

# Future City

Vanessa Boni, Deena Chalabi, Michelle Dezember



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*Stages* is Liverpool Biennial's online journal. Each issue shifts its editorial attention in relation to the concerns of the biennial's programme and its work to embed itself in the urban context of Liverpool.

Issue one of *Stages* presents insights, propositions and interventions produced during a year-long partnership between Liverpool Biennial and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. It follows *Future City*, a two-part forum that took place in Liverpool in September 2013 and Doha in December 2013. These forums invited a diverse range of contributors to commentate and speculate on significant changes occurring in urban centres globally.

Doha and Liverpool are complex and contrary cities. Their distinct geographies, histories and politics determine very different narratives of urban regeneration and civic participation. In the context of large-scale urban transformation taking place with projects such as Msheireb in Doha or the upcoming Liverpool Waters development on Merseyside's docklands, *Future City* investigated our individual, institutional and collective stake in the creation of our urban futures.

In their attempts to imagine ways of improving the social, economic and ecological prospects of our cities, the authors of these texts recognise the importance of a critical public sphere that goes beyond the utopian. Saskia Sassen and Irit Rogoff reflect on protest as a way of recovering the process of making citizenship, and on the value of indeterminacy in our global urban future. Architectural historian Nasser Rabbat argues for the need to deconstruct passive, nostalgic or fantastic visions of the future in architecture, in favour of a greater awareness of the civic. Noura Al Sayeh reflects on how we are impacted by our reliance on natural resources, and how this affects our sense of what is possible in the public realm.

Artists, theorists, academics, writers, geographers and architects were invited to select material for *Futurist Library 620BC – 2013*, which includes science fiction, non-fiction, journals, film and other specialist material as a tool kit to help us think about how to work towards a future city.

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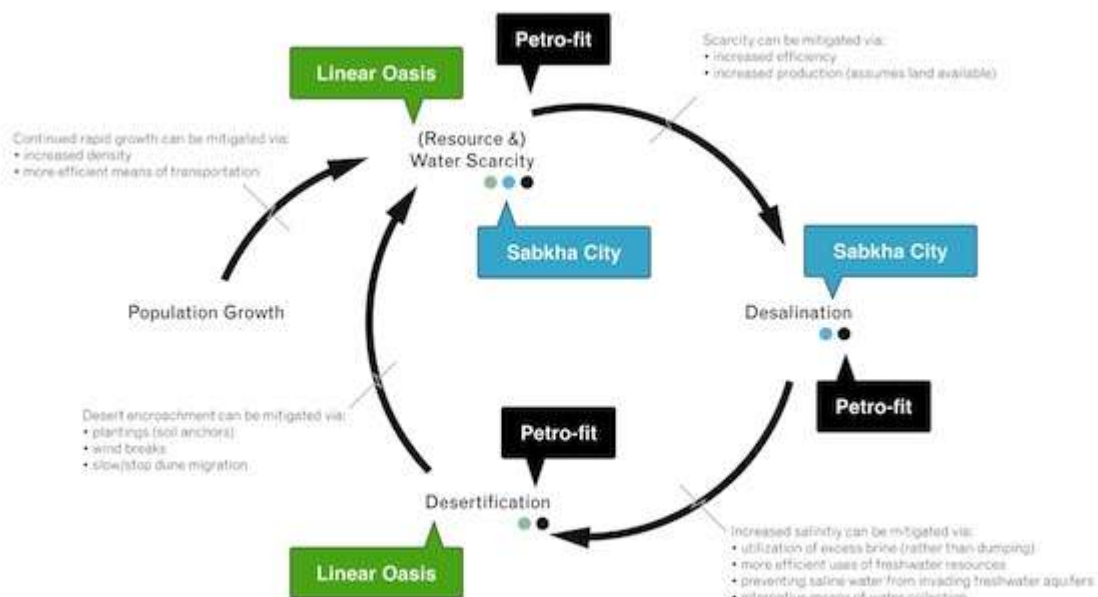
**Vanessa Boni, Deena Chalabi, Michelle Dezember**

# Three Scenes and Speculations from a Future City

If all design can be seen as a way to predict – and shape – the future, no field should be more forward-looking than urban design and planning. However, planners tend to be fairly cautious, relying on historical precedents rather than future trends in shaping cities. There are perfectly rational reasons for this tendency: the past is a more knowable territory than the future. And yet, do we limit our vision if we fail to untether ourselves from the past, and seek design opportunities for the future?

Our research team – architects and designers curious about alternative approaches to designing the urban future, especially as it relates to the Middle East – began by creating a digital compendium of all the predictions we could find (past and present) that were related to the future of urban environments. We tagged and sorted these in various ways to see what we might uncover. Among our most interesting (and obvious) discoveries was that projections into the future are more telling about the present in which they are created. For example, many of the anxieties of the 1980s revolved around a potential nuclear Armageddon; today, it's ecological disaster that terrifies us.

We then focused our lens on urbanisation in the rapidly developing world, specifically exploring the design possibilities in a future desert conurbation, one perhaps very similar to Doha, Qatar and its environs. Doha intrigues us for a number of reasons. While it is unique in many ways (high standards and ambitions, the world's largest GDP and carbon footprint per capita, and a overwhelmingly expatriate population), the rapid population growth and frenetic urban/suburban development here can be seen as harbingers of things to come elsewhere. The number of people living in Qatar has trebled in the past seventeen years, and four-fifths of them live in the greater Doha area, which has quadrupled in size during that same time, growing not only up, but out as well. Inevitably, this growth has put a great strain on the fragile desert and marine ecosystems upon which the city sits. The relationship between some of Doha's most challenging issues is illustrated below.



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The city's rapidly increasing population exacerbates a feedback loop of increasing water scarcity, desalination and desertification. Each of the three projects below proposes a potential integrated solution to some or all of these issues for a future Doha. We examined three distinct scenarios in greater detail, and offered three potential future design proposals: the Linear Oasis, a hybrid vegetative and mechanised wall designed to address issues of desertification and urban sprawl; Sabkha City, a possible response to rising

sea levels and issues of desalination; and Petro-fit, a regionally-scaled investigation of possible uses for the infrastructures of oil and gas following the industry's demise.

### Scenario One: Desertification

Desertification threatens over one-third of the Earth's population and affects over 40% of its land area. More than twelve million hectares of arable land are lost every year to desert encroachment. Despite this consistent loss of land, the UN projects that to support a predicted population of nine billion people in 2050, a 70% increase in food production would be required. <sup>14</sup>

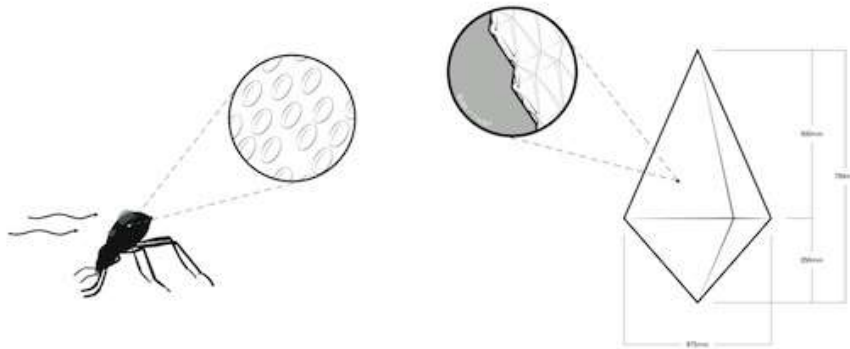
As a windswept desert peninsula, Qatar's geography and climate have forced it to import 90% of its food. <sup>15</sup> Its meteoric population growth has all but exhausted what scarce groundwater reserves it had. Overexploitation of underground reservoirs has caused seawater to creep in, contaminating the water table and hastening the demise of agricultural productivity. Qatar's increased population, sprawling urban settlements and consumption habits only add to the strain on already limited resources. As the vegetation that anchored the soil in place erodes, a rapidly expanding populace will be exposed to stronger and more frequent sandstorms. The increased number of people and the inefficiency of their settlement may well overtax Qatar's dwindling water and food resources.

### Speculation One: Linear Oasis

The Linear Oasis is a hybrid botanical-mechanical infrastructure that provides integrated solutions to the problems of desertification, resource scarcity and urban sprawl at a regional scale. It serves as a barrier to sandstorms, a self-sustaining source of water and food, and a limit to urban growth. After the construction of its most basic infrastructure, the Linear Oasis can passively collect water from the atmosphere, subsequently supporting local agriculture, live-work settlement and transit infrastructure.

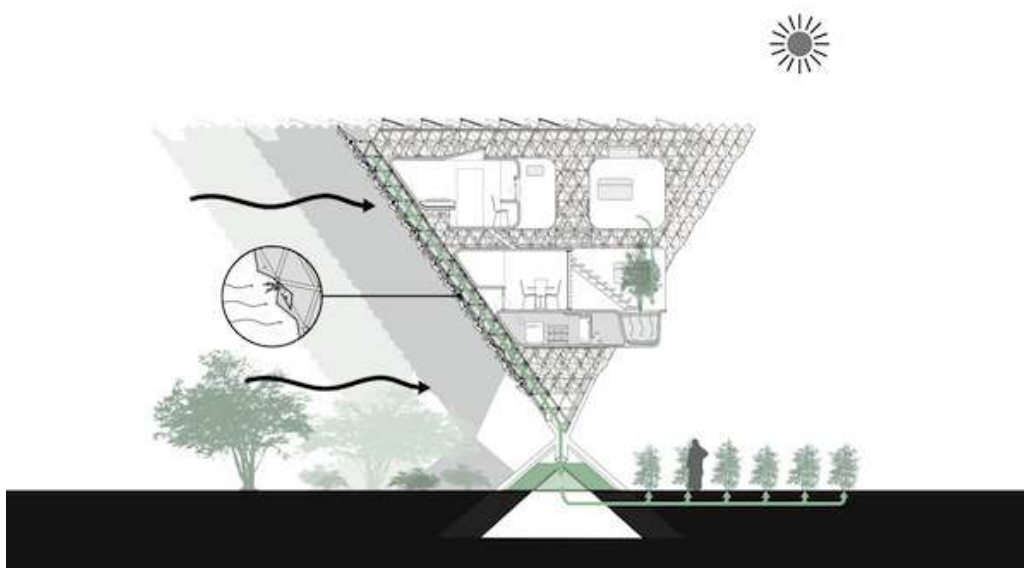
The Linear Oasis is reminiscent of fractal geometry, using similar forms at multiple scales for a variety of effects. Operating at its largest scale, it is a wall spanning the breadth of Qatar, built perpendicular to the prevailing winds to shield the majority of Qatar's population from sandstorms. The orientation of the components is echoed in each of the building units, which take the form of inverted triangular pyramids. When aggregated, these comprise a nationwide green wall that cleans the desert air as it passes.

Equally important is the fact that, due to Qatar's peninsular condition, breezes blow inland from the Gulf, carrying moisture with them. By intelligently shaping and nano-texturing the smallest components of the system, this moisture can be collected from moving air. This type of surface occurs naturally in the shell of the Namib Desert beetle, which is composed of alternating hydrophobic and hydrophilic areas that pull moisture from the air at the nanoscopic level. <sup>16</sup>



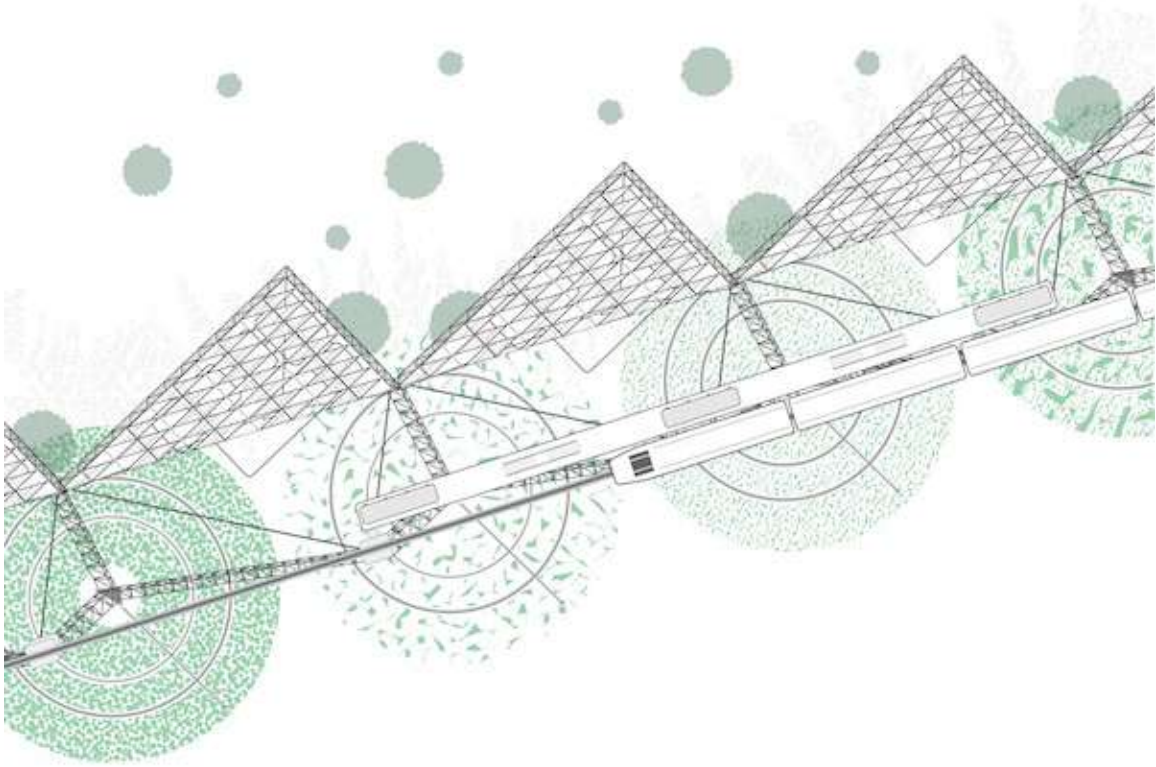
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Most water collected from wall components flows down the face of each pyramid towards a central holding tank integrated into the base of each unit. The water tank feeds into a drip-irrigation system that supports small-scale agriculture along the southern face of the wall. These plots are tended by live-in farmers who reside in modular housing units installed in the space-frame structure on the southern face of the pyramidal units.



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Residents of the Linear Oasis are linked to each other, and their produce to urban centres, via a light-rail transit line that runs along the top of the wall from the east to the west. Transit along the Linear Oasis has the potential to tie into the proposed national metro and rail systems. The integration of these transit lines suggests a third line that would in turn delineate an ideal area for future urban growth that is well-served by transit, protected from sandstorms and securely supplied with food and water.







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### Scenario Two: Rising Water

Continuing global climate change is expected to result in both increased temperature and sea level, the effects of which will be magnified in the world's most heavily populated urban centres. Almost half of the global population lives within 100 kilometers (62 miles) of a coast, including twenty-three cities with populations over 5 million. Rising seawater not only threatens cities with inundation, but can also contaminate underground freshwater aquifers. Should sea level rise by even 1 m, 41,500 km<sup>2</sup> of coastal land in GCC countries will be adversely affected. Forecasts of a 1 m increase are generally considered baseline; some experts predict upwards of 2 m by the century's end.

At the same time, desalination is a reality of the region, with just under half of the world's plants located on the perimeter of the Gulf. Separating the salt from the water provides a valuable source of potable water that has allowed these desert cities to thrive, but the process has two major downsides: first, it is energy intensive, and second, the brine that is dumped back into the Gulf threatens the fragile marine environment.

### Speculation Two: Sabkha City

A *sabkha* (?sæbk?) is an area of coastal flats subject to periodic flooding and evaporation, which

result in the accumulation of aeolian clays, evaporites and salts, typically found in North Africa and Arabia.

