

for Delfina and Her Generation

Hope is Memory that Desires
(Balzac)

Spaces of Hope

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Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
List of plates	ix

Introduction

1 The difference a generation makes	3
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Part 1

Uneven geographical developments

2 The geography of the <i>Manifesto</i>	21
3 'Working Men of All Countries, Unite!'	41
4 Contemporary globalization	53
5 Uneven geographical developments and universal rights	73

Part 2

On bodies and political persons in global space

6 The body as an accumulation strategy	97
7 Body politics and the struggle for a living wage	117

Part 3

The utopian moment

8 The spaces of Utopia	133
9 Dialectical utopianism	182

Part 4

Conversations on the plurality of alternatives

10 On architects, bees, and 'species being'	199
11 Responsibilities towards nature and human nature	213
12 The insurgent architect at work	233

Appendix: Edilia, or 'Make of it what you will'	257
---	-----

Bibliography	282
--------------	-----

Index	289
-------	-----

'City air makes one free' it was once said. That idea took shape as serfs escaped their bonds to claim political and personal freedoms within the self-governing legal entities of medieval cities. The association between city life and personal freedoms, including the freedom to explore, invent, create, and define new ways of life, has a long and intricate history. Generations of migrants have sought the city as a haven from rural repressions. The 'city' and 'citizenship' tie neatly together within this formulation. But the city is equally the site of anxiety and anomie. It is the place of the anonymous alien, the underclass (or, as our predecessors preferred it, 'the dangerous classes'), the site of an incomprehensible 'otherness' (immigrants, gays, the mentally disturbed, the culturally different, the racially marked), the terrain of pollution (moral as well as physical) and of terrible corruptions, the place of the damned that needs to be enclosed and controlled, making 'city' and 'citizen' as politically opposed in the public imagination as they are etymologically linked.

This polarization of positive and negative images has its geography. Traditionally it registers as a division between secular and sacred space within the city. Later, the supposed virtues of the countryside and the small town were often contrasted with the evils of the city. When, for example, the rural army of reaction was assembled on the outskirts of Paris in 1871 poised to engage in the savage slaughter of some 30,000 communards, they were first persuaded that their mission was to reclaim the city from the forces of satan. When President Ford denied aid to New York City in 1975 in the midst of its fiscal crisis ('Ford to City: "Drop Dead!"' read the famous newspaper headline), the plaudits of virtuous and God-fearing small-town America were everywhere to be heard. In contemporary America, the image of the respectable God-fearing suburbs (predominantly white and middle class) plays against the inner city as a hell-hole where all the damned (with plenty of underclass racial coding thrown in) are properly confined. Imaginings of this sort take a terrible toll. When, for example, it was proposed to disperse some 200 families from the inner city of Baltimore to the suburbs as part of a 'Movement to Opportunity,' the suburbanites rose up in wrath to stop the program, using a language that sounded as if representatives of the devil were about to be released from their inner-city prison and let loose as a corrupting power in their midst. Religion doesn't always have to play this way of course. It also powers many an organization (like BUILD) that seeks to defend the poor, improve communities, and stabilize family life in the crumbling inner cities.

None of these imaginaries is innocent. Nor should we expect them to be. 'We make the house and the house makes us' is a saying that goes back to the Greeks. This was well understood by Robert Park (1967, 3), a founding figure of urban sociology, when he wrote:

[I]t is in the urban environment – in a world which man himself has made – that mankind first achieved an intellectual life and acquired those characteristics which most distinguish him from the lower animals and from primitive man. For the city and the urban environment represent man's most consistent and, on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in more after his heart's desire. But if the city is the world which man created, it is the world in which he is henceforth condemned to live. Thus, indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself.

While we can reasonably aspire to intervene in that process of 'remaking ourselves' and perhaps even to acquire some 'clear sense of the nature of (our) task,' we cannot leap outside of the dialectic and imagine we are not embedded and limited by the institutional worlds and built environments we have already created. Yet we cannot evade the question of the imagination either for, as Marx (1976 edition, 283–4) observed (in a foundational statement that we will later examine in much greater depth): what distinguishes human labor and the worst of architects from the best of bees is that architects erect a structure in the imagination before realizing it in material form. When, therefore, we contemplate urban futures we must always do battle with a wide range of emotive and symbolic meanings that both inform and muddle our sense of 'the nature of our task.' As we collectively produce our cities, so we collectively produce ourselves. Projects concerning what we want our cities to be are, therefore, projects concerning human possibilities, who we want, or, perhaps even more pertinently, who we do not want to become. Every single one of us has something to think, say, and do about that. How our individual and collective imagination works is, therefore, crucial to defining the labor of urbanization. Critical reflection on our imaginaries entails, however, both confronting the hidden utopianism and resurrecting it in order to act as conscious architects of our fates rather than as 'helpless puppets' of the institutional and imaginative worlds we inhabit. If, as Unger (1987b, 8) puts it, we accept that 'society is made and imagined,' then we can also believe that it can be 'remade and reimagined.'

3 Utopianism as spatial play

Any project to revitalize utopianism needs to consider how and with what consequences it has worked as both a constructive and destructive force for change in our historical geography.

Consider Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. More's aim, and this is characteristic, was social harmony and stability (in contrast to the chaotic state of affairs in England at that time). To this end, he excluded the potentially

disruptive social forces of money, private property, wage labor, exploitation (the workday is six hours), internal (though not external) commodity exchange, capital accumulation, and the market process (though not a market place). The happy perfection of the social and moral order depends upon these exclusions. All of this is secured, as Lukerman and Porter (1976) point out, by way of a tightly organized spatial form (Plate 8.18). Utopia is an artificially created island which functions as an isolated, coherently organized, and largely closed-space economy (though closely monitored relations with the outside world are posited). The internal spatial ordering of the island strictly regulates a stabilized and unchanging social process. Put crudely, spatial form controls temporality, an imagined geography controls the possibility of social change and history.

