (1992).

⁴³ Tavares, *supra* note 41.

⁴⁴ Yona Friedman, *Programme for Mobile City Planning: An Update*, in EXIT UTOPIA: ARCHITECTURAL PROVOCATION 1956–76, at 13–14 (Martin van Schalik & Otakar Macel eds., 2004).

⁴⁵ Yona Friedman calls for the need for Indeterminate Town Planning as a “solution that can be achieved through a reorganization of the methodology of town planning” that sees the previously unreconcilable

through dwelling, circulation, and recreation.⁴⁶ Town planning Indeterminacy seeks conciliation between a city for isolated individuals and a city dedicated to public life.⁴⁷ Against deploying the new city over the ruins of the old, failed city, Yona Friedman proposes the city by means of non-intrusive scaffolding, a form of floating Modernist urbanism.⁴⁸

At the same time, Constant is working on the ideas that will form his New Babylon. While the first urban avant-garde was ideologically expropriated by the forces of private investment in the Post-War Europe, and re-launched as poured concrete in the *Supercuadras* in Brazil, Constant challenges the Modernist relationship between industrial production and urban form.⁴⁹ New Babylon uses automation as the tour de force of a new city emancipated from work as the core value of Modernist urban planning.⁵⁰ In opposition to the models of Modernist cities like Brasilia and Chandigarh with their centralized, bureaucratic, and predictably pre-programmed plans, New Babylon does not have a center, possesses no cars, and its people need no recreation since work has disappeared due to automation.⁵¹ While the conception of the “ville verte,” the Modernist “green town where well-spaced

“city for isolated individuals covering vast areas with low-density population (dispersion),” or a “city dedicated to public life with collective amenities (concentration).” *Id.* at 14.

⁴⁶ Through his urban proposal and his work in the CIAM, Le Corbusier proposed the CIAM Grille, a tool for urban analysis that focused on the points of dwelling, circulation, recreation, and work. For more on the CIAM Grille and the urban values it fomented, see ERIC MUMFORD, *CIAM DISCOURSE ON URBANISM, 1928–1960* (2000).

⁴⁷ In his project for a spatial Paris, Yona Friedman draws the scaffoldings and structures of his new form of urbanism over photographs of Paris. For more, see Friedman, *supra* note 44, at 18–29.

⁴⁸ Challenging the traditional form of the European city, Constant proposes a “network of sectors” that will “span the globe.” Mark Wigley, *The City of the Future: HP-Talk with Constant about New Babylon (1966)*, in *EXIT UTOPIA: ARCHITECTURAL PROVOCATION 1956–76*, at 12 (Martin van Schaik & Otakar Macel eds., 2004). He claims to have “abandoned the idea of the city as a kind of node,” while “thinking about a very open structure, entirely coherent, so that” one can “travel through it, and with all the fragments of the landscape integrated within.” *Id.*

⁴⁹ Against the Modernist city (as designed in the multiple plans of Le Corbusier) as a center for production focused around the idea of work, the New Babylon Constant aims to create a city for a time in which “investments in automated production facilities become more economical than wages, investments in human productive forces,” and people “are liberated, en masse, from their duties and obligations,” a “type of society” in which man will “play with his life, rather than partition it according to the demands of the struggle of existence.” *Id.* at 10–12.

⁵⁰ Constant, *Another City for Another Life*, in *THEORY OF THE DÉRIVE AND OTHER SITUATIONIST WRITINGS ON THE CITY 92* (Liberio Andreotti & Xavier Costa eds., 1996).