Sabkha City is a phased urban strategy to adapt an existing coastal settlement for use after rising sea levels have made its continued habitation untenable. Rather than attempt to stem or to mitigate the effects of littoral encroachment, it accepts the impending inundation of the area and subverts the destructive potential of seawater into the driving force enabling future occupation. As sea levels rise, the Sabkha City grows larger; tidal surges generate freshwater and building material. By century's end, the city becomes an elevated oasis of land surrounded by water.



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Due to its low-lying coastal location on the increasingly saline Gulf, as well as the growing pressure placed on its limited freshwater resources, al Wakra, Qatar, will serve as a case study for the application of the Sabkha City strategy. Focusing on al Wakra's historical village – an area of cultural significance to the country – demonstrates how this strategy could address a desire to preserve portions of an otherwise

inundated original settlement.



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Initially, Sabkha City is a skeletal framework of scaffolding, mesh, pulleys and raised walkways linking the most important sites within the historical village. Villas in the flood plain are selectively sacrificed, becoming solar stills or storage tanks within a larger, tidally operated passive-solar desalination system. In addition to providing a constant supply of drinking water, the system disperses the excess brine over the mesh and scaffold framework, where the saline mist evaporates into a crust of salt, thickening over time into an elevated plain. The city's skeleton deteriorates beneath its saline coating, leaving behind a fused carapace of salt columns and an irregular network of vaults. Over time, new living spaces can be built on or carved from the synthetic landscape to replace those that will inevitably flood below.



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### Scenario Three: The end of Oil

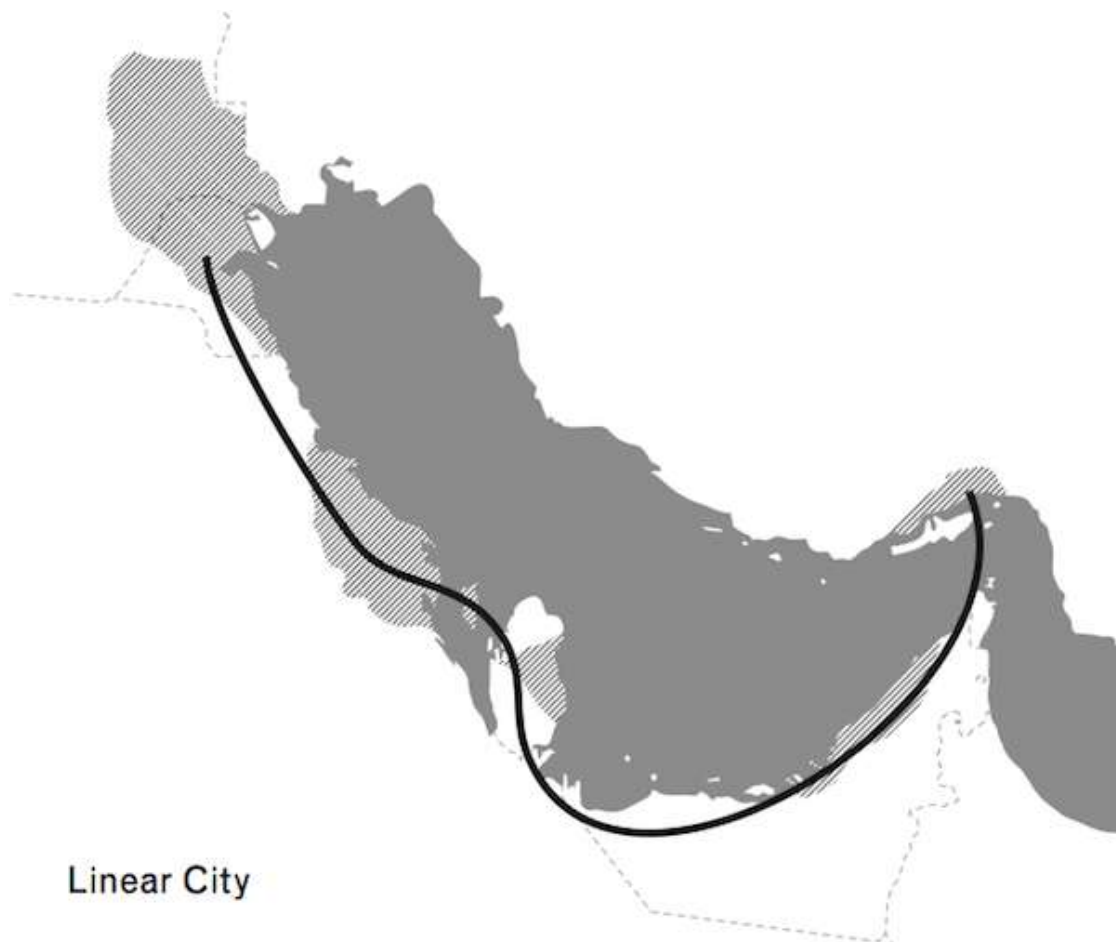
Sometime around the year 2100, all oil and natural gas in the Middle East will be depleted. ▫ Miles of pipeline, scores of massive storage tanks, refineries the size of cities, and the 120 offshore oil and natural

gas rigs that ply the Gulf today will all be abandoned. The sheer scale of this 'leftover' infrastructure is difficult to comprehend. The offshore platforms alone span almost 450,000 m<sup>2</sup> and could stretch 7.6 km if placed end to end. Each liquid natural gas (LNG) storage tank at Ras Laffan Industrial City, Qatar, has a capacity of 140,000 m<sup>3</sup>, measuring 78 m in diameter and almost 40 m high. ▣ Ras Laffan itself covers 295 km<sup>2</sup>; the municipality of Doha covers 132 km<sup>2</sup>. The question is simple: what can be done with this infrastructure?

### Speculation Three: Petro-Fit

The size and quantity of these elements create opportunities at a variety of scales through a programme of creative adaptive reuse of this soon-to-be-defunct infrastructure. The offshore rigs, which are designed for relocation, offer particularly exciting potential for recombination.

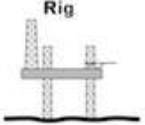

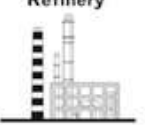

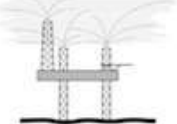


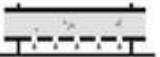



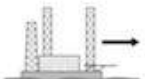




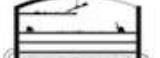

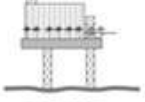


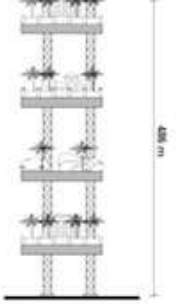
At the regional level, the rigs could be strung together to fashion piers for a new mega-causeway that capitalises on existing and planned links in the Gulf. From Basra to Musandam, much of the Arab edge of the body of water is currently populated and urbanised; strategic use of this infrastructure would cement the linear megalopolis that is already underway. ▣ A more ambitious iteration would link both the northern and southern sides of the Gulf, allowing for free movement of people and goods between the waterfront cities in the Arab peninsula and Iran.



Linear City

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At the urban level, Qatar might consider constructing a new Doha Bay, or completing the current crescent shape to form a circular means for pedestrian and vehicular perambulation. The rigs offer a number of potential retrofits, dependent on the national priorities: agriculture, amusement, education, retail super malls, live-work office parks.

Infrastructure / Program	Rig	Storage	Refinery	Pipeline
Infrastructure				
Program				
Agriculture				
Amusement				
Commute Reversal				
Construction				
Education				
Mall				
Skyscraper				

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Of particular interest is the residential rig-tower, which would be one of the tallest buildings in the region, if not the world. Unlike the typical tower, it would allow for a series of interventions at each level, including unrealised or relocated projects for the city. In these ways, the infrastructure might be repurposed to allow for a variety of possibilities, depending on the city's needs and priorities.



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### Conclusion

Development in Doha over the past decade has outpaced all expectations, and laudable investments in culture, sports and health are materialising at a surprising rate. For cities like Doha and its citizens, things have never looked better. So why offer such seemingly bleak visions of the future for a region that is currently enjoying its moment in the sun? While seemingly far-fetched scenarios, each of the options represents distinct possibilities for solutions should conditions continue along current trajectories. These speculations are intended to provoke thought, and to question the current *modus operandi*. In the end, what is needed is enlightened clients (and a general public), who approach future growth with a long view rather than the typical developer-driven cycle that demands a return on investment within eighteen to thirty-six months.

One glaring omission in our speculations on Doha involves the role that its future inhabitants might

play in its development. In fact, this remains among the most pressing questions for the city's future. Today, the situation is such that nationals comprise about 6% of the overall workforce. <sup>13</sup> Will it continue to be a city in which only a small minority are truly inhabitants, the rest transitory blue- and white-collar labourers? Will it become a city with a Qatari majority, or will it become a city of global citizens, where all who work for it are made to feel that they belong?

Text: Rami el Samahy & Adam Himes

Research & Design: Rami el Samahy, Adam Himes, Phillip Denny, Keith Lagreze, & Kennan Rankin

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1. Qatar National Census 2010. See also author's research at [www.4dDoha.com](http://www.4dDoha.com).
  2. Renee Richer, *Conservation in Qatar: Impacts of Increasing Industrialization*, Georgetown University Center for International and Regional Studies, 2008.  
<http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/qatar/cirs/ReneeRicherCIRSOccasionalPaper20082009.pdf> (accessed ???).
  3. Environment News Service, 'UN Leaders Focus on Preventing the Spread of Deserts | Environment News Service', *Environment News Service*,  
<http://ens-newswire.com/2011/09/21/un-leaders-focus-on-preventing-the-spread-of-deserts/> (accessed 31 January 2012).
  4. Arwa Aburawa, 'Qatar to Invest in 1,4000 New Farms', *Green Prophet*,  
<http://www.greenprophet.com/2011/08/qatar-14000-new-local-farms/> (accessed 31 January 2012).
  5. Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have developed materials and appliques that mimic the properties of the beetle's shell, though at the time of writing, they have not yet entered the public market.
  6. Estimates vary widely on this statistic, ranging from as low as 23% (Greenpeace) to as high as 60% (Global Environment Facility). Almost all sources define the 'coast' as the near coastal zone, an area within 100 m (328 feet) in elevation and 100 km (62 miles) of the coast. Whether the coast is defined solely as an area adjacent to a sea or the ocean or if it includes river coastlines is unclear and may account for the statistical variability. While a consensus is difficult to determine, between 40–50% seems the most plausible.
  7. 'Sea Level Rise | Greenpeace International', Greenpeace | Greenpeace.  
[http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/climate-change/impacts/sea\\_level\\_rise/?accept=183de9769c809dbff492c7cf057afbcf](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/climate-change/impacts/sea_level_rise/?accept=183de9769c809dbff492c7cf057afbcf) (accessed 30 January 2013). Twelve of these cities have populations over 10 million.
  8. Satish Kanady, 'Rising Sea Level Poses Risk to Qatar, Neighbors', *The Peninsula Qatar*,  
[http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display\\_news.asp?section=Local\\_News&month=November2009&file=Local\\_News200911281256.xml](http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=Local_News&month=November2009&file=Local_News200911281256.xml) (accessed 13 June 2012).
  9. Thomas Rogers, 'The Flooded Earth: Which of Our Cities Can Be Saved?', *Salon*,  
[http://www.salon.com/2010/07/06/the\\_flooded\\_earth\\_interview/singleton/](http://www.salon.com/2010/07/06/the_flooded_earth_interview/singleton/) (accessed 13 June 2012).
  10. Emmanuelle Landais, 'Waste dump threatens Arabian Gulf', *Gulf News*  
<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/environment/waste-dump-threatens-arabian-gulf-1.72058> (accessed 11 January 2014).
  11. Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. 'sabkha'.
  12. As of 2005, desalination plants were responsible for discharging in excess of 10,000,000 m<sup>3</sup> of brine waste into the Gulf per day. This has probably increased as more desalination plants have come online in the intervening years. See A. Hashim and M. Hajjaj, as cited in H.H. Al Barwani and Anton Punama, 'Evaluating the Effect of Producing Desalinated Seawater on Hypersaline Arabian Gulf', *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 22, 2 (2008), p.280.
  13. 'Are We Running Out of Oil and Gas?', PetroStrategies, Inc. – Consulting, Research and Training.  
[http://www.petrostrategies.org/Learning\\_Center/are\\_we\\_running\\_out\\_of\\_oil\\_and\\_gas.htm](http://www.petrostrategies.org/Learning_Center/are_we_running_out_of_oil_and_gas.htm) (accessed 2 July 2012).
  14. 'DSI > References > Tanks > 8 LNG tanks, Ras Laffan, Qatar', DSI Group,  
<http://www.dywidag-systems.com/emea/references/tanks/8-lng-tanks-ras-laffan-qatar.html>

(accessed 2 July 2012).

15. The distance from Basra to Musandam is 1,600 km. For the sake of comparison, the length of the Northeast corridor in the US, from Boston to Washington, is 700 km.

16. *Qatar Population Status 2012*, Permanent Population Committee, October 2012.

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### Rami El Samahy and Adam Himes

Since 2006 Rami el Samahy has been teaching at Carnegie Mellon University as Assistant Teaching Professor of Architecture. He holds a full-time joint appointment between the Carnegie Mellon campuses in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Doha, Qatar, teaching architecture and urban design. Courses include Systems Studio, Middle Eastern Cities and a new course entitled The Future of Cities / Cities of the Future. Rami is a founding partner of over,under, a multi-disciplinary studio that focuses on design and architecture with projects in the Middle East, Central America and the United States.

Adam Himes is a former Research Associate at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar where he participated in research projects in Doha, Pittsburgh, and Boston. During this time he led the research and content development of the web-based apps *4dDoha:Buildings* and *Pittsburgh Projects*. His research examining future predictions on the development of cities formed the basis of *Projections*, an installation exhibited in Boston and Los Angeles. Adam graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a Bachelor of Architecture in 2011 and currently works in Istanbul.



# Walking Towards Revolution



Future City Expedition 1, Bouchra Khalili and Omar Kholeif, 2013.

The space of contemporary revolution is a complex one – complex because it is constantly mediated and (re)mediated. It is intense in its proximity – with online media offering us raw images as opposed to the staid commentary of talking heads – but equally, its automated functionality distances us from the subjects of revolution. We are able to shift rapidly from watching a video of the massacre of Egyptian Copts at Maspero in downtown Cairo, to shopping for underwear or viewing porn on demand. The spectator or end-user in this context is able to flit between different moments in time – engaging with diverse levels of desire, anxiety and elation. This ability to juxtapose a single real place (the conflict zone) with several other spaces (imaginary or constructed online zones) is reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s definition of the ‘heterotopia’. <sup>1</sup> Foucault uses the term to describe spaces and places that function in non-hegemonic conditions. One can argue that these are ‘third’ spaces, which are simultaneously cerebral and physical – a moment in time, where layered meanings can develop.

The notion of navigating multiple virtual spaces is also relevant in the revolutionary context for individuals like myself, who possess a geographic or nationalistic sense of duality. I speak here of the duality of being both insider and outsider from the site – the ‘square’ (the *midan* or *saha*) – where the embers of revolutionary dissidence are first kindled. I experience dual reactions to what is perhaps an artificial sense of historic belonging to the contemporary site of conflict. The context of seeing the site of my youth, Egypt, mediated through the meta-narratives of both mainstream and social media elicits conflicting feelings. Am I relating to the present through a seemingly nostalgic memory of a peaceful Egyptian childhood? Or is my relationship to contemporary images of conflict developed through the manipulation of particular media machinery – machinery that manufactures feelings of euphoria and despair as it narrates the narrative of conflict as if it were a piece of cinema?