Not all forms of temporality are erased. The time of 'eternal return', of recurrent ritual, is preserved. This cyclical time, as Gould (1988) remarks, expresses 'immanence, a set of principles so general that they exist outside of time and record a universal character, a common bond, among all of nature's rich particulars,' including, in this instance, all the inhabitants of Utopia. It is the dialectic of social process that is repressed. Time's arrow, 'the great principle of history,' is excluded in favor of perpetuating a happy stationary state. No future needs to be envisaged because the desired state is already achieved. In Bacon's *New Atlantis*, a utopian text written shortly after More's, the King decides that society has achieved such a state of perfection that no further social change is needed. In Bacon's case, technological change and new knowledges are not only deemed possible but actively sought. But their implantation is tightly regulated by the wise men of Salomon's House (an institution interpreted as a forerunner of the Royal Society). The effect is to progress towards the technological and learned perfection of an already perfected social order. More, by contrast, evokes nostalgia for a mythological past, a perfected golden age of small-town living, a stationary-state moral order and a hierarchical mode of social relating that is non-conflictual and harmonious. This nostalgic strain is characteristic of much utopian thinking, even that projected into the future and incorporating futuristic technologies. As we shall see, it has important consequences for how, if at all, such schemes get translated into material fact.

There are many ways to understand More's text and the numerous utopian schemas produced subsequently (such as those of Bacon and Campanella). I isolate here just one aspect: the relationship proposed between space and time, between geography and history. All these forms of Utopia can be characterized as 'Utopias of spatial form' since the temporality of the social process, the dialectics of social change – real history – are excluded, while social stability is assured by a fixed spatial form. Louis



Plate 8.18 Thomas More's Utopia: an exercise in spatial play. Holbein's 'Frontispiece' to More's Utopia captures some of its spatial structure and its consequent spatial controls over the moral and political order.

Marin (1984) considers More's Utopia as a species of 'spatial play.' More in effect selects one out of many possible spatial orderings as a way to represent and fix a particular moral order. This is not a unique thought. Robert Park (1967), for example, wrote a compelling essay in 1925 on the city as 'a spatial pattern and a moral order' and insisted upon an inner connection between the two. But what Marin opens up for us is the idea that the free play of the imagination, 'utopics as spatial play,' became, with More's initiative, a fertile means to explore and express a vast range of competing ideas about social relationships, moral orderings, political-economic systems, and the like.

The infinite array of possible spatial orderings holds out the prospect of an infinite array of possible social worlds. What is so impressive about subsequent utopian plans when taken together is their variety. Feminist utopias of the nineteenth century (Hayden, 1981) look different from those supposed to facilitate easier and healthier living for the working class and all sorts of anarchist, ecologically-sensitive, religious, and other alternatives define and secure their moral objectives by appealing to some specific spatial order (Plates 8.19, 8.20 and 8.21). The range of proposals – and of spatialities – testifies to the capacity of the human imagination to explore socio-spatial alternatives (see, e.g., Bloch, 1988; Kumar, 1987; 1991; Levitas, 1990; Sandercock, 1998). Marin's notion of 'spatial play'

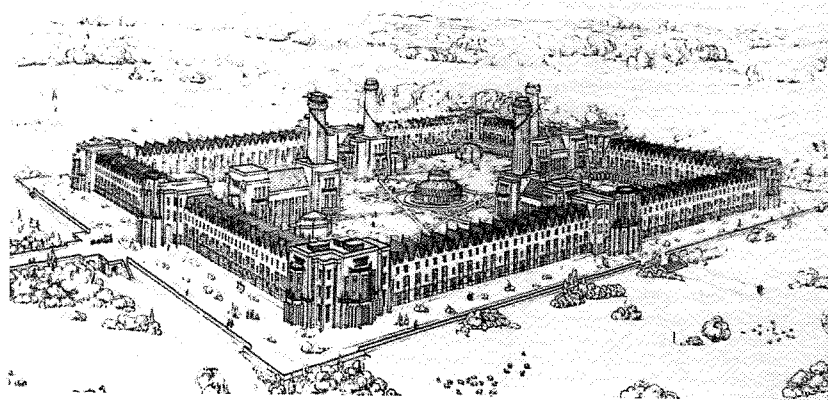


Plate 8.19 A design for Robert Owen's New Harmony. Robert Owen, one of the most prolific and fecund of utopian writers and activists in Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century, actually put some of this utopian schemes into practice. Stedman Whitewell proposed the above design for Owen's New Harmony Settlement in the United States.

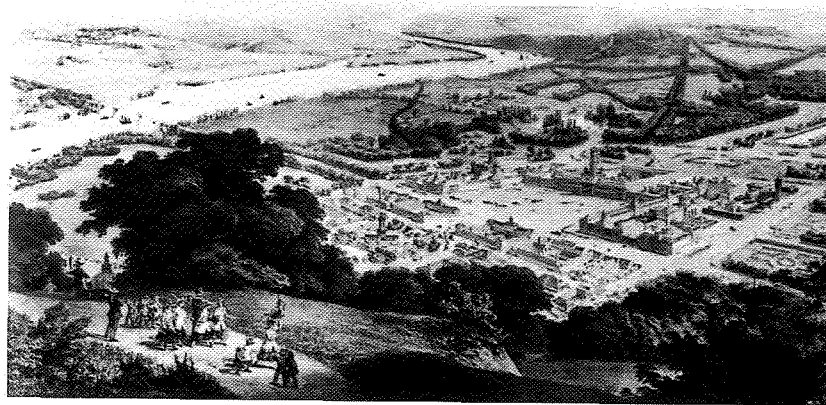


Plate 8.20 Fourier's ideal city. Fourier drew for inspiration upon the layout of Versailles in his plan for a collectively organized communist industrial society dominated by communal production and communal living arrangements.