⁵¹ Wigley, *supra* note 48.

and isolated skyscrapers must necessarily reduce the direct relations and common action of men.”⁵² Constant renders conurbation for the “direct relation of surroundings and behavior to be produced.”⁵³ In New Babylon, the Homo Ludens (human the player) lives with total freedom to create “his surroundings while exploring his own creation” in “an uninterrupted process of creation and re-creation.”⁵⁴

In 1956, Victor Gruen’s Southdale Center, the first air conditioned, enclosed shopping mall, opens to the public in a Minneapolis suburb.⁵⁵ Southdale Center is the first of a series of buildings that, like New Babylon and Paris Spatale, create an artificially conditioned environment that liberates the users from the complications of the city.⁵⁶ A fabricated urban condition as an antidote to the current state of the city, Southdale Center is a shelter from crime, dirt, unemployment, and any kind of socio-political or environmental problem.⁵⁷ The shopping mall presents the ultimate achievement of commercial architecture. An anti-urbanist strategy, Southdale Center is the architectural climax of consumer culture, a form of contained Urbanism as free space for commercial transactions.

The Shopping Mall—and with it the suburban revolution—brings into existence a new type of facsimile urban reality. Enclosed in a cluster of walls and

⁵² Paul Hammond, *Another City for Another Life*, INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE 3 (Dec. 1959), <https://www.cdcc.vt.edu/sionline/si/another.html>.

⁵³ Constant, *supra* note 50.

⁵⁴ *International Situationniste #1*, in THEORY OF THE DÉRIVE AND OTHER SITUATIONIST WRITINGS ON THE CITY 69 (Liberio Andreotti & Xavier Costa eds., 1996).

⁵⁵ VICTOR GRUEN, SHOPPING TOWN: DESIGNING THE CITY IN SUBURBAN AMERICA 265–88 (Annette Baldauf trans., 2017).

⁵⁶ “Inspired by the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan, Gruen designed the first enclosed, temperature-controlled shopping environment.” *Id.* at 272.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

In 1956 Gruen convinced the family owners of a leading department store in Minnesota to commission his firm for the development of a retail complex that would meet the needs of suburbanites. Gruen and his team suggested building an “entire new community,” that is, a city unto itself. The Dayton family acquired 463 acres of land in Edina, southwest of Minneapolis, and Gruen and his team realized a project that comprised houses, apartment buildings, a park, a medical center, a lake, highways, schools, and, finally, a fully enclosed shopping mall.

Id.

juxtaposed corridors, the flexible existence of the Mall creates an open-ended landscape of for-profit programmatic possibilities. The Mall is a forced marriage between Modernist utopianism and capitalist pragmatism. As long as they respond to the construction of a social class with purchase power, these new programmatic mutations are capable of accommodating all kinds of uses, from theme parks, to museums, housing, working, and recreation.

In a premonition of historical (and materialist) proportions, Southdale Center could be seen as the big bang in the expanding universe of de-urbanization and now even smart cities. The privatization of public spaces has been reclaiming the tools and strategies to make cities, perpetuating social inequality and cancelling any form of ambitious reformulation of the city as a public space for collective living.⁵⁸ While Brasilia, Chandigarh, Paris Spatiale, and even New Babylon represent the hopes of ideal forms of urbanism, the displacement of the state as a sponsor by market-driven private investment renders a gentrified future of proliferating Hudson Yards and homogeneous predictively policed smart cities controlled by Silicon Valley Conglomerates and Multinational Technology Companies. Although master planned by single authors, because of their public intentions and infrastructures, cities like Brasilia could be potentially reclaimed by the commons (even it requires de orchestrated mobilization of popular force). Paradoxically, while designed by anonymous conglomerates, the smart city shaped after the Shopping Mall remains—by means of its rigidity, so-called safety, homogeneity, and dependence on data—not only an inaccessible barrier, but a dangerous one for the majority of the subaltern world.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Much has been written on the latent problems inherent in the loss of public space and its repercussions on already disenfranchised communities through over policing and gentrification. See Manissa M. Maharawal, *Black Lives Matter, Gentrification and the Security State in the San Francisco Bay Area*, 17 ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY 338–64 (2017); Setha M. Low, *The Erosion of Public Space and the Public Realm: Paranoia, Surveillance and Privatization in New York City*, 18 CITY & SOC’Y 43–49 (2006); MICHAEL SORKIN, VARIATIONS ON A THEME PARK: THE NEW AMERICAN CITY AND THE END OF PUBLIC SPACE, (1992).