Invited by the Liverpool Biennial and Mathaf to develop a project in Liverpool for *Future City* in September 2013, I chose to engage with the urban space I knew well by looking for ways to embody the sense of a collapse in the temporal order that the ongoing Egyptian Revolution had unleashed in me. As a city, Liverpool has multiple personal meanings for me. When I first immigrated to Britain as a very young

child in the early 1980s, I saw Liverpool as a site of racial violence. As I grew older, I looked back at the history of the Toxteth Riots of 1981 with interest. I later lived in Liverpool (on two very different occasions) and both times the decision was a forced act of dislocation from my friends and loved ones. This personal narrative formed a cornerstone of my thinking.


I began by inviting the artist Bouchra Khalili, a Moroccan-French artist whose work I had admired for some time, to collaborate with me on a project exploring dislocation, mediation and what the German filmmaker Douglas Sirk referred to as 'distanctiation'. I was especially interested in how Khalili's subjects embodied speech as a forum for minorities to reclaim a position of power. We began with the proposition of developing an exploration of cultures of protest. We were interested in the form of protest – an aural, physical and embodied development – and in considering how its structure could activate questions about collective memory and consciousness.

Through our conversations it transpired that both Khalili and I were North Africans who had migrated to Europe during the 1980s and had both been in proximity to great social and political change. In Khalili's case, it was the March for Equality and Against Racism often known as Beur's March, which saw Arab immigrants taking to the French streets in 1983, from the port city of Marseilles to Paris. This was the first national anti-racist movement in France and was triggered by a racist climate propagated by right-wing political parties in France at the time. For Khalili, this event seemed especially relevant, since our presentation was to occur only a matter of weeks before the thirtieth anniversary of the march.

During this time, I was going back and forth between my parents' home in Egypt, and had recently cancelled one of these trips during the overthrow of Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi. This begged the question: what does it mean to be 'present' within a political conflict, a moment of uprising. Thinking of Foucault's heterotopia (and of being in multiple temporal zones) I wondered what might happen if the revolution could be transposed and invoked into or onto a different physical site?

Together, Khalili and I envisioned a performative walk inspired by Liverpool's rich history as a radical city of activism that sought to consider the strategies used by oppressed communities for representation. Given the proliferation of mass media and internet technologies, has the politics of protest – both local and global – been removed from the personal, political and urban context in which it occurs, or is the relationship to the local urban politic still important?

On an autumnal afternoon in Liverpool, we met at Pier Head, a historic site that evinces Liverpool's history as a port city, and its part in the slave trade. We walked through the streets of the city centre, stopping in front of historic sites of power, but we did not speak of these. We marched in the street led by Egyptian-British actor Adam El Hagar – the mediating voice that Bouchra and I had chosen to embody our narrative of other cities, other protests.

 *Future City Expedition 1*, Bouchra Khalili and Omar Kholeif, 2013.

The narrative was a two-part documentary-fiction called *On the Culture of Protest* (2013). The first half, written by Khalili, was pieced together out of numerous media and archival accounts of the historic 1983 March des Beurs that culminated in Paris. The second half, which I had written, was developed as an 'out of sync' recollection of the Egyptian Revolution, which began in 2011 and which arguably continues to the present day. I interspersed personal anecdotes – the death of my grandfather during the uprisings, the exaltation of the Egyptian artist Ahmed Basiony, and my grandmother's nervous breakdown, alongside raw newsreel footage, literary excerpts and de-contextualised messages from social media. These were the mediated voices of the revolutionary struggle – disembodied from their original sites of struggle and violence.

*On the Culture of Protest* (2013) was a combined attempt to re-embody the spirit of different struggles through the act of walking and listening. Nearly fifty people, who collectively resembled a small

marching group, attended the walk. Individuals were required to 'keep up' with the fragmented narrative and the pace of the walk. This pace was developed through two days' worth of on-site rehearsals. The pacing was choreographed so that it would be nearly impossible for people's attention to drift outside the space that we had created. The language was constructed in spurts, the narration traversed quiet and loud intervals, the speed varied – abrupt speed quickly slowed down, jumping from narrations told in both formal and colloquial tongues. The audience's true presence was required.

So much political failure, I believe, has to do with the inability to be 'present' within the context of one's own struggle. The mediation of media has created a Ballardian fracturing of the collective narrative, where feelings, beliefs and attitudes are abstracted from the object that imbues them with meaning. Struggle and political belief become public affectations formed out of 'trending' fads that occupy numerous RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds. Indeed, the proliferation of social media continually brokers and fosters relationships on the basis of constructed algorithms, which many of us will perhaps naively assume are the products of happenstance.

Social media has accelerated our relationships to each other. During the first eighteen days of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, I found myself becoming increasingly confessional online to certain individuals, attempting to form bridges with acquaintances. I felt that a border had been eroded and that I could assess through individual Facebook feeds which of my contacts would be appropriate to engage with. I was geographically dislocated from the site in Cairo where most of my family were living and as a result I was hungrily searching for attention online – a support network. Could a collective memory, a consciousness, be formed online, or is the physical sweat and heat of bodies in proximity essential to bind us in struggle, to enable us to engage with the nuanced complexity of the ongoing political situation?

The reaction from audience members to our project in Liverpool suggested to me that the physical space of protest is a markedly different one from the virtual. One participant informed me that the space of physical protest was much more discursive. At first I was confused, but I think I have come to understand what she meant. Indeed, the space of the social-media platform, despite its seeming circular nature, can be purely one-directional. Status updates, tweets and video blogs in moments of conflict function as catalytic calls rallying for or against violence, antagonism, surrender, protection and so forth. Rarely do such forums enable a nuancing to the conversation or a space for one to ask innocent or naïve questions. Certainly, one would not care to seem naïve on social media, which for many of us is also the most public and permanent of forums. Moreover, if such forums become antagonistic, they often end up resulting in battles between individuals with polar political views. The power of being present in space, as opposed to being abstracted and anonymous, enables a different kind of relationship to one another. Although I do not wish to propagate a romantic view of physical protest, I do believe that In Real Life (IRL) we are able to be vulnerable and negotiate our proximity in a way that enables us to better understand what it is that we are fighting for.

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1. *Of Other Spaces* (1984) in *Diacritics* vol. 16. No.1 spring 1986. PP.22-27.

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**Bouchra Khalili:** Bouchra Khalili is an artist who investigates the experiences of identity, immigration and transience. Working primarily in film and video, she reflects the nomadic and often transnational state that defines life for many people throughout the world. She has participated in numerous exhibitions, including the 18th Sydney Biennale *all our relations* (2012); *Mapping Subjectivity* at MoMA (New York, 2011); the 10th Sharjah Biennial (2011); *You Have Been There* at Marian Goodman Gallery (New York and Paris, 2011); *Meeting Points* (2011); and *Surveillée(s)* (2011). In 2012 she was the recipient of the DAAD-Artist in Berlin Award.

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## Omar Kholeif

Omar Kholeif is a writer and curator based in London. He is currently curator at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, as well as curator-at-large at Cornerhouse and HOME, Manchester. From 2009 to 2013 he was the curator at Liverpool's FACT, where he was part of the curatorial team for the Liverpool Biennial in 2012. He is the Senior Editor of *Ibraaz*, a critical forum on visual culture in North Africa and the Middle East. His latest book, *You Are Here: Art After the Internet*, is published by Cornerhouse Books (2014).

# Interview with Slavs and Tatars

**Deena Chalabi:** Slavs and Tatars' work emphasises overlooked cultural and historical complexities, and with *Future City* we've been curious about how those might enrich our current and future thinking. So, what do you believe should be remembered or forgotten?

**Slavs and Tatars:** In lieu of *what*, let's rather turn to *how* we should remember or forget. We believe in resuscitating history, and we use this word 'resuscitation' deliberately: putting one's lips onto the subject matter, onto history, onto language, and breathing in and out of it. So there's a sensual, seductive element to the revisitation, a corporal approach. There's also something disrespectful about this act of resuscitation: putting one's lips onto another's to revive him/her is different from placing one's lips on someone else's romantically, as in a kiss. It's just as important to disrespect your sources as it is to respect them.



"Pucker up, History" Slide from *TransliterateTease*, lecture-performance, 51 min, 2013.

**DC:** Speaking of sources, Slavs and Tatars began as a reading group for out-of-print works, or texts unavailable in English, and original publications have a very important function in your practice. Have you always seen your work in terms of a process of reactivating cultural memory and/or a quest for alternative historical narratives?

**S&T:** We've attempted to reactivate certain ideas, behaviours, affects and thought-processes associated with a given geographical region. <sup>1</sup> To some degree, we see this work as a correction: recalibrating the balance, whether it involves acknowledging the progressive potential of faith in social revolutions, the sacred use of language, the collective acts of reading and storytelling, for example.



Slavs and Tatars' publications, 2009-2013.

**DC:** How important is storytelling for creating a sense of place?

**S&T:** The oral aspect of storytelling is crucial to an understanding of place. Despite our extensive publication output, we retain a healthy suspicion of print. In her research on Byzantine music, Bissera Pintcheva talks about the meaning of icons understood as performance: 'a descent and dwelling of spirit in matter'. Through its oral iteration, each story becomes a practice in genealogy, akin to the hadiths.

**DC:** So what's at stake in the process of retelling certain lost narratives, or bringing ideas back into circulation? What kinds of tensions do you see embedded in the practice of making things visible?

**S&T:** Creating visibility is itself a two-fold risk. First, it's not enough to excavate a given narrative or idea; one also needs to activate it. Second, in a world with increasingly immediate access to information and demands for transparency, it's also imperative for some things to remain imperceptible. As Norman Brown said, 'Mysteries are intrinsically esoteric, and as such are an offense to democracy: is not publicity a democratic principle?'

**DC:** Different parts of the world have different legacies in terms of the relationship between the individual and the society, which create different expectations and conceptions of the public. Your works often play off these various legacies. How do you engage with how we might live collectively?

**S&T:** Our work often operates along the lines of a bazaar or souk: there's a fanning out of media, a something-for-everyone approach that runs counter to the stern rarefaction we associate with modern and contemporary art. Our *Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz*, for example, tells the story of twenty-first-century Iran through that of 1980s Poland and *Solidarno*?. The project began as a magazine contribution (to the Berlin-based biannual *032c*), a public balloon, an archive, textile works, public billboards, lectures, publications, mirror mosaics and craft-specific sculptures. Stemming perhaps from our regional focus, this maximalism allows the audience different levels of entry into the project. And this not-only-but-also approach requires us to engage with the notion of generosity, to face our audience, as opposed to making work that could remain insular or only relevant to an art professional. It acknowledges different interests, needs and people.





Pray

Way (installation view), slim and wool carpet, MDF, steel, neon. 390 x 280 x 50 cm, 2012. *The Ungovernables* 2nd New York Museum Triennial, New York. Photo courtesy of Patrick McMullan.

If a visitor to one of our installations – whether *Beyonsense* at MoMA, *PrayWay* at MoMA Warsaw, or *Not Moscow Not Mecca* at the Vienna Secession – simply sits down and caresses his/her partner, that's an equally legitimate engagement with the work as that of someone who might have read everything available on line and peruses our books in the exhibition space. This lack of 'preciousness' about our work comes from our interest in reconsidering notions of generosity and sacred hospitality: for example, linguistic hospitality, expropriating ourselves and appropriating the other as we attempt to put on the clothes of the foreign and ask the foreign to step into our language.

**DC:** In addition to your linguistic agility, your practice is also predicated on dismantling the rhetoric of (increasingly defunct) imagined geographies. Does unearthing forgotten examples of syncretism help to imagine a different kind of cosmopolitan future?

**S&T:** Syncretism is to the mind what open-source is to code: it allows for the integration of 'alien' or 'other' forms of thought, behaviour, practice into one's own. It also operates a collapse of time, not just of space, allowing for the incorporation of those beliefs that precede one's own. We should highlight the numinous or 'wholly other', to quote Rudolf Otto, context in which syncretism is often used: by reconciling difference and emphasising coexistence, syncretism is a compelling argument in favour of compromise too often disparaged as a source of weakness.



Left: The Triumph of Leninist-Stalinist National Politics, by N. Narakhan, 10 Years of Soviet Uzbekistan), 1934, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, NY. Right: Women at the shrine of Naqshbandi, outside Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

**DC:** Have your adventures in Eurasian archives yielded any surprising notions of utopia, whether fictional or theoretical? Is there something emancipatory about the process of reclamation?

**S&T:** It has often been in engaging with archives or material whose position is antithetical to ours where we've experienced something resembling liberation. *Molla Nasreddin*,<sup>2</sup> the early twentieth-century Azeri political satirical magazine that we translated in 2011, for example, argued for modernisation as westernisation and blamed Islam for what it considered the increasing gap between the Western world and the Muslim world, both ideas that stand in opposition to the very founding of our practice. In this sense, *Molla Nasreddin* was very much a product of its time, like Atatürk's Dil Devrimi (language reforms). Rarely do artists, writers, or others devote two years to translating and publishing a document with which they strongly disagree.



Molla Nasreddin: the magazine that would've, could've, should've (JRP-Ringier, 2011).

**DC:** In Long Legged Linguistics, the works address a set of issues that one might describe in terms of politicised, embodied language. How does your recent set of works speak to the process of making or unmaking citizenship through language?

**S&T:** Our approach to identity is to adopt several at once – hence our name – not to mention our interest in the transmogrification of ideas across various cultures, landscapes, people. It's a pity that allegiances in general are conceived as singular, exclusive affairs. Since the end-game of loyalty only gains in severity the higher up the scale one climbs, we must struggle to blur the boundaries of where one nation's, one people's, or one ideology's history begins and another one's ends. Woe to the hapless immigrant who finds him/herself caught between devotion to home and host country, mother tongue and second language, former and future passport.