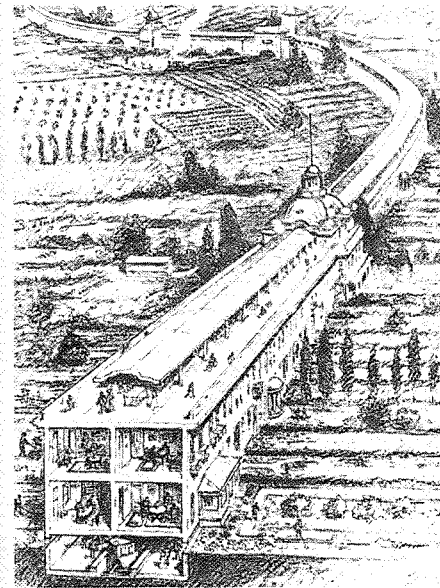


Plate 8.21 Edward Chambliss: Roadtown. The new systems of transportation led many designers to break with the traditional circular motif in favor of linear settlements oriented to major communication links. In this design two levels of dwellings with cooperative housekeeping arrangements spread throughout are underlain by a 'soundless' monorail and overlain with an extensive open promenade. This design, by Edward Chambliss from 1910, sparked considerable interest in women's journals of the time.

neatly captures the free play of the imagination in utopian schemes. Reversion to this utopian mode appears to offer a way out of Unger's dilemma.

Alas matters are not so simple. Imaginative free play is inextricably bound to the existence of authority and restrictive forms of governance. What Foucault regards as 'a panoptican effect' through the creation of spatial systems of surveillance and control (polis = police) is also incorporated into utopian schemes. This dialectic between imaginative free play and authority and control throws up serious problems. The rejection, in recent times, of utopianism rests in part on an acute awareness of its inner connection to authoritarianism and totalitarianism (More's *Utopia* can easily be read this way). But rejection of utopianism on such grounds has also had the unfortunate effect of curbing the free play of the imagination in the search for alternatives. Confronting this relationship between spatial play and authoritarianism must, therefore, lie at the heart of any regenerative politics that attempts to resurrect utopian ideals. In pursuing this objective, it is useful to look at the history of how utopias have been materialized through political-economic practices: it is here that the dialectic of free play of the imagination and authoritarianism comes to life as a fundamental dilemma in human affairs.

4 Materializations of utopias of spatial form

All the great urban planners, engineers, and architects of the twentieth century set about their tasks by combining an intense imaginary of some alternative world (both physical and social) with a practical concern for engineering and re-engineering urban and regional spaces according to radically new designs. While some, such as Ebenezer Howard (Plate 8.22), Le Corbusier (Plate 8.23), and Frank Lloyd Wright (Plate 8.24) set up the imaginative context, a host of practitioners set about realizing those dreams in bricks and concrete, highways and tower blocks, cities and suburbs, building versions of the *Villes Radieuses* or Broadacre City (Plate 8.24), whole new towns, intimate scale communities, urban villages, or whatever. Even when critics of the authoritarianism and blandness of these realized utopian dreams attacked them, they usually did so by contrasting their preferred version of spatial play with the spatial orderings that others had achieved.

When, for example, Jane Jacobs (1961) launched her famous critique of modernist processes of city planning and urban renewal (damning as she did so Le Corbusier, the Charter of Athens, Robert Moses, and the great blight of dullness they and their acolytes had unleashed upon post-war cities), she in effect set up her own preferred version of spatial play by appeal to a nostalgic conception of an intimate and diverse ethnic neighborhood in which artisan forms of entrepreneurial activity and employment and interactive face-to-face forms of social relating predominated. Jacobs was in her own way every bit as utopian as the utopianism she attacked. She proposed to play with the space in a different and more intimate (scaled-down) way in order to achieve a different kind of moral purpose. Her version of spatial play contained its own authoritarianism hidden within the organic notion of neighborhood and community as a basis for social life. The apparatus of surveillance and control that she regarded as so benevolent, because it provided much-needed security, struck others, such as Sennett (1970), as oppressive and demeaning. And while she placed great emphasis upon social diversity, it was only a certain kind of controlled diversity that could really work in the happy way she envisaged. Pursuit of Jacobs's goals could easily justify all those 'intimately designed' gated communities and exclusionary communitarian movements that now so fragment cities across the United States.

This brings us to perhaps the most intriguing of Marin's categories: that of 'degenerate utopias.' The example that Marin used was Disneyland, a supposedly happy, harmonious, and non-conflictual space set aside from the 'real' world 'outside' in such a way as to soothe and mollify, to entertain, to invent history and to cultivate a nostalgia for some mythical past, to