⁵⁹ It is not a coincidence that smart cities have been studying how shopping malls like the Mall of America operate. John R. Quain, *Cities Looking To Get Smarter Take a Lesson From an Iconic Shopping Mall*, DIGITAL TRENDS (Dec. 18, 2018), <https://www.digitaltrends.com/features/bluetooth-beacons-and-rfid-bands-the-mall-of-america-is-a-really-smart-city/>; see Doug Peeples, *Is Predictive Policing Right for Your Smart City?*, SMART CITIES COUNCIL (Nov. 10, 2016), <https://smartcitiescouncil.com/article/predictive-policing-right-your-smart-city/>; Tate Ryan-Mosley & Jennifer Strong, *The Activist Dismantling Racist Police Algorithms*, MIT TECH. REV. (June 5, 2020), <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/06/05/1002709/the-activist-dismantling-racist-police-algorithms/>.

While the many forms of ideal Urbanism have for the majority of the last 120 years been designed by white men at the expense of all the “others,” new imaginaries—as the ones claimed by the many international calls to defund and abolish the police and protect Black, brown, and indigenous life in cities—could propel critiques on the current city while providing new imaginaries of radically inclusive urban forms to come. What the many clashes of the police and paramilitary forces against anti-racist and anti-police brutality protesters in cities around the United States show is that cities are being surveilled and policed as if they were private property which continues a legacy connected to the slave patrols.⁶⁰

On the other hand, as in the controlled environment of the shopping mall where the goal is to achieve smooth financial transactions, the smart city relies on private interests as well as racist and capitalist technologies to move us into an even more exclusive future.⁶¹ Now that the collective call is out there for us to imagine better cities together, why do governments and tech companies want to delegate planning to machines and algorithms?

V. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

What can be done now, as we wait for radical institutional transformation? What can we do as designers, thinkers, and citizens (inhabitants of cities) if the authoritative power of the market refuses to come voluntarily to the negotiation table? How can we reimagine the city from below? What is to be done after all the ideal plans have been humiliated into public submission, exhausted and ridiculed out of existence? What can we do when we are called utopian, naïve, or unpragmatically idealistic? Can history provide a background reference to our current situation? Can we address the pressing social, environmental, political questions of our time with planning and designing skills acquired from the very settler-colonial institutions responsible for creating and consolidating the current power structures, creating and maintaining the current inequality?

⁶⁰ See Julian Haydan & Jack Hurbanis, *History of Policing in America: Starts and Ends With Protecting Private Property*, WUWM (June 2, 2020), <https://www.wuwm.com/post/history-policing-america-starts-and-ends-protecting-private-property#stream/0>. A series of articles on the use of unmarked vans to arrest civilians have been published in recent months, including arrests made in the city of Pittsburgh and Kenosha, Wisconsin. See Laurence Tribe, *'A Profoundly Un-American Attack on Civil Society': Why Trump's Paramilitary Force Is Unconstitutional*, WBUR (July 23, 2020), <https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2020/07/23/trump-federal-police-portland-laurence-tribe>; Rob Mentzer, *Police, Federal Agents Use Unmarked Vehicles in Arrests of Kenosha Protesters*, WIS. PUB. RADIO (Aug. 27, 2020), <https://www.wpr.org/police-federal-agents-use-unmarked-vehicles-arrests-kenosha-protesters>.

⁶¹ Will Douglas Heaven, *Predictive Policing Algorithms Are Racist. They Need to be Dismantled*, MIT TECH. REV. (July 17, 2020), <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/17/1005396/predictive-policing-algorithms-racist-dismantled-machine-learning-bias-criminal-justice/>.