# Futurist Library

## FUTURIST LIBRARY

*Future City is a toolkit to help us think about how to work towards a future city. Artists, theorists, academics, writers, geographers and architects, as well as participants in Future City, were invited by the curators to select material that a library for the future should have. Responding to the question: what should we read in order to think most imaginatively for the future? The library includes fiction and non-fiction books, journals and films as well as other relevant specialist material.*

### 620 BC – 2013

620 560 BC	<i>Aesop's Fables</i> Aesop	Sophia Al Maria
c.1308 21	<i>Inferno (The Divine Comedy Vol.1: Hell)</i> Dante	Rosalind Nashashibi
1516	<i>Utopia</i> Thomas More	Imre Szeman
1624	<i>New Atlantis</i> Sir Francis Bacon	Imre Szeman
1759	<i>Candide Or Optimism</i> Voltaire	The Royal Standard
1886	<i>Beyond Good &amp; Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future</i> Friedrich Nietzsche	Iman Issa
1913	<i>'Kitab Al-Tawasin'</i> <i>Ana Al-Haqq Reconsidered</i> Husain B. Mansur Hallaj	Charlie Pocock Louis Moreno

1921	<i>We</i> Yevgeny Zamyatin,	Zainab Djavanroodi
1924	<i>The Magic Mountain</i> Thomas Mann	Rosalind Nashashibi
1927	<i>Metropolis</i> written by Thea von Harbou directed by Fritz Lang	Noura Al Sayeh
1929	<i>The City of Tomorrow</i> Le Corbusier	Imre Szeman
1929	<i>The Sound and the Fury</i> William Faulkner	Dominic Willsdon
1929	<i>Letters to a Young Poet</i> Rainer Maria Rilke	Francesco Manacorda
1932	<i>Brave New World</i> Aldous Huxley	Mitra Khoubrou
1934	<i>Technics &amp; Civilization</i> Lewis Mumford	Imre Szeman
1940	'On the Concept of History' Selected Writings Walter Benjamin	Rosalind Nashashibi
1949	<i>The Second Sex</i> Simone de Beauvoir	Deena Chalabi
1960	<i>The Image of the City</i> Kevin Lynch	Iman Issa
1961	<i>Retorno de las Estrellas</i> Stanislav Lem	Ingo Niermann
1963	<i>For a New Novel</i> Alain Robbe-Grillet	Philippe Rahm

1965	<i>Alphaville</i> written and directed by Jean-Luc Godard	Naeem Mohaiemen
1967	<i>The Environment Game</i> Nigel Calder	Ingo Niermann
1968	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> written and directed by Stanley Kubrick	Fumio Nanjo
1970	<i>The Urban Revolution</i> Henri Lefebvre	Louis Moreno
1971	<i>Trafic</i> written by Jacques Tati, Jacques Lagrange and Bert Haanstra, directed by Jacques Tati	Noura Al Sayeh
1972	<i>Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form</i> Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour	Noura Al Sayeh
1973	<i>Crowds and Power</i> Elias Canetti	Iman Issa
1973	<i>Gravity's Rainbow</i> Thomas Pynchon	Rosalind Nashashibi
1974	<i>The Dispossessed</i> Ursula Le Guin	Louis Moreno
1977	<i>Parallel Botany</i> Leo Lionni	Simone Ferracina

1997	<i>Rain Of Iron And Ice: The Very Real Threat Of Comet And Asteroid Bombardment</i> <b>John S. Lewis</b>	<b>Nelly Ben Hayoun</b>
1997	<i>Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies</i> <b>Jared M. Diamond</b>	<b>Philippe Rahm</b>
1997	<i>Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance</i> <b>Ackbar Abbas</b>	<b>Elaine Ng</b>
1997	<i>Poetics of Relation</i> <b>Édouard Glissant</b>	<b>Hans Ulrich Obrist</b>
1998	<i>Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After</i> <b>Hilton Judin, Ivan Vladislavic, Netherlands Architecture Institute</b>	<b>Dominic Willsdon</b>
1998	<i>Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression</i> <b>Jacques Derrida</b>	<b>Francesco Manacorda</b>
2000	<i>'Bicycle Repairman', A Good Old-Fashioned Future</i> <b>Bruce Sterling</b>	<b>Imre Szeman</b>
2000	<i>Architecture Theory Since 1968</i> ed. <b>K. Michael Hays</b>	<b>Imre Szeman</b>
2000	<i>Empire</i> <b>Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri</b>	<b>Fumio Nanjo</b>



2002	<i>'Metropolis and Mental Life', The Blackwell City Reader</i> George Simmel	Imre Szeman
2003	<i>Qit'ah min Ūrūbbā,</i> Radwa Ashour	Nasser Rabbat
2003	<i>'Future City', New Left Review 21</i> Fredric Jameson	Imre Szeman Nav Haq
2004	<i>Sphären III</i> Peter Sloterdijk	Philippe Rahm
2005	<i>Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other ScienceFictions,</i> Fredric Jameson	Nav Haq Louis Moreno
2005	<i>Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age</i> Russell Jacoby	The Royal Standard
2005	<i>The President's Last Bang,</i> written and directed by Im Sang-soo	Naeem Mohaiemen
2005	<i>The Life Collection: David Attenborough</i> David Attenborough	Sophia Al Maria
2006	<i>The Lodging House</i> Khairy Shalaby	Nasser Rabbat
2006	<i>Planet of Slums</i> Mike Davis	Elaine Ng
2006	<i>On Translation</i> Paul Ricoeur	Slavs and Tatars

2006	<i>European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power</i> , Immanuel Wallerstein	Deena Chalabi
2006	<i>Syndromes and a Century</i> , written and directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul	Francesco Manacorda
2007	<i>Al Manakh 1</i> Rem Koolhaas, AMO, Pink Tank	Mitra Khoubrou
2007	<i>Hollow Land</i> Eyal Weizman	Nato Thompson
2007	<i>Meeting the Universe Halfway</i> Karen Barad	Ursula Biemann
2007	<i>Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics</i> Nada M. Shabout	Charlie Pocock
2008	<i>The Elusive Metropolis</i> ed. Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall	Dominic Willsdon
2009	<i>Architecture météorologique</i> Philippe Rahm	Philippe Rahm
2009	<i>Perspective as Symbolic Form</i> Erwin Panofsky	Iman Issa
2009	<i>The Novel of Nonel and Vovel</i> Larissa Sansour & Oreet Ashery	Nat Muller
2009	<i>Makers</i> Cory Doctorow	Nat Muller

2009	<i>The Radicant</i> <b>Nicolas Bourriaud</b>	<b>Alia Swastika</b>
2009	<i>The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis</i> <b>Lydia Davis</b>	<b>Rosalind Nashashibi</b>
2010	<i>Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism</i> <b>Stephen Graham</b>	<b>Evan Calder Williams</b>
2010	<i>The Time-Travels of the Man Who Sold Pickles and Sweets</i> <b>Khairy Shalaby</b>	<b>Nasser Rabbat</b>
2010	<i>Solution 185-195: Dubai Democracy</i> <b>Ingo Niermann</b>	<b>Ingo Niermann</b>
2010	<i>Complete Mandarin Chinese</i> <b>Elizabeth Scurfield</b>	<b>Sophia Al Maria</b>
2010	<i>Singapore songlines. Ritratto di una metropoli Potemkin... O trent'anni di tabula rasa</i> <b>Rem Koolhaas</b>	<b>Elaine Ng</b>
2010	<i>Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things</i> <b>Jane Bennett</b>	<b>Simone Ferracina</b>
2010	<i>Interviews</i> <b>Hans Ulrich Obrist</b>	<b>Alia Swastika</b>
2010	<i>Hans Ulrich Obrist &amp; Cedric Price: The Conversation Series</i> <b>Cedric Price, Hans Ulrich Obrist</b>	<b>Hans Ulrich Obrist</b>

2010	<i>Al Manakh 2</i> Rem Koolhaas, AMO, Pink Tank	Mitra Khoubrou
2011	<i>Infrastructure as Architecture</i> Katrina Stoll and Scott Lloyd	Imre Szeman
2011	<i>Russia's Own Orient</i> Vera Tolz	Slavs and Tatars
2011	<i>Art in Iraq Today</i> Samar Faruqi ed. Dia Azzawi and Charles Pockock	Charlie Pockock
2011	<i>The Nightmare Of Participation (Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality)</i> Markus Miessen	Alia Swastika
2011	<i>Being Singular Plural (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics)</i> Jean Luc Nancy	Alia Swastika
2011	<i>Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed</i> Jared Diamond	Deena Chalabi
2011	<i>Living in the Endless City</i> Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic	Mitra Khoubrou
2012	<i>I Burn Paris</i> Bruno Jasielski	Evan Calder Williams
2012	<i>Cities without Ground</i> Jonathan Solomon, Clara Wong, Adam Frampton	Elaine Ng

2012	<i>After the Future</i> Franco 'Bifo' Berardi	Nat Muller
2012	<i>Portal 9: Stories and critical writing about the city.</i> Issue #1 'The Imagined' ed. Fadi Tofeili	Nat Muller
2012	<i>The Ecological Thought</i> Timothy Morton	Simone Ferracina
2012	<i>Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship,</i> Claire Bishop	Alia Swastika
2012	<i>An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalisation,</i> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak	Deena Chalabi
2012	<i>Stories We Tell</i> written and directed by Sarah Polley	Alia Swastika
2013	<i>Metatropolis</i> John Scalzi	Imre Szeman
2013	<i>Portal 9: Stories and critical writing about the city.</i> Issue #2 'The Square' ed. Fadi Tofeili	Nat Muller
2013	<i>Landscape Futures</i> Geoff Manaugh	Simone Ferracina
2013	<i>Volume #35: Everything Under Control</i> ed. Arjen Oosterman	Simone Ferracina

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### Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad and Lola Halifa-Légrand

Lola Halifa Légrand: French-born Lola Halifa Légrand is a designer who often works in collaboration with artists, curators and designers. Since graduating from The Royal College of Art, London, in 2011, she has

worked with organisations such as Electra, Manystuff, Department 21 and The National Portrait Gallery, and has self-published widely.

Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad is a London-based designer and artist who, through the use of collaborative research, engages with the role and social function of design within domestic and urban public spaces. In 2008 he established a multi-disciplinary studio producing work ranging from interior and public spaces to recipes, photography, games, public interventions and product design. Recent projects and exhibitions include *Penfold's Cupboard*, *Residents' Restaurant*, *The Showroom* (2012), *AubergineNW8* (London Festival of Architecture), *Room 3* (Lloyd Hotel, Amsterdam), *Auto-Assemble-Food* (Architecture Association, London) and *Parallax* (Tokyo Wonder Site).

# Dispatches on the Future City

Hamid Dabashi

In 2013 I had the opportunity to engage in a series of public conversations about the future of the city around the world, many of which stemmed from the publication of a book that I wrote about Arab revolutions called *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*. In that book, I paid particularly close attention to the notion of public space, and the way in which Tahrir Square had emerged as an allegorically potent term through which we as citizens of a future that cannot be too distanced from our present might begin to reimagine our citizenship. I noted that soon after the Egyptian revolution began, other places around the world began to rename themselves after Tahrir Square. For example, when the Occupy Wall Street movement began in Zuccotti Park in New York, people called it Tahrir Square. The name became synonymous with the occupation of public space.

I proposed that the period of ideological formation in the context of postcoloniality had exhausted itself. On previous occasions, I had formulated three moods – anticolonial nationalism, third-world socialism and militant Islamism – as the *modus operandi* of ideological formation and political mobilisation over the last 200 years in the Arab world. My proposal was that in the location of public space, Tahrir Square writ large, we were at the proverbial ground zero of the articulation of new ideas around human agency, the implications of which went far beyond that region. My subsequent travels have only confirmed my proposition that the reclamation of public space is an urgent global issue.

Earlier this year, I was in Gwangju, South Korea. The Gwangju Biennale had invited me to participate in a symposium for the Folly Project, which began in 2011 and was initially co-curated by the distinguished artist Ai Weiwei. A folly is an architectural design that is very frivolous: it has no function in itself, but is often a critical intervention into the functionality and rationality of a space. The idea of 'folly' was invoked in Gwangju through a number of commissioned spatial interventions into the city. I was invited because of an extraordinary work by the architect Eyal Weizman, who had come up with the idea of Roundabout Revolutions. He had taken the idea of Tahrir, Pearl Square in Bahrain and a number of other public squares in the Arab world in which revolutions had taken place, and superimposed them onto a roundabout in Gwangju, which was itself the site of a major revolutionary uprising in 1982. So suddenly, beyond space and beyond time, these disparate moments of uprising and dissident became enmeshed and related.

In a succession of cities, including in my own city of New York – in Zuccotti Park – across Greece during the movement against austerity measures, or in the youth uprising in the UK against tuition-fee hikes, in Madrid, or in Gezi Park in Istanbul, the question quickly shifted from *whether* to occupy public space, to *how* to re-occupy and redefine public space. Both in the case of Zuccotti Park and Gezi Park in Istanbul, it turned out that these were already privatised spaces: there was no public space accessible for the protests. And as a result this began to stimulate a whole debate around the notion of what exactly is public. I've been fascinated, for example, by the fact that the Bahraini government not only destroyed the central monument in Pearl Square after the uprising there, but has now appropriated the notion of occupying public space by turning the area into a government art project.

A few months after the publication of my book, I had a public conversation with Pankaj Mishra in London about this question of public space in the context of reimagining geographies, during which Deena Chalabi heard me talk and invited me to Liverpool. Paramount to my experience in Liverpool was of course seeing the dilapidated urbanity of the city and the heroic struggle that people in Liverpool were putting together, which I saw especially in the form of their attempts to revive a bakery. However valiant they were, the bakery's destiny appeared to be a *fait accompli*, since the neighbourhood has been slated for demolition. Nevertheless, the community has put up extraordinary resistance.

In Liverpool, I remembered another uncanny urban condition that I had witnessed a few months earlier, in Detroit, Michigan. I was invited to facilitate a conversation between the artist Shirin Neshat, and lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi at the Detroit Institute of Art. Between the fancy five-star hotel in which we were staying and the spectacular Institute, there was practically nothing but derelict space. The degree of destitution in Detroit, which has since declared bankruptcy, was on a visual level



similar to what I saw in Liverpool. But there was no organised communal resistance to what was happening, at least as far as I could see.

I was next invited to Mexico City, and my visit coincided with the Day of the Dead, which is a celebration similar to Halloween in North America, when Mexicans celebrate the reawakening of their dead relatives. They put out their favourite foods and the entire city is covered with brightly coloured, heavily scented marigolds, so that the dead can find their way. In the highways, on the subways and buses you see people dressed as skeletons, singing and dancing. It seemed to me particularly important that on the campus of UNAM, the national university, this moment of the dead returning to visit their relatives was used for political expression. It was as if the dead, now beyond reproach, were coming back with precisely the political slogans – against the surveillance state for example, or labour migration or privatisation – that were on the minds of the living, but for a variety of reasons were not being expressed. So in effect, the ‘dead’ were defining the public space with these concepts and were now speaking on behalf of the living.

But while the lack of public space is a global condition, and while public space needs to be reclaimed and crafted, we have to consider this in the context of other developments. During my talk in Liverpool, I offered the airport as a cautionary model, a phantasmagoric combination of the surveillance state and unbounded commodity fetishism. The transmutation and absorption of cities, societies and communities into digitised surveillance systems is the real issue of the future city. In an airport, we see the clearest evidence that we are no longer simply atomised individuals; we are digitised individuals. Today, it is not my passport that needs to correspond to my humanity but in fact my humanity that needs to correspond to my digitised identity. And these digitised identities continue to be extrapolated. The accumulated digitised version of me is the evidence to which my humanity has to correspond no matter where I am in the world. Following Edward Snowden’s revelation, we have learned that not only is the surveillance far beyond national borders, but also that there is no human intelligence behind the intelligence gathering. The computer algorithm that collects the data is zero-one: you’re either a terrorist or not a terrorist. There is no sense of humour. And of course, after 9/11 this is no joking matter.

In the United States there is the illusion that if you hire somebody from MIT or Harvard with a high IQ, that person will know how to read facts. But the intelligence that we need in order to read these facts is actually what Immanuel Kant called public reason. It isn’t just reason in abstraction; it’s reason that emerges from the thicket of the public. I propose the need for a consciously articulated dialectical relationship between public space (as we understand it from the public sphere of Habermas), public reason (as in Immanuel Kant’s ‘*was ist aufklärung?*’), and what Hannah Arendt called public happiness.

In writing the Arab Spring book I returned to Arendt’s *On Revolution*, in which she contrasted the American revolution with the French revolution. In reading the famous statement in the American Declaration of Independence, ‘Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’, she defines the pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of *public* happiness. She also makes a distinction between liberty and freedom. Liberty is emancipation from tyranny, while freedom is to participate in public happiness, perhaps to be part of a public that is instrumental in establishing what happiness is. She systematically analyses Thomas Jefferson’s later work in order to show that his idea of the ward, as a unit of public space and the public sphere, is definitive of this notion of public happiness. So the dialectic that emerges between public sphere, public reason and public happiness is, I believe, needed for us to be able to read facts of all kinds, and that is precisely what we lack in the United States and elsewhere today.

While in Doha for the second Future City symposium, we were asked how we imagine the future city. I think it’s a hard task to imagine it when we are part of what is being imagined for us by the society of the spectacle (after Guy Debord, who coined the term back in 1967). We are conscious of our humanity by virtue of its fragility, and yet also of having been aggressively digitised. The future city is the simulated liminality imagined for us by the surveillance state, amidst the politics of fake and fabricated identity, in turn designed by and for the rich and the powerful.