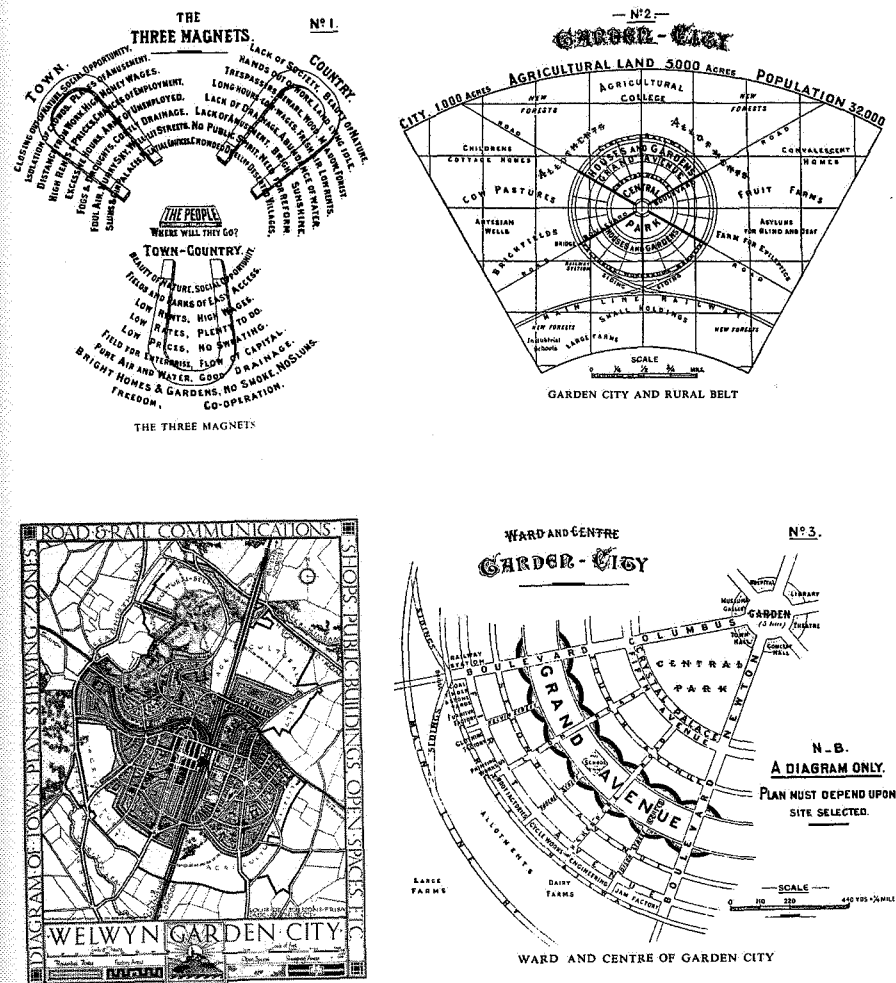


Plate 8.22 Ebenezer Howard: from spatial ideals to new towns. Ebenezer Howard, inspired by his reading of Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward, set out to construct a whole new framework for urban living in his famous texts of 1898 and 1902. The 'new towns movement' that he sparked has arguably been one of the most influential strains of urban planning thought in the twentieth century.



Plate 8.23 Le Corbusier's dream of the ideal city: theory and practice. Le Corbusier's 'Dream for Paris' of the 1920s became the basis of the urban theory later incorporated in the very influential Charter of Athens. It appears largely realized in the achieved design for Stuyvesant Town, New York.

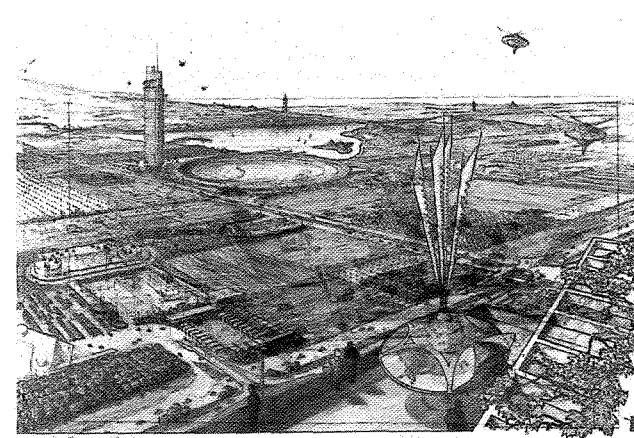


Plate 8.24 Frank Lloyd Wright's plan for Broadacre City. Concerned about the effects of the social collapse of the 1930s and influenced by the abundance of land in the American West and Midwest in particular, Frank Lloyd Wright proposed an alternative organization of space that permitted much greater degrees of personal independence while retaining communicative connections. The landscape he proposed bears a certain kind of corrupted resemblance to contemporary suburban sprawl (see Plate 8.4) which incorporates all the negatives of Wright's design without supporting any of its positive features.

perpetuate the fetish of commodity culture rather than to critique it. Disneyland eliminates the troubles of actual travel by assembling the rest of the world, properly sanitized and mythologized, into one place of pure fantasy containing multiple spatial orders. The dialectic is repressed and stability and harmony are secured through intense surveillance and control. Internal spatial ordering coupled with hierarchical forms of authority preclude conflict or deviation from a social norm. Disneyland offers a fantasy journey into a world of spatial play. And in its later incarnations, as at Epcot, it offers a futuristic utopia of technological purity and unsurpassed human power to control the world (Disney moved, as it were, from More to Bacon for his inspiration). All of this is degenerate, in Marin's view, because it offers no critique of the existing state of affairs on the outside. It merely perpetuates the fetish of commodity culture and technological wizardry in a pure, sanitized, and a-historical form. But, and this is where Marin's idea becomes problematic, Disneyland is an actual built environment and not an imagined place of the sort that More and Bacon produced. This immediately raises the question: can any utopianism of spatial form that gets materialized be anything other than 'degenerate' in the sense that Marin has in mind? Perhaps Utopia can never be realized without destroying itself. If so, then this profoundly affects how any utopianism of spatial form can function as a practical social force within political-economic life.

Generalizing from Marin, it can be argued that we are surrounded by a whole host of degenerate utopias of which Disneyland is but the most spectacular exemplar. When 'the malling of America' became the vogue, pioneers like James Rouse (Plates 8.8 and 8.12), who incidentally built his prototype mall in a Baltimore suburb and later returned to build the pavilions that anchor the Inner Harbor renewal, explicitly recognized that Disney had invented a formula for successful retailing. The construction of safe, secure, well-ordered, easily accessible, and above all pleasant, soothing, and non-conflictual environments for shopping was the key to commercial success. The shopping mall was conceived of as a fantasy world in which the commodity reigned supreme. And if homeless old folks started to regard it as a warm place to rest, youths found it a great place to socialize, and political agitators took to passing out their pamphlets, then the apparatus of surveillance and control (with hidden cameras and security agents) made sure nothing untoward happened (Plate 8.9).