What are we to do when all that we have left is an urbanism that operates in the realm of anti-capitalist realism—after realizing that it acknowledges the unsustainable character of a knowledge and material economy made possible via the inhumane occupation of indigenous land and the brutal materialization of anti-Black racism and its aftermath? Can we look back one hundred years to understand the fuel that fires urban ambition, and inspired by the global calls for racial, economic, and ecological justice dream of different, more solidary ways to live in the city? Can we propose ideal urban plans from the subjectivities so absent from the great narratives in the 20th century? In the times of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter, are we able to respond to the calling of the times and build cities to live together? In the face of modern urbanization as the de facto condition of human inhabitation, can we make new forms of Black, indigenous, transfeminist, queer, and Two-spirit, ecologically just Modernisms?

If we are not allowed to imagine a new newness in the form of radically different cities, can we look back half a century to understand the similarities between our era and the 1960s—in the midst of political upheavals, with the loss of icons (Patrice Lumumba, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr.), failed colonial invasions, political coups, and potential missile strikes—the era of Black Power and Civil Rights? Could we find in the echoes of the events post-1968 a form of architecture devised as ideological critique? Can we think about the city while unmasking its power structures, its shortcomings, its miscarriages, and failures, but also its potential as radically accessible, demilitarized social condensers?

Once idealism is challenged, can we learn from the critiques of Narrative Architecture projects while challenging the one-liner arguments of Superstudio and Archizoom as we call for new models of cities in the way to “continue the miscarried dialogue by other means?”⁶² If heroic forms of urbanism are declared infeasible, can we propose plans ostensibly anti-heroic? When the urban models of exorbitant Black infant mortality rates, failed police reforms, and white supremacist vigilantes continue to fail us, are we able to render urban imaginaries of police abolition and mutual aid?⁶³

If we are not allowed to imagine “1,001 other concepts of the city,” can we summon the Diogenesian Kynic and magnify the implicit dogmas and hierarchical

⁶² MICHAEL ELDRED, *CRITIQUE OF CYNICAL REASON* 15 (1987) (“Ideology critique means the polemical continuation of the miscarried dialogue through other means.”).

⁶³ Angela Y. Davis, *Why Arguments Against Abolition Inevitably Fail*, *LEVEL* (Oct. 6, 2020), <https://level.medium.com/why-arguments-against-abolition-inevitably-fail-991342b8d042>.

divisions of the elitist, anti-Black city, accentuate the dehumanizing character of market-driven urbanism, and highlight the disempowering structures of urban policy-making that end up in segregated, impoverished, and violent parts of the city?⁶⁴

If we are not allowed to reimagine what Plan Voisin, Golden Lane, Chandigarh, or Brasilia could have been if designed by its citizens, and the people more affected by it, can we turn to the provocations of the Kynical architectures post-1968 and reformulate ironic projects—like the Continuous Monuments, the Fundamental Acts of Architecture, No-Stop City, and Exodus of the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture—as Urbanisms of the oppressed or as Narrative stories aiming to destabilize current hegemonic discourses?

If institutions create cartographies of invisibility, could we use our skills, knowledge, and collective intelligence to outline new, anti-racist, diverse, radically inclusive maps? After all, can we dream, draw, plan, and execute a city for us all?

⁶⁴ Just like Diogenes the Kynic used to walk with the lantern during the day searching for an honest man, a Kynical Architecture uses irony as an allegorical lantern while searching for an honest architecture that reveals its ideological makeup. In the introduction of our book *NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE: A KYNICAL MANIFESTO*, we propose how to employ alternative strategies of representation in order to expose and question

the unfairness of a historically classist profession, the intransigent conservatism of academia, the crapstraction of graphs, rankings, and statistics used to justify the perpetual arbitrariness of the status-quo, the embedded class struggle within Architecture, the socio-economic fractures perpetuated by Architecture, and the post-colonial, feminist, and queer arguments left out of this or that hegemonic Architectural ideology.

GARCIA & FRANKOWSKI, *supra* note 30, at 14–27.