In Doha I also heard, at Qatar Foundation, that future students of architecture are likely to study Education City as an example of what has been built. But given how my thinking has been formed, I'm personally less interested in structures than in ruins. I'm interested in the way we imagine developments for the future of a city like Doha with projects like the magnificent buildings of Education City or Musheireb, but also in the particular ways in which ruins are left behind, and who occupies them. When you turn away from Musheireb, you can still see the historical, dilapidated Doha behind it, now used by squatters, who are migrant labourers. Upon visiting, I remembered how earlier this year, when I was in Asheville, North Carolina, a friend took me to see what he called 'the Seven Sowetos of Asheville'. These were the hidden homes of the underclass, which thanks to architectural sleight of hand and landscape design, have been placed out of sight. You'd never notice them unless you knew where to look. The spectacle hides the labour that creates it.

I spent a day in the Sanaya neighbourhood of Doha, chasing after invisible labourers' quarters. I counted four signs of their presence: water tanks, satellite dishes, a makeshift mosque where the Muslim workers say the *Athan*, and their clothes hanging out to dry on balconies. The economics of migratory labour are made increasingly invisible, while the visual regime that the migratory labour enables draws us all into a society of the spectacle that is almost entirely on autopilot.

Three decades before Debord, in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin theorised in his writing on the *Passagenwerke* the aggressive transmutation of the fetishised commodity into the sign, and the sign into ruins. The genius of his thinking, in part a combination of his Jewish and Marxist identity, was the transformation of the ruinous into the allegorical. He began to read these ruins and fragments as allegories of emancipation.

In my humble opinion, the salvation for the future, as we move forward further into the society of the spectacle, is in fact its aggressive transmutation. You need conscious, deliberate, purposeful interventions into the defining moments of and in public space, because if you leave it to itself, it will gobble you up. The extraordinary work of progressively minded curators, artists, activists and architects around the world has allowed me to think about these things from various perspectives and has taught me a great deal, for which I am very grateful.

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### Hamid Dabashi

**Hamid Dabashi:** Originally from Ahvaz in Iran, Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York, which is the oldest and most prestigious Chair in his field. He has taught and delivered lectures in many North and Latin American, European, Arab and Iranian universities. He is a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, as well as of the Center for Palestine Studies at Columbia University.

# Building a Public Realm: Imagining a Future for Old Doha



Interior of Al Ansari House, Al Asmakh, Doha, Qatar. Courtesy of Alia Farid.

*Qatar's staggering pace of construction due to its booming economy has become the subject of international scrutiny, especially in the lead-up to the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup. Development projects account for one-tenth of the national GDP. These range from Education City, Qatar Foundation's educational district on the edge of the city, including work by architects such as Ricardo Legoretta, Arata Isozaki and Rem Koolhaas, to Msheireb Properties' complete renovation of the old city centre.*

*My conversation with architects and designers Ameena Ahmadi and Fatma Al Sahlawi revealed the local optimism and some of the debates and questions surrounding the built environment and the public realm. Both Ahmadi and Al Sahlawi were facilitators of the Old Doha Prize, an ideas competition for proposals of 'heritage-led regeneration in Old Doha'. Teams comprised of both British and Qatari-based architects competed in a one-week design charette, the results of which were displayed in a small exhibition at Mathaf as part of 'Future City: Doha'.*

**Michelle Dezember:** You both work for major projects that are shaping Doha's urban landscape. What role do you see arts and culture playing in the development of the city?

**Fatma Al Sahlawi:** Qatar has done very well in growing its health, education, sports and political sectors, but what's been left behind is the arts and culture sector. It was very important for organisations like the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), Katara, and Qatar Foundation (QF) to be established, not just to check a box, but to create a community of people who are interested in art and culture and attract people from abroad who can add to the diverse nature of Qatar.

**Ameena Ahmadi:** From a QF perspective, what's been happening in Education City is an attempt to create something different from commercial buildings, so it's really a process of creating architecture and setting role models for what contemporary architecture models in Qatar could be, and what needs they could serve. QF in this sense is setting an example by doing, and architecture becomes a physical manifestation of the organisation's ambitions and objectives.

**MD:** Are there 'good' and 'bad' kinds of development?

**AA:** I would say that there are two ways of measuring development: a critique of formal and organisational qualities, and an assessment of the programmatic allocation of a particular development. We can create what might be referred to as a 'great' piece of architecture that's empty of people or has

destroyed something of historical value. The challenge then becomes how to mesh these two ways of looking at a development, its impact, how people are drawn to it, and what comes out of it.

**FS:** Going back to the term 'design' is really important, because by 'design' I mean taking into consideration designing projects that are contextually responsive to the spatial conditions that you're working within, but also the social conditions. When both spatial and social considerations are taken into account, it's place-making and not just space-making. I would judge developments in Doha based on whether they're imported ideas, mega developments, gated communities or typologies of suburban communities, or if they're developments that have taken into consideration the socio-political and spatial conditions that exist in Qatar, catering to them and adopting successful means that work with the given context and situation.

**MD:** What do you think 'place-making' means within the context of Doha? Who are we trying to draw to these developments and why?

**AA:** I believe that what's adding to the urban malaise in Doha is the segregated developments taking place at the moment. The city feels like a collection of disjointed destinations. Our daily experience entails spending quite a significant time in the car between one destination and another. Place-making can't just be about a single place, destination or development; it has to take into consideration urban connectivity. In my opinion, the key is integration. Spread-out development is a natural by-product of the car, but a degree of integration at certain scales is essential for social, economic and cultural forms of life to be fostered. Otherwise, the burden then lies on individual and organisational power to drive such activities into life, excluding natural serendipities. Place-making isn't just about the architecture of a place; it's also the creation of opportunities, the activities that places afford, how they meet the needs of the communities that inhabit them and to what extent they contribute to their wellbeing. In a diverse city like Doha, place-making should contribute to bringing cohesion, respect and integration at various levels. It's a multifaceted process that needs to address the sensitivities of our diverse pieces.

**MD:** You were both involved as facilitators and judges for the Old Doha Prize, which was piloted this year. <sup>1</sup> Could you explain how the idea emerged and if there were any surprising outcomes?

**FS:** We didn't think that the Old Doha Prize would be the outcome of our conversations with the different stakeholders in the Al Asmakh area. My role started out as architect/master planner at QMA. We found it frustrating that each house was being acquired separately, which meant that the urban fabric wasn't going to be preserved. The value in this area is not in a single house: Al Asmakh, Al Hitmi, and Al Ghanem are the last remnants of what Old Doha was like, so it was important to us to preserve the urban fabric of the area as a whole. So the prize came together because stakeholders agreed that it was a feasible approach to respond to what's happening to Al Asmakh. We were surprised how the prize brought people together, and by the outcomes both in terms of the designs and the discussions that were raised.

**AA:** It all started with the enthusiasm of the organisers of this event; many have put in a lot of effort to make the Old Doha Prize a reality. The participants' tremendous work – both in terms of quantity and quality – that resulted afterwards was a true surprise. The discussions were so valuable, and although each team had really distinct proposals, you could map similar issues across all the submissions. The winning team was able to approach the subject holistically: the context, the architecture, who we're trying to serve in this regeneration scheme, how it's different from the rest of the city, and what value it adds to the city. Talking urbanism and architecture was a valuable experience – it wasn't just about doing something for the Al Asmakh area, but also about the architecture and urban-design professions in Doha: how such a programme builds the profession through a critical discourse.

**MD:** It's interesting that the holistic nature of the winning group's proposal is what made it successful. Is this an indication of what's needed for the wider field?

**AA:** Absolutely. When we're thinking of regeneration schemes or development in general, architects' egos sometimes kick in. Suad Amiry said it beautifully when she was talking about restoration projects in

Palestine through the Riwaq Centre for Architectural Conservation in Ramallah: when they were able to think of people and the spaces in between as opposed to just architecture or single buildings, that was when they were able to work successfully.

**MD:** Who are the people that architects and designers should be considering in the spaces, or 'urban fabric', as Fatma put it, of Old Doha?

**AA:** Old Doha is a complex part of the city that showcases to a great extent Doha's DNA. In Old Doha, you find a lot of memories of the Qatari population, you see traces of past stories, you see a large number of migrant workers who've come in search of ways to improve their lives and their families' conditions, you see some speciality commercial activities that attract clients from across the city. I don't think that any of the above should be excluded. The fact that all of this exists in Al Asmakh offers unique opportunities for the area.

**FS:** It's fortunate that some of the original inhabitants of the oldest parts of Doha are still alive. Their stories and memories, knowledge of the past, and presence today should be utilised and documented as a layer in the history of Old Doha. It's also fortunate to be able to come into contact with the current occupiers and residents of Old Doha, the migrant community. Documenting and analyzing their current occupation is critical to ensure that we don't erase another layer of history. A new layer of occupancy can initiate an overlay with the existing, and with the absent past, to build upon the rich heritage and history of the area. A complete wipeout and replacement of the people currently occupying Old Doha would injure the potential of creating an area with diverse layers of history, people and activities.

**MD:** What strikes me about the Old Doha Prize is that it calls for 'heritage-led regeneration proposals'. What does 'heritage' mean in a place like Doha, and why was this approach important?

**FS:** We can't say that the heritage of Doha is just the pre-concrete buildings from 1920–50, but rather a set of building typologies and means of construction that show the evolution of the city. But perhaps we need to let go of our attachment to the original uses of these buildings. We can't go either to the extreme of looking at these heritage houses as frozen objects in time like an urban museum, nor of completely demolishing them because our uses don't fit them. Being part of a governmental entity like QMA, it's very easy to create a masterplan that defines zoning but doesn't allow for the organic initiation of a new culture or new way of inhabiting these areas. I think the role of these governmental entities should be in envisioning the preservation of such areas and intervening in a humbler way by creating catalysts. It should be at a smaller scale.

**AA:** From an experiential point of view, when you walk through an old part of the city that gives you comfort in terms of its scale, for example, or the memories it evokes, or you feel at ease because of how your surroundings are clustered, this is an aspect of the importance of preserving heritage put in simple terms. This kind of preservation, by which I don't mean freezing but rather bringing to life and building on heritage, helps inform and inspire our design decisions today for new developments as well.

**MD:** How have architectural practices shaped life in Doha?

**FS:** Looking at Al Asmakh, which was made up of both Qataris and non-Qataris, we saw that they were living in a mixed-use community. It was a residential community but they had economic generators like bakeries and shops. But since the 1980s there's been a movement of people away from the centre that's created sterile zones, single-use districts of the city. So if you drive around Madinat Khalifa or West Bay, you only find houses and not much encouragement for interaction between inhabitants. That's where I see a shortcoming in the way that master planning has happened on the large scale; it's forgotten what happens at the smaller scale of everyday life.

**AA:** There are architects who've been drawn to commercial developments, as Clare Melhuish mentioned during 'Future City: Doha', that create visuals more than actually building them and thinking about lived conditions. You walk around our neighbourhoods and there isn't even a pavement, except where people have bothered to extend and pave the area in front of their houses. Some people plant a tree,

some put in a bench, and if such elements repeat, then we're building a public life. Being in the public sphere is about a shared responsibility. When you're out walking on the pavement, you start feeling responsible for it: I'm not going to throw trash on it because I'm going to use it and it constitutes a part of my daily life. Building a public realm and being conscious of these things is about allowing people to take ownership of space and feel responsible for it. Those pieces of the city that are in between our daily destinations basically have a huge impact on shaping our lives and experiences; knitting them through considerate and participatory urban design and planning could improve our life patterns immensely. I hope that initiatives like the Doha Architecture Forum and Mathaf's 'Future City' symposium can better inform practices and spread awareness of these important notions.

**MD:** What role can architects play in imagining better ways of urban life? Is it possible to build a public realm?

**FS:** With architects, there's often an egocentric approach to focusing on the building you're designing regardless of what's happening around you. If we keep following that approach, even if we're the 'best' designers, we won't create the 'best' places. We'll only achieve the isolated nature of the cities that are developing at such a fast pace. There needs to be an overlapping of target users and cultures, understanding them from various points of view. Overlapping is a great responsibility of the architects who are dealing with the fragmented spatial nature of the city today, and the complex social structures as well.

**AA:** If we consider the presentation that Rami El Samahy delivered, for example, in 'Future City: Doha', he started by saying that even though he's presenting extreme and hypothetical scenarios, he usually asks his students to be sensible designers. As an undergraduate student, I struggled to think beyond real or common-life scenarios, even though I was learning in studios led by a very experimental approach. Nonetheless, as I reflect back on such work and on the three speculations that Rami presented, I think it's great to work on imaginative scenarios. Sometimes the role of architects and urban designers is to imagine things or visualise surreal conditions in order to push the architectural discourse forward and help inform the decisions we make today. Seeing those hypothetical projects makes you ask 'What if?' Imagining in this sense helps create better realities.

I'm not sure there's a short answer to the second part of your question. Building or creating a public realm is a multifarious process rather than a product. Such a process requires recognition of the need for what a public realm entails. Some of what's expected to take place within a public realm is already happening in Doha, for example, but in isolation or within allocated spaces or even within what's considered a private sphere. Developing a public realm must start with defining what a public realm in Doha is. It definitely can't be based on pure imported models, because in essence, the public realm is the source of the unique properties of any city.

**FS:** A public realm isn't achievable solely by a developing entity. It's an adjoined process that entails the developer and designer, but most importantly the people who will be the users and occupiers of such places. The 'public' is a critical ingredient in building the 'public realm'.

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1. The Old Doha Prize is an ideas competition organised in November 2013 by the British Council and Qatar Museums Authority with the support of Msheireb Properties in Qatar, and the RIBA and the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, in the UK.

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2011 and in 2012 she founded the Doha Architecture Forum. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from the American University, Sharjah, and an MArch in Urban Design from the University College of London's Bartlett School of Architecture.

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### **Michelle Dezember**

Michelle Dezember is the Deputy Director for Programming and Special Projects at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar. She joined in 2009 as the Head of Education and served as the museum's Acting Director from 2012–13. She holds a joint B.A./B.S. in Art History and Sociology from Santa Clara University, a graduate certificate in Visual Cultural Studies from the University of Barcelona, and a M.A. in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester.



# What is our Globalised Urban Future?

Saskia Sassen and Irit Rogoff

**Saskia Sassen:** A city comes with such a charge of meanings, of histories, that when one utters the word 'city' it's almost an invitation not to think. So when I'm working on the city, I need another language: I think of the city as a complex but incomplete system, and in that mix of complexity and incompleteness lies an astounding capacity for continuous reinvention – often successful although sometimes not. This also explains why cities can outlive all kinds of other, far more powerful systems that are centrally managed and led by monarchs and corporate CEOs. It's quite remarkable to think of all the kingdoms, multinationals, financial firms, republics that have fallen. Meanwhile there are cities, outliving all of those other structures and worming themselves into future histories. Somehow we know that a city like Liverpool, with its the extraordinary mixture of histories, will probably be around in a thousand years. Will the United Kingdom still be here, as it exists now? I'm not so sure.

When I think about an immediate future, there are two issues that can frame our propositions. One of them is a question: where is the frontier today? Of course, in our historic, imperial times the frontier was at the edge of the system, but now we're past that kind of edge. I have a tentative answer: I think that the key frontiers today are actually inside our cities. If the city is too neat, there is no frontier, but if the city is complex and incomplete then there is a frontier. And when I think about what a frontier space is, I imagine a zone where actors from different worlds have an encounter, an encounter for which there are no established rules; we do not and cannot know what that encounter would be like. So the frontier is variable: it has some very positive and attractive features and it has some very negative and brutal ones. That is historically how frontiers have been, and I see this in our big, not fully controllable, messy cities: São Paulo, New York, Mumbai and so on. And today very often that encounter is marked by socioeconomic struggles.

My second framing proposition for thinking about cities – today and in an immediate future – is the question of indeterminacy. It seems to me that more and more space, whether that space is rural (with large corporate farms), urban or digital, is over-determined. The city is the space where you can still actually find and experience indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is a variable. It contains the possibility of making, and I think especially of making by those who lack access to formal instruments for making, whether that's the making of a building, the making of an economy, the making of a politics, the making of a history, or beyond.