As Benjamin (1969) remarked on the Parisian arcades of the nineteenth century, the whole environment seemed designed to induce nirvana rather than critical awareness. And many other cultural institutions – museums and heritage centers, arenas for spectacle, exhibitions, and festivals – seem to have as their aim the cultivation of nostalgia, the production of sanitized collective memories, the nurturing of uncritical aesthetic sensibilities, and the absorption of future possibilities into a non-conflictual arena that is eternally present. The continuous spectacles of commodity culture, including the commodification of the spectacle itself, play their part in fomenting political indifference. It is either a stupefied nirvana or a totally blasé attitude (the fount of all indifference) that is aimed at (Simmel [1971] long ago pointed to the blasé attitude as one of the responses to excessive stimuli in urban settings). The multiple degenerate utopias that now surround us – the shopping malls and the 'bourgeois' commercialized utopias of the suburbs being paradigmatic – do as much to signal the end of history as the collapse of the Berlin Wall ever did. They instantiate rather than critique the idea that 'there is no alternative,' save those given by the conjoining of technological fantasies, commodity culture, and endless capital accumulation (Plate 8.8).

James Rouse, incidentally, in one of those local ironies for which Baltimore is quietly famous, returned to the inner city after he retired to be an active participant, through his Enterprise Foundation, in a program of neighborhood revitalization in a community called Sandtown Winchester. There, his activities are memorialized (Plate 8.12) as he sought paternalistically to help rebuild a community undermined in part through the very processes of suburbanization and commercialization that he had in his business incarnation done so much to promote.

But how could it happen that the critical and oppositional force given in utopian schemes so easily degenerates in the course of materialization into compliance with the prevailing order? There are, I think, two basic answers to this question. Let me unpack them by a closer look at what is now held out as one of the leading candidates to transform our urban futures, the movement called 'the new urbanism.'

Duany (1997), one of its leading lights, 'feels strongly that urbanism, if not architecture, can affect society.' Getting the spatial play right, in the manner proposed by the new urbanism will, he argues, help rectify matters. His proposals evidence a nostalgia for small-town America, its solid sense of community, its institutions, its mixed land uses and high densities, and its ideologists (such as Raymond Unwin). Bring all this back in urban design and the quality of urban living and of social life will be immeasurably improved. This argument is buttressed by appeal to a long line of critical commentary (Kunstler, 1993; 1996) on the 'placelessness' and the lack of 'authenticity' in American cities (soulless sprawling suburbs, mindless edge cities, collapsing and fragmenting city cores fill in the pieces of this dispeptic view). The new urbanism does battle with such monstrous deformities (Katz, 1994). How to recuperate history, tradition, collective memory, and the sense of belonging and identity that goes with them becomes part of its holy grail. This movement does not, therefore, lack a critical utopian edge.

The new urbanism offers something positive as well as nostalgic. It does battle with conventional wisdoms entrenched in a wide range of institutions (developers, bankers, governments, transport interests, etc.). In the tradition of Mumford, it is willing to think about the region as a whole and to pursue a much more organic, holistic ideal of what cities and regions might be about. The postmodern penchant for fragmentation is rejected. It attempts intimate and integrated forms of development that by-pass the rather stultifying conception of the horizontally zoned and large-platted city. This liberates an interest in the street and civic architecture as arenas of sociality. It also permits new ways of thinking about the relation between work and living, and facilitates an ecological dimension to design that goes beyond superior environmental quality as a consumer good. It pays attention to the thorny problem of what to do with the profligate energy requirements of the automobile-based form of urbanization and suburbanization that has predominated in the United States since World War II. Some see it as a truly revolutionary force for urban change in the United States today.

But there are problems with materializing this utopian vision. The movement presumes that America is 'full of people who long to live in real communities, but who have only the dimmest idea of what that means in

terms of physical design' (Kunstler, 1996). Community will rescue us from the deadening world of social dissolution, grab-it-yourself materialism, and individualized selfish market-oriented greed. But what kind of 'community' is understood here? Harking back to a mythological past of small-town America carries its own dangerous freight. The new urbanism connects to a facile contemporary attempt to transform large and teeming cities, so seemingly out of control, into an interlinked series of 'urban villages' where, it is believed, everyone can relate in a civil and urbane fashion to everyone else. In Britain, Prince Charles has led the way on this emotional charger towards 'the urban village' as the locus of urban regeneration. Leon Krier, an oft-quoted scion of the new urbanism, is one of his key architectural outriders. And the idea attracts, drawing support from marginalized ethnic populations, impoverished and embattled working-class populations left high and dry through deindustrialization, as well as from middle- and upper-class nostalgics who think of it as a civilized form of real-estate development encompassing sidewalk cafes, pedestrian precincts, and Laura Ashley shops.

The darker side of this communitarianism remains unstated. The spirit of community has long been held as an antidote to threats of social disorder, class war and revolutionary violence (More pioneered such thinking). Well-founded communities often exclude, define themselves against others, erect all sorts of keep-out signs (if not tangible walls), internalize surveillance, social controls, and repression. Community has often been a barrier to, rather than facilitator of, social change. The founding ideology of the new urbanism is both utopian and deeply fraught. In its practical materialization, the new urbanism builds an image of community and a rhetoric of place-based civic pride and consciousness for those who do not need it, while abandoning those that do to their 'underclass' fate. Most of the projects that have materialized are 'greenfield' developments for the affluent (including, of course, Prince Charles's own venture in the construction of Poundbury in Dorset, Plate 8.25). They help make the suburbs or the ex-urbs better places to live (Langdon, 1994). But they do little or nothing to help revitalize decaying urban cores. Scully (1994), a sceptical ally of the movement, doubts if the new urbanism can ever get to the crux of urban impoverishment and decay. In commenting on Seaside, that icon of the new urbanism, he notes that it has 'succeeded beyond any other work of architecture in our time . . . in creating an image of community, a symbol of human culture's place in nature's vastness' (the same is now being said, by the way, of Prince Charles's Poundbury). But, Scully continues:

[O]ne cannot help but hope that the lessons of Seaside and of the other new towns now taking shape can be applied to the problem of housing for the



Plate 8.25 Poundbury, Dorset. Prince Charles has led the way in a movement that calls for the construction of 'urban villages' as a solution to big city problems. He has put these ideals to work on one of his own estates close to Dorchester, and constructed a high density neighborhood appealing to the nostalgia of vernacular styles and small-town intimacies that were supposed to characterize a bygone era.

poor. That is where community is most needed and where it has been most disastrously destroyed. Center city would truly have to be broken down into its intrinsic neighborhoods if this were to take place within it. Sadly, it would all have been much easier to do before Redevelopment, when the basic structure of neighborhoods was still there . . . It is therefore a real question whether 'center city' as we know it can ever be shaped into the kind of place most Americans want to live in. (229)

The presumption here is that neighborhoods are in some sense 'intrinsic,' that the proper form of cities is some 'structure of neighborhoods,' that 'neighborhood' is equivalent to 'community' and 'community' is what most Americans want and need (whether they know it or not). It is further presumed that action at the scale defined by this new urbanism is effective and sufficient to solve problems that exist at all other scales. The nostalgic and spatially limited strain of the utopian dream resurfaces.

All of this happens because the 'new urbanism' must, if it is to be realized, embed its projects in a restrictive set of social processes. Duany (1997), for example, declares he has no interest in designing projects that will not get built. His concern for low-income populations is limited by a minimum price for new housing units in a place like Kentlands (Plate 8.26), not too far from Baltimore, of \$150,000 (nearly ten times the median income in Baltimore). His interest in the suburbs arose simply because this is where most new projects can be built. Suburban growth, he argues, is



Plate 8.26 Utopian nostalgia: the commercialized new urbanism of Kentlands, Maryland. Kentlands, designed by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, is billed as a revolutionary approach to the new urbanism. Placed in the midst of a 'technoburb' (housing the National Bureau of Standards, IBM and several other high tech companies) it offers 'old-fashioned urban planning' with high densities, sidewalks and 'small town charm'. Close to Washington and not far from Baltimore, Kentlands is billed as a stellar example of the 'new urbanism' at work, offering accommodations to more than 5,000 on a totally planned 356 acre site.

Single family homes begin at around \$400,000, townhomes begin at \$250,000 and provision for any low income population does not go below \$150,000 for a condo unit. The high density design offers mainly an eclecticism of architectural styles and white picket fences that echo the strange world of David Lynch's 'Blue Velvet'. The cars (mainly gas-guzzling Sports Utilities Vehicles) are housed better than two-thirds of the world's population and a nod to ecological benevolence is given by the existence of a pond, the preservation of a few patches of woodland and naming the Elementary School after Rachel Carson. It is served by a standard suburban shopping center manned by workers who certainly cannot afford to live in the community they serve. While innovative relative to suburban sprawl, Kentlands sells small town nostalgia in a suburban setting to a very affluent clientele.

'the American way,' buried deep 'in our culture and our tradition' and while he objects strongly to the accusation that he is 'complicit' with power structures and that he panders to popular taste, he also insists that everything he does is designed to create spectacular projects that outperform all others on a commercial basis. This means 'faster permits, less cost, and faster sales.' His version of the new urbanism operates strictly within such parameters.

But who is at fault here? The designer, Duany, or the conditions of the social process that define the parameters of his projects? In practice, most realized Utopias of spatial form have been achieved through the agency of either the state or capital accumulation, with both acting in concert being the norm (this is as true in Singapore and Korea as it is in Britain, Sweden, France, or Australia). It is either that, or moving 'outside' of mainstream social processes (as seemed possible at least in the nineteenth century, with the United States being a favored target for utopian idealists such as Cabet, Robert Owen, and multiple religious movements). Those who took such an outsider path typically suffered a kind of meltdown of their principles, however, as they were absorbed within the mainstream of capital accumulation and the developmental state (something similar happened to the Israeli kibbutz).

The failure of realized utopias of spatial form can just as reasonably be attributed to the processes mobilized to materialize them as to failures of spatial form *per se*. This, as Tafuri (1976) so cogently argues, is what makes an architectural utopianism under present conditions such an utter impossibility. But there is a more fundamental contradiction at work here. Utopias of spatial form are typically meant to stabilize and control the processes that must be mobilized to build them. In the very act of realization, therefore, the historical process takes control of the spatial form that is supposed to control it. This contradiction requires further scrutiny.

5 On the utopianism of social process

If materialized utopias went wrong because of the social processes mobilized in their construction, then the focus switches to questions of process. Can we think of a utopianism of process rather than of spatial form? Idealized schemas of process abound. But we do not usually refer to them as 'utopian.' I want, along with a few select commentators like Polanyi, to break with that convention and consider the utopianism of temporal process alongside the utopianism of spatial form.

The use of the term 'utopian' may seem strange in this context because the word 'Utopia' is usually attached to some place that is no place as well as a happy place. The qualities of place (what might be called 'placefulness')

are important and this means evocation of and close attention to spatial form as a container of social processes and as an expression of moral order. Idealized versions of social processes, in contrast, usually get expressed in purely temporal terms. They are literally bound to no place whatsoever and are typically specified outside of the constraints of spatiality altogether. The qualities of space and place are totally ignored.