These three elements – complexity, indeterminacy and the frontier space – help us understand particular features, especially of making, in the current period. For instance, I think of the protest movements that we're seeing, the Occupy movements, as one acute, highly visible example to be explored. I think that Irit and I share the notion that these movements are really about recovery, the work of making citizenship. We, the comfortable middle-classes, have become consumers of our citizenship. These protest movements and their modest claims – this is not the heroic syndicalism of the miners in the early 1900s, for instance – represent an honest claim: 'Hey, I'm a citizen. I did x, y, z. I played it by the rules, and now the state is failing me.' I see in this a project that seeks to recover the condition of a solid, robust citizenship. This is an enormously valuable project, given the current period. Here, the city is critical in rendering these claimants visible, and allowing their claims to circulate in a vast global ideational space. This is one instance of the city as a space for making – making citizenship, claiming the rights that have been taken by states and powerful economic actors.

Ours is a period when in much of the world the economic nexus is no longer constituted via the importance of people as workers and consumers as it was in the Keynesian period: the ascendance of finance and its voracious financialising of everything means that people matter less and less: there are now other instruments that play a greater role in wealth-making than workers and consumers. This is a bit of a complex development, not easy to explain in a few words. I've developed it all in brutal detail in my new book *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*.

In many ways, I think these protest movements are a point in a trajectory, and it's quite possible that

this isn't the first nor the final point in that trajectory. There are older histories and genealogies of protest in some of these cases that then surface and become visible as specific, variable claims, from Cairo, New York and Barcelona to Istanbul and Rio. And I think this particular point in those longer trajectories is about making the social. What they got out of these protests is social capabilities. And that's why an Occupy movement is different from a demonstration. If you're occupying hour after hour, week after week, month after month, and even if it's just six months, you're actually working very hard, continuously, to keep the peace, to keep things going, to adapt to different temperatures, to engage very different people from the ones you're usually with, and so on. It's a collective capability that was developed, and that begins to constitute the more abstract project of making the social.<sup>1</sup> Again, we in the middle classes consume the social; we don't know what the social means. I think that in our current period the social is one of the most elusive conditions, and a deeply unstable meaning.

Our city maps are top-down, those of an omniscient observer, but in reality that perspective doesn't exist; it doesn't represent the city as a lived space. The city is made up of many different points of entry and exit. Each neighbourhood is a distinctive point of entry into the city, and generates knowledge about the city that diverges from the knowledge of the centre and of other neighbourhoods. I have a fantasy that in a near future we could open-source the neighbourhoods, creating an open-access digital space where people can post their knowledge and insights online.<sup>2</sup> It could be organised by the government of the city – as long as it doesn't evolve into a surveillance space. It would begin to collect the knowledge of different neighbourhoods, of the homeless, of children, of older people, of the unemployed, of the super-employed, and it would give us an insight into the material spaces and practices that constitute 'the city', and I include here cultural elements of daily life in the neighbourhood. It would create a new kind of understanding and possibly a new space for making.

I think that one of the major threats we confront in our cities is the rapid growth of over-determined urban space; the privatising of space, the massive, centrally planned projects and mega complexes. All these are replacing what were once mixed settings, killing the particularities and quirks and old cultures of daily life that give a city some of its character. Could a digital space that open-sources the neighbourhood, gathers local knowledges and entices residents into active participation generate indeterminacy? I can imagine a partly sociocultural space that operates to some extent on the digital vector and on the knowledge vector, and in that process unsettles codified knowledge about the city. Could this feed indeterminacy? I think that's where cities are strong, that's where cities mobilise imaginations and making. It's in this mix of conditions and possibilities that indeterminacy becomes a force, feeding or making room for that condition that I described as the frontier in our current period – a space where actors from different worlds have an encounter for which there are no established rules. This both feeds into and depends on indeterminacy.

**Irit Rogoff:** The path into a notion of future city that interests me is the one that considers new modes of occasional and partial inhabitation – presences that claim one thing and affect another, make a demand and enact a solution in another mode. In the wake of these partial, temporary and ephemeral inhabitations, certain fundamental assumptions about the relation between space and public get rewritten.

I come to this through different vectors – an interest in processes of spatialisation, an interest in participation and an interest in what might possibly become a notion of 'public' after the demise of the classical public sphere. For Jürgen Habermas, who long dominated the understanding of a bourgeois public sphere, the eighteenth-century public realm had to do with private people coming together as a public to claim the public sphere that had been regulated from above. They stood against those very public authorities to engage them in a debate via the use of reason.

Fundamental to this ability to engage the more powerful in debate was both reason and an informed and critical body of knowledge, but it was always limited to the welfare of its rightful members. In the twenty-first century in Syntagma, Plaza Mayor, Tahrir, in Wall Street, Rothschild Boulevard, St Paul's

Square, in São Paulo and Bahrain and Tunis, in Sans-Papiers rallies in Paris and Vienna, 'public' is no longer defined by the common welfare of its rightful members. The notions of common welfare and of rightful members are the very issues at stake in these gatherings, whether 'rightful' by its inclusion or exclusion from citizenship or legal inhabitation; whether rightful in terms of its economic enfranchisement through access to markets, or whether rightful in terms of having a share in shaping the terms and values by which they live and are governed. So beyond the demands that these gatherings posed to a regime or to an authority or a dominant belief, it is the very notion of 'rightful members' that is at stake in this revision of 'public'.

In recent years, as the crisis of citizenship and rights has deepened in Europe, Étienne Balibar has been developing an extremely interesting set of contentions, which I'm summarising very briefly and very schematically. One of these has to do with what he calls 'transnational citizenship', which divorces citizenship from a national franchise, and instead of thinking about a complete inclusion within a national identity, people acquire an equal amount of civic rights within a given constituency. This is similar to the arguments of numerous activists within the movements protesting the criminalisation of the status of the 'Sans-Papiers'.

A second contention rightly argues that we live among those who work, pay taxes, take part in communities and provide them with essential services, whose children go to school and play football in the street and sing in clubs and churches, and yet have no rights; that we live among 'citizens without citizenship'.

And finally Etienne Balibar argues in favour of what he calls a model of 'shared citizenship', or co-citizenship, which I think is one that is very valuable for this inhabitation of public space that I think we're both talking about, one that troubles the divisions between those with full rights and those without any rights. Instead, he proposes an ebb and flow as the diminishment and augmentation of rights takes place within given situations, an indeterminacy that moves back and forth on a kind of scale, that is not as solidly grounded as a juridical status.

In this situation we're yoked together, not through identity, belonging, nationality or standing, but by the act of sharing spaces and situations. The sharing of space and the erosion of status that bleed into one another.

In fact Balibar goes further and says that we owe a great debt to the Sans-Papiers, because, and I quote, 'They have recreated citizenship among us, insofar as it is not an institution nor a status but a collective practice.'

So the future city or the present city read through the prism of its unrest as its future promise, which is what I believe in, is the site of this new moment of collective practice. Its gatherings are characterised by what Giorgio Agamben has termed 'the coming community', one that's indifferent to a common property. This common property he describes as 'being red, being French, being Muslim' – being red (communist ideology), being French (national identity), being Muslim (faith and kinship). This community of singularities operates through the new relational mode of subjects, not through a shared essence (identity) or shared beliefs (ideology), or shared affinity (kinship) or a shared set of conditions. What it has in common is a being together in time and space – it's an ontological community.

I make these claims and observations in the footsteps of Jean-Luc Nancy's exceptionally interesting work in 'being singular plural', a body of thought that has done much to enable us to detach singularity from individuality, and the politics of autonomous selves, although Nancy's starting point is quite different from the one being rehearsed here. I think he comes out of a philosophical argument taking up twentieth-century philosophical discussion on being, ontology, through a modern interpretative process of what Plato had called the dialogue of the soul with itself. In his contribution to this on-going debate, Nancy breaks down the 'with' of 'with itself' to another less inward, more plural set of links. He does so in the name of a complex and very contemporary politics of what he calls the places, groups or authorities that

constitute the theatre of bloody conflict among identities. And what follows in the book is a kind of litany of names that are internally fractured and incoherent – names of people who enact a kind of internal contradiction of un-belonging within themselves, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, Rwanda, Bosnian Serbs, Tutsis, Hutus, Tamil Tigers, Casamance, ETA militia, Roma of Slovenia, Krajina Serbs, Chiapas, Islamic Jihad, Bangladesh, The Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, on and on. And then he says:

These days it is not always possible to say with any assurance whether these identities are intranational, infranational, or transnational; whether they are 'cultural,' 'religious,' 'ethnic,' or 'historical'; whether they are legitimate or not – not to mention the question about which law would provide such legitimation; whether they are real, mythical, or imaginary; whether they are independent or 'instrumentalized' by other groups who wield political, economic, and ideological power.

What Nancy proposes for the bringing together of this gathering of incoherent internally conflicted identities that enact nothing but an un-belonging to the space in which they are operating, is the breaking down of the word compassion – so not compassion as empathy, but compassion as the passion that operates between us. And he proposes a kind of shift from a gathering that's founded on the notion of having something in common with a gathering that's founded on the notion of what he calls 'being in common'. So the shift is from a having in common to a being in common, which I think is one of the ways in which one can think through the urban inhabitation of protest movement.

I recently read an interview with Saskia, who was asked whether the numerous and contiguous protest movements around the world were a manifestation of globalisation, in which everything circulates in an accelerated mode. She said that she thought that, rather, it was the work of citizenship, taking place simultaneously as the enormity of the global crisis of citizenship became apparent, consistent with a shift from subjects to stakeholders, those who have a stake in the modes by which they are governed, and whose gathering is a performance of stake-holding.

At Goldsmiths, where I teach, and which is situated in New Cross in London, some of our students and former students have formed a group called the New Cross Commoners. They reoccupy decommissioned libraries with reading and empty cafés with debate. They read poetry on the common and argue law at the council. They don't assume rightful membership, but produce it on a daily basis. And so the future city for me is the site of a being in common, in which a practice of shared citizenship is an active process, as is shared study and reading and poetry; as might be the shared space of the art gallery and the exhibition hall.

**SS:** Looking at the world beyond the scope of the city, we're currently living through a time when the institutionalised national level is decaying, like an old infrastructure. This disassembling is not visible, because the formal structures, language and laws are there. But there's a new condition taking shape, beneath the familiar alignments and their visible contradictions. I think of these as conceptually subterranean trends – subterranean not because they happen beneath the ground, but because we cannot see them. We lack the concepts. In other words, they cut across divides – China, Russia, economy, polity, rural, urban – but become visible only when dressed in the familiar clothes. We don't have the conceptual instruments to see that these localised presences are the recurrence in site after site across the world of some deeper trends that are marking a new configuration – and that can coexist with the old geopolitical world of the inter-state system. For me, in fact, the new world isn't, for instance, that one billion people are communicating on Facebook – partly because they're largely communicating among homogenous interest fragments – albeit hundreds of thousands of fragments. (I think under its current format and content and purpose, Facebook is a footnote in this story). These conceptually subterranean processes that interest me get filtered through the specifics of each place, and hence we merely see them as something happening in China, and thus it's easily coded as 'Chinese'; if it happens in Egypt it's Egyptian. But it's not that simple. Nor am I saying that these new trends are akin to a smooth space of connectivity.

One of the tasks is to actually make those underlying trends that cut across the familiar boundaries, visible. Artists have their way of making visible elements that are maybe just emergent or vague, and we, of course, use conceptual language and theory to make them visible.

When I think of today's protest movements, I see many different genealogies of meaning and histories of protest. Each is specific. It doesn't make sense to flatten them into one kind of movement. But, at the same time, they're also all making visible some of these (conceptually) subterranean trends that get filtered through the specifics of each of these histories, yet are also underlying, cutting across these older histories. I think this juxtaposition of old and new, and global and specific, is part of our current condition. To some extent it remains insufficiently addressed, or under-studied, under-recognised. At such a juncture, cities are interesting spaces because they have the capacity to make visible this possibility of interpreting, this possibility of seeing a globally multi-sited but partial history that arises from many diverse local histories. This is one way of reading today's protest movements. They're making visible something that goes beyond the particular event – in Cairo, in New York, in Istanbul, in Rio – itself.

Then there's the question of public space. For me, the piazza, the traditional public space, has embedded codes, where people know how to conduct themselves. It's a space for ritualised practices that constitute 'publicness'. It's a very different space from the street, which I think of as marked by indeterminacy. I mean 'the street' in some sort of generic sense. Thus even if today's protest movements may happen in parks, they make it into an indeterminate space, and in that sense I think of this type of space as the global street.

Let me illustrate the notion of codes embedded in urban space. Think of any city, downtown at rush hour. In the rush, we accidentally kick each other, step on each other's feet. But we don't take it personally. If it happened in the neighbourhood, it would be a provocation. In this sense, then, downtown at rush hour is a space-time juncture with embedded codes that we've made collectively and hence recognise them. It's another version of what happens in the piazza – codes we need because otherwise there'd be disaster. But it is a variable – at some point it becomes unattractive. We've all experienced this in terribly well-run countries where everybody stands patiently if the light is red, even if there's no car in sight.

And then the third element: membership in its diverse formats, citizenship, the immigrant, the outsider. In research on immigrants and citizenship, the temporal dimension is critical. If you take a sufficiently long temporal frame, you can see that (along with the racisms, the hatreds and the tragedies), when the outsider succeeds in getting her claims recognised, she expands the formal rights of existing citizens. When we do the opposite, which we're doing today in trying to take away rights from immigrants, we're actually also damaging citizens. One of my hobbies is to count all the rights we're losing. In the last twenty years, we've lost many rights, and now what do we do?

**IR:** There is a tension, which I don't quite know what to do with, between the expansion of citizens' rights, which make one the rightful member, and Balibar's notion of co-citizenship. Because I think one negotiates a certain amount of loss for one's self as one shares. And so one of the things that really interests me in the way in which movements are making themselves visible across urban spaces and performing certain kinds of dynamics, is that on the one hand one should read it as empowerment, and on the other hand I also read it as that kind of negotiation of loss.

And so it's in the arena of the urban as the site of negotiation between empowerment and concomitant loss that you share your citizenship and you lose a certain amount of rights. And in the art world, in the classical old museum world, which is based on an enlightenment model of endless elasticity in which you can bring in everybody, accumulate more and more histories and stories within histories, minorities' histories, and all of that, there's never a sense of loss.

The classical museum archive or library is an institution of endless stretching and addition, and it's always been really important to me that the art world performs loss, that it recognises this as it brings in other perspectives and other histories. What's happening is an erosion of a kind of hegemonic position

and that that needs to be performed within cultural institutions.

**SS:** This is such a great image and such a necessary feature of any collective effort or condition: the negotiation of loss. It's what finance never does: negotiate for loss! I like what you say – its ambiguity, a sort of downgrading of membership... and yet, when it's across groups, it's probably a necessity at times. Negotiating for loss with the state or the large corporations is a completely different matter. With other social groups it can get shaped as solidarity. It can never do that with the state or corporations.

That's why we need spaces of making. We have to make our citizenship, because we've become very thin subjects. One angle onto this thinness is the vast surveillance systems, more like data-gathering, that many of our governments have – the US is number one, but the UK, Germany, the Netherlands also have data-gathering systems. It invites the question 'Who are we, the citizens?' I totally agree with Irit, and I love the image that the loss has to be part of it. At the same time, I think that if we fight together, if diversities (of beliefs, needs, cultures, oppressions) fight for something that can be shared across those differences, we'll achieve rights that are of a different sort from those involving the state giving us rights. Among such rights there should be rights that don't mark us thickly ('the' citizen, 'the' immigrant, 'the' woman, etc), but that mark us thinly and in that thin marking we can hold on to all kinds of particularities. We don't have to be homogenised into some flattened subject that we call 'the' citizen.

**IR:** I agree with that, and I think it's an interesting notion – the notion of a thinned version of the robust and indelible rights that we've always attributed to citizenship, and that means a huge amount of adjustment on one's own part.