We can identify a rich and complicated history of utopias as divergent temporal unfoldings. One obvious candidate is Hegel, whose guiding spirit is rendered material and concrete by a dialectics of transcendence (a dialectics that unfolds on the logic of 'both-and'). Things in themselves move history as they become things for themselves. The end state of history is, interestingly, expressed as a spatialized metaphor. The ethical or aesthetic state is the end point of the unfolding of the World Spirit. Marx sometimes followed this line of thinking though it was not the World Spirit but active class struggle that assumed the guiding role. As classes in themselves become classes for themselves, so history was moved onwards towards the perfected state of a post-revolutionary classless communistic society where even the state ultimately withered away. In both cases (and I obviously simplify) the ultimate stationary state as spatial form (which is unspecifiable in advance) is arrived at through a particular conception of historical process. Whereas More gives us the spatial form but not the process, Hegel and Marx give us their distinctive versions of the temporal process but not the ultimate spatial form.

There is, of course, plenty to protest in such placeless teleologies. Both William Blake and Kierkegaard, for example, insisted that the dialectic should be understood as 'either-or' rather than 'both-and.' The effect is to make history a succession of existential or political choices which have no necessary guiding logic or any clearly identifiable end state (Clark, 1991). Put another way (and this is a crucial point to which I will return), utopias of the social process have the habit of getting lost in the romanticism of endlessly open projects that never have to come to a point of closure (within space and place).

In detail, we find Marx in his political histories and later writings often drawn to a dialectics of 'either-or' rather than the 'both-and' of Hegelian transcendence. His hesitation in supporting the Paris Commune on the grounds that the time was not yet ripe and his sudden switch to support it up to the hilt had everything to do with his double sense of a dialectic that could be 'both-and' or 'either-or.' Marx clearly recognizes the potential consequences of either making a revolution or not in a given place and time and with this the teleology gives way to a much more contingent sense of historical unfolding, even if the motor of history still remains class struggle. As he wrote in his famous letter to Kugelmann on the subject:

World history would indeed be very easy to make, if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. It would, on the other hand, be of a very mystical nature, if 'accidents' played no part.

(Marx and Lenin, 1940, 87)

Furthermore, the fact that it was in Paris that the Commune was occurring lent definite qualities (tangible strengths as well as weaknesses) to the movement while posing the question as to whether and how the revolutionary movement might move outwards from this epicenter to engulf the whole of France and even Europe. The distinction between the dialectic of an open-ended 'both-and' and the closure presupposed in 'either-or' is, as we shall see, no trivial matter.

In order to sustain his views Marx had to deconstruct a different and even then dominant utopianism of process that relied upon the rational activities of 'economic man' in a context of perfected markets. Since this has been by-far the most powerful utopianism of process throughout the history of capitalism we need to pay close attention to it. Adam Smith articulated the argument most precisely in *The Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776. His reflections on the theory of moral sentiments – he was in the first instance a moral philosopher rather than an economist – led him to propose a utopianism of process in which individual desires, avarice, greed, drives, creativity, and the like could be mobilized through the hidden hand of the perfected market to the social benefit of all. From this Smith and the political economists derived a political program to eliminate state interventions and regulations (apart from those that secured free-market institutions) and curb monopoly power. *Laissez-faire*, free trade, and properly constituted markets became the mantras of the nineteenth-century political economists. Give free markets room to flourish, then all will be well with the world. And this, of course, is the ideology that has become so dominant in certain of the advanced capitalist countries (most notably the United States and Britain) these last twenty years. This is the system to which, we are again and again told, 'there is no alternative.'

Marx mounted a devastating attack upon this utopianism of process in *Capital*. In the second chapter he concedes the Smithian fiction of a perfected market. Then with a relentless and irrefutable logic he shows the inevitable consequences. An unregulated free-market capitalism, he proves, can survive 'only by sapping the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the laborer,' making the despoliation and degradation of the relation to nature just as important as the devaluation and debasement of the laborer. Furthermore:

[I]n proportion as capital accumulates, the situation of the worker, be his situation high or low, must grow worse ... Accumulation of wealth at one

pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole ... (1976 edition, 799)

Marx's brilliant deconstruction of free-market utopianism has largely been suppressed in recent times. Polanyi (writing in America during the Second World War with the Cold War clouds already on the horizon) understood Marx's point all too well and elaborated on it (without attribution) in the following terms:

Our thesis is that the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness. Inevitably, society took measures to protect itself, but whatever measures it took impaired the self-regulation of the market, disorganized industrial life, and thus endangered society in yet another way. It was this dilemma which forced the development of the market system into a definite groove and finally disrupted the social organization based upon it.

(Polanyi, 1957, 3-4)

But the rise of neoliberalism as a dominant ideology in the Thatcher-Reagan years (and its export around the world through a mix of persuasion and economic force) swept such objections aside. The free-market juggernaut, with its mantras of private and personal responsibility and initiative, deregulation, privatization, liberalization of markets, free trade, downsizing of government, draconian cut-backs in the welfare state and its protections, has rolled on and on. For more than twenty years now we have been battered and cajoled at almost every turn into accepting the utopianism of process of which Smith dreamed as the solution to all our ills. We have also witnessed an all-out assault on those institutions – trade unions and government in particular – that might stand in the way of such a project. Margaret Thatcher proclaimed that there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families, and set about dismantling all those institutions – from trade unions to local governments – that might stand in the way of her utopian vision. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Fukuyama put a Hegelian gloss on all of this. We are now at the end of history. Capitalism and the free market are triumphant world wide. The end of history is here (a sad thought if Baltimore is anything to go by).