I wanted to add just one more thing related to visibility and determinacy. It has to do with the fact that within a notion of infrastructure, which is both determining and invisible, we find a set of contradictions. There's infrastructure, which has always been the main building block of systems of world governments, the colonial system, capitalism etc. There's a kind of neutrality, a seeming neutral efficiency that's just about delivery. But we also know that we inhabit infrastructure in completely divergent and unequal ways, not in terms of the infrastructures being unequal in terms of delivery to different neighbourhoods and so on, but our approach to it, the way in which we inhabit it, our ambivalence towards it, the way in which it's impossible to connect your subjectivity to infrastructure.

These are, I think, the kind of questions that operate between the terms that Saskia is putting forward, between indeterminacy and visibility. And it seems to me that one of the things that's emerging is a whole process by which another kind of negotiation is taking place, that's not about negotiation with the absolutely visible or graspable, and that's why the occupation of major public spaces is so important. It's not because it's televisual and it's a good photogenic moment. It's because it's negotiation with infrastructure: it's negotiation not just with empowered spaces, but with everything that makes them run. The cleaning operations in places like Tahrir after a movement, most of which are done by the protesters and not by the city, are an extraordinary performance of these negotiations.

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1. Saskia Sassen. "Imminent Domain: Spaces of Occupation", *Art Forum*, January 2012.

2. See: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/teconomy/2013/11/10/open-sourcing-the-neighborhood/>

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### **Saskia Sassen and Irit Rogoff**

Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and Co-Chair, The Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University. Her research and writing focuses on the social, economic and political dimensions of globalisation, resulting in numerous publications such as the award-winning *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton University Press, 2006). Her forthcoming book is *Expulsions: When Complexity Produces Elementary Brutalities* (Harvard University Press, 2014). As well as serving on several editorial boards and advising international bodies, she is also

the recipient of diverse awards and mentions, ranging from multiple doctor honoris causa to named lectures and being selected for various honours lists.

Irit Rogoff is a writer, curator and organiser working at the intersection of contemporary art, critical theory and emergent political manifestations. She is Professor of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, London University, where she heads the PhD in Curatorial/Knowledge programme, the MA in Global Arts programme and the new Geo-Cultures Research Centre. Rogoff has written extensively on geography, globalisation and contemporary participatory practices in the expanded field of art.



# How do Resources Impact our Ability to Think About the Future?

As an architect and practitioner in the urban sphere living in Bahrain, an island nation a few kilometres away from one of the largest oil reserves in the world, one would think that the question of how resources impact our ability to think about the future of our cities would be more present in the daily interactions and reflections of those with whom I come into contact. The reality is that in Bahrain, as in most places in the world, we are almost completely oblivious to the impact of energy on our urban development and its interconnectedness with all the other aspects of our contemporary society. As the moderator of the Future City panel about natural resources, I was therefore very curious not only about how we are impacted by our reliance on oil and how that affects our sense of the future, but also about what and how we might be able to change.

Imre Szeman, Research Chair in Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada, has been researching what he has called 'petrocultures' for many years, and argues persuasively that our first challenge is to think of cities not just as valuable spaces of experience or aesthetic landscapes but as enormously complex infrastructural systems based on property and energy that can nonetheless be evaluated in order to be modified. In an article entitled 'Oil Futures', Szeman argues that there are three dominant social narratives concerning oil's future, its relationship to capitalism and a possible move towards sustainable energies, which he describes as strategic realism, techno-utopianism and eco-apocalypse. Strategic realism 'views contemporary geopolitical maneuvering as the inevitable outcome of competition for access to goods and resources: chief amongst these being access to oil'. Techno-utopianism believes that the exhaustion of oil supplies will be solved through science and technology, while the eco-apocalypse 'understands that fundamental social and political change is essential to address the end of oil'. Szeman maintains that while the first two narratives of strategic realism and techno-utopianism 'remain committed to capitalism and treat the future as one in which change will occur because it has to occur', eco-apocalyptic theorists do not offer any alternatives to face the coming disaster and take the view that 'nothing can be done to stop it', although they tend to better understand its scale. The eco-apocalyptic discourse of the last ten years has at least succeeded in raising awareness of, and predicting the unsustainable nature of, our economic, social, political and urban addiction to cheap oil, even if it has done little in terms of providing alternative solutions.

Until now, the social cost of our reliance on oil as a cheap resource has not been factored into our economic and financial systems; nor does it seem likely that it will be, even (or perhaps especially) in countries such as Bahrain where oil reserves have in effect already been substantially depleted. For all the talk about the incredible speed of change that technology brings, it is almost shocking to think how slow our urban infrastructures and socio-economic models have been to adapt.

Szeman's co-panelist, Werner Hofer, Founder Director of the Stevenson Institute for Renewable Energy at the University of Liverpool, has spent several years looking for the best examples worldwide of the successful implementation of renewable energy solutions. Hofer notes that 6% of all jobs in Austria are in the green economy. Hamburg has recently voted to buy back the electricity, gas and local heating grid, taking them into public ownership and attempting to maximise the efficiency of their production with renewable energy.

Hofer also points out that in the United Kingdom, Cambridge has reinvented itself as a haven for tech start-ups and has the highest innovation rating in the country. It has done so through the meeting of twenty-five people in a pub who challenged themselves to change the city a quarter of a century ago. This proves that change can happen through a series of small and slightly alternative decisions, Hofer argues, such as modifying planning and favouring certain credits above others. Eventually, the sum of all these different decisions can contribute to create a new environment.

As partial and incomplete as these solutions may be, they clearly demonstrate that in the abstract there are more than enough renewable-energy resources to satisfy our current and future energy needs. The question remains whether the sum of all these technological innovations and isolated local success

stories is enough to stir the necessary change to alter our reliance on non-renewable energies. How do we map these technologies onto current political systems and city infrastructures that are themselves by-products of the oil-economy? Is it enough to apply these technologies to our existing cities without rethinking the systems and oil-based socio-economic models that have created these cities?

Many European cities have an infrastructure, either by accident or for historical reasons, that can better support renewable energy as a result of the density of population in certain areas. However, in North American cities and those in other parts of the world that have been modelled after them – for example, parts of China, the Middle East and Africa where urban and suburban sprawl are widespread – the adaptation of the infrastructure to renewable energies is much more difficult to apply.

For Szeman, 'the problem with cities today is not just bad planning', but 'very real material relations that generate urban tensions and are pushing many cities to crisis', one of those being the concept of property generated by an understanding of the city as a 'capitalist accumulation'. The problem with property extends further when applied to the increasing privatisation of infrastructure – namely, energy infrastructures, 'which have had a more significant and determinant role in shaping cities into the forms to which we have become accustomed'.

Since our cities today have been shaped by the availability of oil, it is difficult to imagine what our future cities would or could look like in its absence. If they no longer responded solely to a capitalist logic, and ceased to be defined by suburban automobile culture, we would also have to admit that some activities such as agriculture, manufacturing and the production of energy itself would once again need to be produced at a regional and local level. We do not seem willing to do that, nor to move the debate away from one centred around technological advances and towards the structural changes that need to happen in our current political and economic systems in order to address the shortage of affordable oil. Perhaps it is a question that the energy crisis will oblige us to confront.

The recent debate and controversy around the exploitation of shale gas threatens to delay this looming and necessary confrontation even further. If the wide-scale exploitation of shale gas does go ahead, it will dilute the sense of emergency inherited from the eco-apocalyptic discourse, providing oil resources for another fifty years, at the most conservative estimate. It remains to be seen whether the ethical questions relating to the environmental and social concerns about the extraction of shale gas will have enough weight to prevent its wide-scale exploitation. The large amounts of water required to extract shale gas will also increase the geostrategic role of water resources and contribute to redefining a geo-political map of the world based around water and energy as the main commodities, much as the quest for oil and gas defined the geo-political map of the twentieth century.

In an optimistic scenario, it should be possible to imagine the flourishing of a shadow economy where energies could be traded between regions. If applied to the European continent this could mean that regions in the south with an abundance of sun could trade off solar energy against water from the northern regions. Instead of our current trade lines, we could imagine an energy infrastructure based on the exchange of these two commodities. In a city such as Liverpool, which spends over 1 billion GBP per year to pay for its energy, such a shadow economy could allow this money to be spent elsewhere in the city and reinvested in local communities.

This is the kind of thinking and deep structural changes that are needed – ones that would completely change the framework in which we think about our societies and the function of cities. Ideally, we should be able to imagine, as Szeman suggests, 'a social system in which we do not measure ourselves by the degree to which we produced more than the year before, as a measure of its capacity and success'. Perhaps what is most needed is a positive framework from which to start thinking about alternative political, social and urban models and dreaming about other forms of cities.

What is most intriguing about environmental discourse in general, according to Szeman, is the way that it challenges 'existing ideas about the relationship of aesthetics and politics and the ideas that we have

about how and when culture intervenes, and the capacity for citizens to make decisions about the way that they view the world.' It encourages us to think about the potential of current cultural production, in the sense of biennales, debates, documentaries and the like, to create a sense of the change required for a mass reaction. We need to question whether our aesthetic and cultural systems are the right ones, and whether what is needed is an increased individual sense of responsibility towards the issue, or a new collective modus operandi.

If we do admit that the challenges faced by the shortage of cheap energy cannot be dealt with at an individual level but instead require profound structural changes to our current economic, political and social systems, then we also need to change the way in which we address the debate on resources, not as an independent and specific discourse but one that is underlying in all aspects of our current capitalist social models. In short, we need to start discussing models in which everything is subject to change – and fast.

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### Noura Al Sayeh

Noura Al-Sayeh is an architect currently working at the Bahrain Ministry of Culture as Head of Architectural Affairs. Here, she is responsible for overseeing the planning and implementation of cultural institutions and museums, as well as the creation of an active agenda of exhibitions and academic exchange initiatives. Al Sayeh oversaw the programme for the *Month of Architecture* (2012), Manama Capital of Culture of the Arab World 2012, concentrating on the ideas and practice of public space in the Arab World. She was also co-curator and curator respectively of Bahrain's first and second participation in the Venice Architecture Biennale.

# Towards A Thermodynamic Urban Design

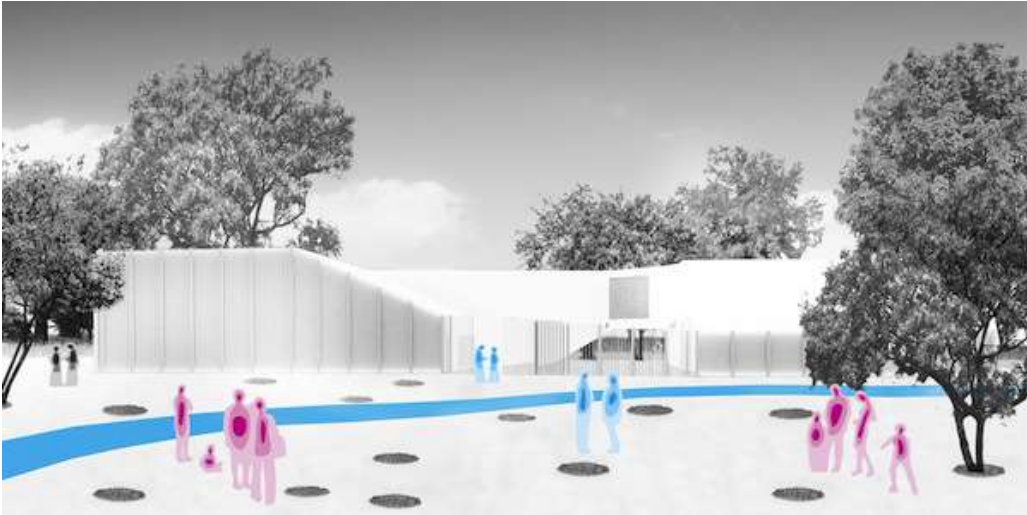


Jade Eco Park, 2012-2015, Taichung, Taiwan, Philippe Rahm architectes, Mosbach paysagistes, Ricky Liu & Associates

Over the last forty years, the history of urban and regional planning has been written from a macroscopic and aesthetic point of view, as opposed to a microscopic and physiological one. By re-analysing this urban story through a microscopic prism, we can discover other factors that have been more relevant in the construction of cities and the composition of their forms. A reassessment will allow us to offer an alternative to the present urban development, which is currently based on the phenomenon of an unbalanced and unethical economic globalisation. Our ambition is to look to a more sustainable, humanistic and equitable global urbanisation for all.

If we think of urban planning in terms of Thermodynamics, we could start to imagine a new strategy of globalisation: a global redeployment of industrial production in a world based on energy and climate criteria, rather than on the current financial or economic criteria. For example, in the current crisis of the European model of the 'Post-industrial society', France has recently decided to re-industrialise itself. This seems necessary in order to achieve a world balance in the coming years between the South and the North. If the North is to experience a re-industrialisation, the South will have to increase the social and health conditions of workers. So, if we are looking for a new equilibrium to achieve this new stage in globalisation, we must know which criteria will become important when planning on a global scale.

The current division between design conception and industrial production is primarily caused by the out-sourcing of industrial production to countries where labour is cheaper and the labour law is the least restrictive. The result is a continual shifting of the place of production as industries search for the most economical solution. Consequently, social and ecological inequalities that can no longer be accepted arise. We need to find a future with an overall balance between the cost and the social conditions of work.



Jade Eco Park, 2012-2015, Taichung, Taiwan, Philippe Rahm architectes, Mosbach paysagistes, Ricky Liu & Associates

To begin to define the concept of Urban Thermodynamics, we can draw on three examples that have, in a new and innovative way, managed to exploit energy resources related to their unique geographical position.

The first example is the relocation of Facebook servers from California to the Arctic Circle in Lulea, Sweden. Computers that hold huge amounts of data overheat and require a great deal of energy to be cooled. Therefore, it is easy to understand the decision to relocate the servers from the Californian climate, where the annual temperature is 19.5 degree Celsius, to the cooler climate of Lulea, where the average annual temperature of is 2 degrees Celsius. This shift in location and climate results in huge energy savings, which in turn saves several tens of billions of US dollars for the American-owned company.



Jade Eco Park, 2012-2015, Taichung, Taiwan, Philippe Rahm architectes, Mosbach paysagistes, Ricky Liu & Associates

The second example is in the small village of Trient in Switzerland. The village is located in the remote mountains of Valais and has a small population of 150 inhabitants. In the coming years, the village will receive several million Swiss Francs in hydraulic royalties. This is thanks to the town's unique glacial dam, which supplies electricity to the Swiss railway network.

The third example is the German Desertec Project. The project proposes to cover a small part of the Sahara Desert with solar panels, with the aim to supply all the electricity needs of North Africa and Europe.

These three examples reveal surprising geographical locations for a new urban development, focusing on locations that were previously not populated and never urbanised, such as the far north, the desert and the mountains. Thus, the twenty-first century is going to see a radical change in the criteria of



geographical value; we will perhaps witness a relocation of human geography, which will cause the creation of new cities and the decline of old. Climate can play a primary role in the future urbanisation of the planet. Following global thermodynamic values related to parameters of geographical location, latitude and altitude can be proposed as a solution for a globalisation that will no longer be based on wages or working injustices, but on ecological and climatic factors, towards sustainable development for humanity. We could call this new type of urbanisation 'Thermodynamic Urban Planning', based on a world redistribution of the urbanisation on the planet according to the locations of the renewable energy resources today.