It may seem strange to view the likes of Thatcher and Gingrich as Hegelians, but the free-market triumphalism they espoused was nothing other than Smithian utopianism of process attached to a very Hegelian kind of teleology ('progress is inevitable and there is no alternative'). In many respects, as Frankel (1987) points out, the most effective utopians in recent

times have been those of a right-wing persuasion and they have primarily espoused a utopianism of process rather than a utopianism of spatial form. The odd thing, however, has been the failure to attach the negative epithets of 'utopian' and 'teleological' to this right-wing assault upon the social order. Only recently has a main-stream thinker like John Gray sought to rehabilitate Polanyi and attack the inherent destructiveness of free-market utopianism. The precipitous fall from power and influence of both Thatcher and Gingrich testifies to their vulnerability on precisely such a count.

For the consequences of their utopianism when rendered actual are close to those that Marx's deconstruction depicts. Income inequalities have risen rapidly in all those countries that have given themselves over most energetically to the utopianism of the market (see Chapter 3). This polarization in income and wealth also has its geographical forms of expression: spiraling inequalities between regions as well as escalating contrasts between affluent neighborhoods and impoverished shanty towns or, in the case of the United States, between impoverished inner cities and affluent and exclusionary suburbs. Accelerating uneven geographical development, the undermining of all forms of social cohesion and state powers, the destruction of whole cultures and of those 'structures of feeling' that give a solid grounding to daily life, and, perhaps most problematic of all, the degradation of large swathes of the environment to the degree that much of the earth's surface becomes uninhabitable, are some of the effects that Gray (1998, 207) correctly depicts. 'As a result,' he writes, 'we stand on the brink not of the era of plenty that free-marketeers project, but a tragic epoch, in which anarchic market forces and shrinking natural resources drag sovereign states into ever more dangerous rivalries.' These are, I insist, exactly the forces that are at work in the degradation of Baltimore. So why such tragic outcomes to such a supposedly benevolent process?

The answer broadly lies in what happens when the utopianism of process comes geographically to earth. For any materialization of free-market utopianism requires that the process come to ground someplace, that it construct some sort of space within which it can function. How it gets framed spatially and how it produces space become critical facets of its tangible realization. Much of my own work these last twenty years (Harvey, 1982; 1989) has been about trying to track exactly such a process, to understand how capital builds a geographical landscape in its own image at a certain point in time only to have to destroy it later in order to accommodate its own dynamic of endless capital accumulation, strong technological change, and fierce forms of class struggle. The history of creative destruction and of uneven geographical development in the bourgeois era is simply stunning. Much of the extraordinary transformation of the earth's surface these last 200 years reflects precisely the putting

into practice of the free-market utopianism of process and its restless and perpetual reorganizations of spatial forms.

But the conditions and manner of this spatial materialization have all manner of consequences. As free-market capital accumulation plays across a variegated geographical terrain of resource endowments, cultural histories, communications possibilities, labor quantities and qualities (a geographical terrain that is increasingly a differentiated product of capital investments in infrastructures, 'human capital,' and built environments), so it produces an intensification of uneven geographical development in standards of living and life prospects. Rich regions grow richer leaving poor regions ever poorer (Baltimore provides a dramatic example of such uneven geographical development at the metropolitan scale). Circular and cumulative causation embedded within the utopianism of the market process produces increasing geographical differentiations in wealth and power, rather than gradual progress towards homogeneity and equality. There is, the saying goes, 'nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals' and it is precisely on this point that the egalitarianism and the democratization implicit in freely functioning markets produces more rather than less inequality in the long run.

Community and/or state power has led the way in trying to counteract some of the more egregious consequences of free-market utopianism (spiraling income inequalities, uneven geographical developments, externality effects on the environment, and the like). But there is a deep paradox that lurks in this phenomenon. The free market, if it is to work, requires a bundle of institutional arrangements and rules that can be guaranteed only by something akin to state power. The freedom of the market has to be guaranteed by law, authority, force, and, *in extremis*, by violence. Since state power is usually understood in terms of the monopoly of the forces of violence, the free market requires the state or cognate institutions if it is to work. Free markets, in short, do not just happen. Nor are they antagonistic to state power in general though they can, of course, be antagonistic to certain ways in which state power might be used to regulate them.

The play of free-market utopianism can be assured only if, as Marx and Engels pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto*, the state (and we must now include the local state in this determination) becomes 'the executive committee of the bourgeoisie.' Decolonization after 1945, and the subsequent internationalization and liberalization of global markets, has brought the whole world much closer to that norm, though the uneven pace at which this has occurred (a product of political and social struggles in which resort to traditional solidarities and traditions has played an important role) has affected how the utopianism of process has been materialized in different places and times. Geopolitical struggles between

places and, even more destructively, between states or alliances of states are integral to the problem.

The upshot of this argument is that the purity of any utopianism of process inevitably gets upset by its manner of spatialization. In exactly the same way that materializations of spatial utopias run afoul of the particularities of the temporal process mobilized to produce them, so the utopianism of process runs afoul of the spatial framings and the particularities of place construction necessary to its materialization. Adam Smith, curiously, saw the problem. It was hard, he wrote, to foresee the mix of benefits and misfortunes that extension of market exchange might confer on different parts of the world. But, he hoped:

[B]y uniting, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry, their general tendency would seem to be beneficial. To the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from these events have been sunk and lost in the dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned. These misfortunes, however, seem to have arisen rather from accident than from any thing in the nature of those events themselves. At the particular time when these discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans, that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries. Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another. But nothing seems more likely to establish this equality of force than that mutual communication of knowledge and of all sorts of improvements which an extensive commerce from all countries to all countries naturally, or rather necessarily, carries along with it.

(Adam Smith, cited in Arrighi, 1994, 19)

The effects were by no means as accidental or as transitory as Smith's utopian vision supposed. Nor could Smith's standard response, readily to be found in writings now as then, that the problem of inequality arises because the perfection of the market has not yet been fully realized, carry weight and credibility after two centuries of hard experience.

6 Grounding social processes in spatial forms

Utopias of spatial form get perverted from their noble objectives by having to compromise with the social processes they are meant to control. We now see also that materialized utopias of the social process have to