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### Philippe Rahm

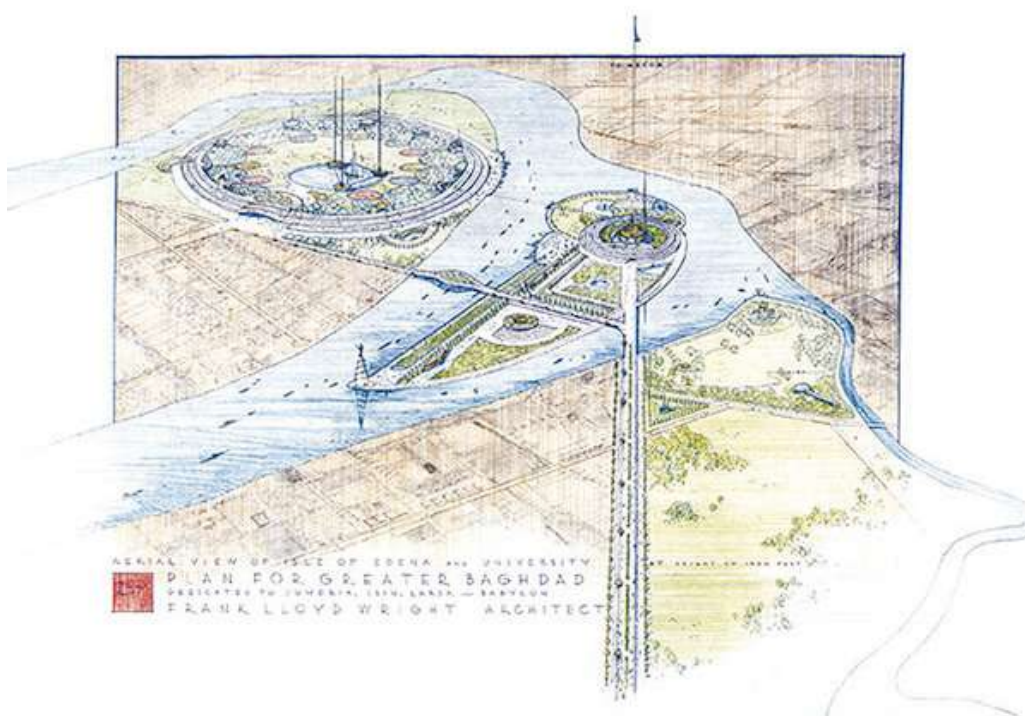
Philippe Rahm is an Architect and Principal in the office of Philippe Rahm Architectes, Paris. His work, which extends the field of architecture from the physiological to the meteorological, has received an international audience in the context of sustainability. He has been nominated for several international architectural awards, and has participated in a number of exhibitions worldwide, including at Archilab, Guggenheim, New York and Manifesta.

# What Do We Need to Deconstruct?

The first cities appeared in modern-day Iraq, Egypt and the Levant and connected the two worlds of the Mediterranean and Asia. The coming of Islam in the seventh century reinforced the city's primacy as the locus of both the community and the polity of the new religion. But the most enduring legacy of the Islamic city has been its fantastic quality, recalling the grandeur and wealth of ancient imperial capitals and trade emporia.

Italo Calvino in his *Invisible Cities* (1972) captured that fabulous strangeness in lyrical descriptions. His fictional Marco Polo recounts to a rapt Qublai Khan the fables of the cities of his vast Mongol empire, which the Khan had apparently not visited. They are magical, mysterious, captivating, depressing, oppressive, liberating, degrading, humanising and demonising all at once. But Calvino is constructing a chronicle of nostalgia, for Marco Polo is weaving together, from memory but also from fantasy, the images of his beloved Venice, the queen of the Mediterranean, all cast in the fragmented narrative of the cities of the Orient.

Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural approach was no less romantic. His plan for Greater Baghdad in 1957–58, which centred on an island in the middle of the river Tigris, is nothing less than a modern Oriental fantasy. Recalling the Round-city of al-Mansur, built more than 1,100 years earlier, the project came complete with an assortment of naïve references to what an American raised at the end of the nineteenth century would have thought of the Orient through his reading of the *One Thousand and One Nights*.



Frank Lloyd Wright, Aerial View of Isle of Edena and University, Plan For Greater Baghdad © ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014.

A seemingly new kind of architectural fantasy has emerged in the Arabian Gulf in the last twenty years. I say 'seemingly' because it is purported to be futuristic, having broken all previous measures of scale, form, luxury, fantasy and often purpose and urban constraints. But in its dependence on formalistic references to traditional forms and patterns, and its reliance on a dystopically halved city, this architecture is in fact regressive and antiquated.

Dubai, with its unrestrained economic *laissez-faire* and aggressive pursuit of investments, was the first to ride, and eventually to guide, the new tide. The entire city, its surrounding desert, and even its coastal water became the world's most phenomenal visual laboratory, where the designers' architectural

flights of fancy, which pushed the limits of size, height, eccentricity and desire, and the willingness of their patrons to bankroll those fantasies, seemed unbridled.

In this make-believe milieu, the architecture of what Mike Davis called the 'utopian capitalist city' appears to have emerged as a tacit design objective shared by the designers and their patrons to lure in more investors in a financial cyclical scheme. Thoughtful design has been hastily given up in favour of a new daredevil architecture that loudly, and often too loudly, bespeaks the ambition to endow the global pursuit of luxury aimed at the wealthy with a fabulous imagery that Joseph Rykwert matter-of-factly calls the 'Emirate Style'.

The Dubai Syndrome has spread to other cities in the Gulf. But this hasty and hungry process of expansion and luxury has its harsh consequences. At home, it has brought into sharp relief the contrast between the lifestyles of the wealthy natives and the huge masses of poor labourers imported mostly from South and Southeast Asia, who are crowded in ill-kempt camps or dilapidated rental neighbourhoods and denied any civic rights.

Severe urban effects are also felt in the older and poorer cities in the surrounding region that are directly influenced by the Arabian cities. The proliferation of Dubai-style futuristic 'New Cities' around these older cities has caused their historic neighbourhoods, already suffering under the weight of acute population explosion and an assortment of governmental corruption, a greedy real-estate market and chaotic overbuilding, to decay faster than at any time before.

The most alarming effect of this relentless neo-liberal transformation, however, is neither architectural nor urban. It is rather the fading away of the cities' civic quality that had been slowly and painstakingly acquired over the last two centuries of the on-and-off modernisation process. The poor quarters, as Michael Slackman had already remarked about Cairo in the *New York Times* in 2007, are being turned into contiguous, ruralised squatter settlements where people live by their own wits and devices, cut off from the authorities, the law and often each other.

When the Arab Spring erupted in 2011, it was partially a response to these conditions, as the famous slogan '*aysh, huriyya, 'adala ijtimaiyya*' (Bread, Freedom, Social Justice) implies. The various revolutions strove for a freer and more just sociopolitical structure. And although the revolutionary aftershocks are still brutally shaking the region and threatening its very geopolitical balance, their unfulfilled original goals have not lost any of their urgency or significance. Therein lies our professional responsibility. It is time to aspire again to a utopian future urbanism that takes into account a clear conception of the lost respect for the citizen.

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### Nasser Rabbat

The scholarly interests of architect and historian Nasser Rabbat include the history and historiography of Islamic architecture, art, urban history and postcolonial criticism. He is the Aga Khan Professor and the Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. Publications include: *Thaqafat al Bina' wa Bina' al-Thaqafa* (The Culture of Building and Building Culture, Beirut, 2002) and *Mamluk History Through Architecture: Building, Culture, and Politics in Mamluk Egypt and Syria* (London, 2010). He serves on the boards of various cultural and educational organisations, consults with international design firms on projects in the Middle East, and maintains several websites focusing on Islamic architecture and urbanism.

# We Are Here to Stay



Homebaked, 2013, Anfield, Liverpool

*One of the beauties of the project is the people, and the richness the different perspectives give to understanding how to reach the goals of the main idea. The perspectives may vary and may well be opposed to your own, but they all relate to achieving the same, and shape the whole.*

– Fred Brown, co-producer of Homebaked

### Telling the story

Telling the story of *2Up2Down/Homebaked* has always been a big part of the project's process. We tell it to visitors, journalists, students, politicians and customers. We tell it at conferences, in front of a camera, behind the counter, over Skype and in the pub. We have our storytellers, ambassadors and writers. Sue is a one-take wonder, Jayne is passionate and funny, Fred is a poet, Maria writes funding speak, Jeanne offers a wider picture and so on.

I didn't experience the beginnings of Homebaked personally. Most of us didn't. 'These were the times', I once heard someone saying: 'when "we" was just two people and a dog'.

There are written versions of an overall narrative. Different people have cut-and-pasted it together over the years, told and retold it time and again, from place to place, often misquoting those who have said something very beautiful or funny or intelligent. And some of us have knowingly thrown in some fiction (and fictional characters) from time to time, because we think this world could do with a couple more inspiring urban myths.

Throughout this process, we've simplified things in order to make sense of complex situations. I'm talking lightly about something that, as someone who co-authors those texts or presentations on a regular basis, I've actually often find very difficult. Being part of the day-to-day running of Homebaked, I yearn to capture its mad complexity and give the reader a sense of the furious depth of detail and personal struggle that's swirling around in the broad container of – for example – the term 'community-led'.

I'm fully aware how necessary it is to tell the story: to achieve visibility, attract funding or simply because I believe that even while we simplify the multi-layered process that is Homebaked and its complex context, we're telling a story that just isn't told enough. At the same time, if we want to find new ways of

organising ourselves collectively we need to find fitting formats to tell our story and to experiment with them.

### Cut-and-pasted just for you

Anfield is a classic Northern English working-class neighbourhood, famously the home of Liverpool Football Club. Visitors are often shocked at the outer appearance of the area. Streets upon streets contain only boarded-up houses. Many other houses have been demolished, leaving temporary grassed areas. The high street consists mainly of fast-food outlets, catering to match-day visitors only.

This neighbourhood has been one of the pathfinder areas of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI), originally conceived to get money flowing through nine northern English areas; places identified as 'market failures' where, unlike anywhere else in Britain, house prices have stagnated. Alone in the Anfield/Breckfield area, where the programme was implemented in 2001, several thousand homes were emptied of their occupants in order to build new housing estates. Many people who owned their terraced houses outright couldn't afford the new homes with the compensation given to them by the city. Many were either pushed into debt or had to start renting.

In 2008 The Housing Market Renewal Initiative was completely pulled due to the economic crisis. As a result, the remaining residents were left waiting, as new solutions were slow to manifest. Behind the Stadium where Liverpool Football Club is planning to build a new stand, residents are stranded between 'tinned up' houses owned by the city or the club.

When Anfield was designated part of the HMRI, Mitchell's, the neighbourhood bakery founded in 1903 and known as 'The Pie Shop' by football fans from all over the world, was among the buildings earmarked for demolition. The sisters who owned it and ran the bakery were then in their seventies and considering retirement. Unable to sell a business whose building was threatened with demolition, they waited for the local council to buy them out. While they waited, they were losing customers as the surrounding streets were emptied. When the renewal programme was frozen but the demarcation for demolition wasn't lifted, they had little choice but to close the bakery and retire without compensation.

At the beginning of 2011 the vacant building became the base for *2Up2Down*, a project proposing a small-scale community-led alternative to large planning schemes. *2Up2Down* was initiated and supported over the years by Dutch artist Jeanne van Heeswijk and Liverpool Biennial. Both the artist and representatives of Liverpool Biennial still work alongside the group today.

The bakery building became the site for public discussion and debate, as well as for weekly design workshops and planning sessions focusing on its transformation. Over the first year, a group of around twenty young people worked with URBED architects to remodel the building to accommodate a community bakery with a training kitchen alongside a small housing scheme for two to four households, taking the community as their client. Other people of all ages joined them and together they're developing a new model for community-owned housing and enterprise. It's now called Homebaked.

The group established a Community Land Trust, which enables the community to collectively own and manage land and buildings. Inspired by CLTs in East London, Cumbria and Boston, it's run by a board of volunteers, including people from the local area and professionals from the fields of law, architecture, accountancy and housing.

Another group passionate about reopening the bakery and creating a successful co-operatively run business that would provide employment, training and learning opportunities in the neighbourhood incorporated Homebaked, becoming Homebaked Co-operative Anfield.

### Where did I come from to get here?

When we were invited to be one of the Expeditions as part of *Future City* we considered which format would be best to tell the story of Homebaked. Rather than having one of the ambassadors re-tell the narrative, we wondered if it would be possible to give the audience a taste of the complexity of the process by telling it together, each of us a protagonist and each offering a very personal trajectory. A hosted talk

show was a format that would allow us to tell a biography of Homebaked through personal contributions of some of the people who've been shaping it. The questions we asked in preparation were simple:

Where did I come from to get here? What was my first point of arrival? Why did I stay (or leave)? What do I bring?

As is often the case with performance, the very first improvisation can be the most powerful. In preparation for the event, we organised a workshop at which many people who'd been part of Homebaked over the years turned up. Most of us didn't know each other, or didn't know how the other had been involved. The only task I gave as the facilitator of the event was for participants to introduce themselves in chronological order of appearance in the Homebaked time line. I asked them to keep in mind the questions above.

For me, that evening was Homebaked at its best. While we were telling each other the story, picking out particular catalysing events, individual contributions and key encounters, giving personal anecdotes and describing each moment from our very personal and very different perspectives, a clear narrative arc evolved – one driven by our values, needs and urgencies, that although made up out of so many little parts, made perfect sense as a whole.

The story ended in the present of that particular day with someone telling the very last chapter. This resulted in a new development that not many in the room had heard until then.

### We're here to stay

The expedition to Homebaked happened to fall at a very precarious time for us. We were on the home stretch towards the opening of the bakery: the architectural plans were about to be handed in for planning permission and we'd just been offered two government grants to put the housing part of the scheme in motion. With this as a backdrop, the city council then decided, as part of its new Regeneration proposal 'The Anfield Project', that it still wanted to demolish the buildings on our stretch, which had never officially been alleviated of the demolition order sanctioned under HMRI.

We decided to open the bakery nonetheless. Along the way of the Homebaked trajectory, we've learned that it's important to manifest physically and to stick (softly) to our guns (skills and passions). Action is part of telling the story and 'If we don't author our story, others will. And they may tell our story in ways that we may not like.'<sup>1</sup> The bakery is going well. We haven't been demolished yet. The CLT is adjusting its plans to the new situation. And we've started negotiations with the city council.

If there's a next time to tell the story collectively, I do hope someone from the council will be amongst the people presenting themselves and their trajectory within the narrative of Homebaked.

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1. Marshall Ganz, Public narrative, Collective Action and Power

## Jeanne van Heeswijk and Britt Jurgensen

**Jeanne van Heeswijk** How can an artist be an instrument for the collective reimagining of daily environments, given the complexity of our societies? This is the question that artist Jeanne van Heeswijk, of the Netherlands, considers when deciding how to employ her work within communities. Van Heeswijk believes communities should co-produce their own futures. That's why she embeds herself, for years at a time, in communities from Rotterdam to Liverpool, working with them to improve their neighbourhoods and empowering them to take matters into their own hands, creating an alternative to the urban planning schemes which rarely take embedded culture into account, that are often foisted upon by local authorities. Her work often attempts to unravel invisible legislation, governmental codes, and social institutions, gradually enabling areas to take control over their future. She calls it "radicalising the local" by empowering communities to become their own antidote.



Van Heeswijk's work has been featured in numerous books and publications worldwide, as well as internationally renowned biennials such as those of Liverpool, Busan, Taipei, Shanghai and Venice. She has received a host of accolades and recognitions for her work, including most recently the 2012 Curry Stone Prize for Social Design Pioneers and the 2011 Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change.

**Britt Jurgensen** Resident in Anfield, Britt Jurgensen is a German theatre and performance artist. She used to run an international touring theatre company and has worked on several community arts projects all over Europe as a workshop leader, director and project manager. Britt got involved in Homebaked in 2011 and is a co-founder of the bakery co-operative and a board member of the Community Land Trust. She directed and co-scripted 'The Anfield Home Tour' in the 2012 Biennial and 'We are here to stay', a performative conversation as part of the Future City event in 2013.

# Colophon

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