

(un) fair cities

Equity, Ideology and
Utopia in Urban Texts

Organised by
Ralahine Centre for
Utopian Studies

Second International
Conference of the
Association for Literary
Urban Studies

University of Limerick

12-13
Dec 2019

Conference venues:

- Appeal Court, Glucksman Library Building (GL) (opening session)
- Engineering Research Building (ERB)

University of Limerick, Plassey, Co. Limerick, Ireland

Guest WiFi: ulwireless

Conference support:

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Association for Literary Urban Studies & Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies

(Un)Fair Cities. Equity, Ideology and Utopia in Urban Texts

12-13 December 2019

University of Limerick

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Thursday 12 December		
08.45 – 09.30	Registration (Entrance Hall, Glucksman Library)	
09.30 – 09.45	Opening remarks (Appeal Court, Glucksman Library)	
09.45 – 11.00	Keynote Session 1 (Appeal Court, Glucksman Library) Chair: Michael G. Kelly Caroline Edwards (Birkbeck College, University of London) <i>'The other city, the city of dreams: Literary Utopias and Literary Utopianism'</i>	
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee Break	
11.30 – 13.00	Parallel sessions 1-2 (Engineering Research Building)	
Panel 1: ERB 006	Panel 2: ERB 008	
Chair: Michael Griffin	Chair: Valérie K. Orlando	
Henriette Steiner and Maria Finn (University of Copenhagen). 'Can We Feel Like Insects and Wiggle Our Way Around the Earth Like Worms? Looking for Relational Utopias in Dystopian Fiction and Critical Theory'	Peter Janos Galambos (Toronto). 'The Prophet of the Modern City: Louis-Sébastien Mercier and the Politics of Utopian Modernism'	
Ellen Dillon (Dublin City University). 'Nothing is Utopian. Everything wants to be': Improvising the Commons in Contemporary Poetry.'	Douglas Smith (University College Dublin). 'Utopia and Agoraphobia in 1920s Marseille: Empty Space in Moholy-Nagy and Kracauer'	
Lieven Ameel (University of Turku). 'Peopling the Future Fair City: Affordances of Literary	Edward Welch (University of Aberdeen). 'Build the Imaginary: Spatial Planners and the Limits	

Fiction, Planning and Policy'	of Utopia in Post-War France'	
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch (Buffet, Engineering Research Building)	
14.00 – 15.30	Parallel sessions 2-3 (Engineering Research Building)	
Panel 3: ERB 006	Panel 4: ERB 008	
Chair: Lieven Ameel	Chair: Maxim Shadurski	
Jason Finch (Åbo Akademi University). 'Fairness and Unfairness in Space City: Retrospectively Reading Houston Planning Texts, 1929-2003'	Jana Čulek (TU Delft). 'Utopia as Urban Testing Ground'	
Anne Gessler (University of Houston-Clear Lake). 'The Consumers' Brewery: Reflecting the Utopian Potential and Limits of Interracial Radical Unionizing and Immigrant Identity in the New Orleans Beer Industry, 1905-19'	Deborah Lambert (Vrije Universiteit, Brussels). 'Recycling Old Ideals? A Circular Utopia'	
Adam McKie (Royal Holloway University of London). 'Utopia, Ltd.? English Garden 'Cities' and Liberal Capitalist Utopianism during the Crisis of Capitalism, 1926-39'	Hanna Musiol (Norwegian University of Science and Technology). ' <i>Plotting Futures: Industry, Colony, and Speculative Storytelling in Urban Spaces</i> '	
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break	
16.00 – 17.30	Parallel sessions 5-7 (Engineering Research Building)	
Panel 5: ERB 006	Panel 6: ERB 007	Panel 7: ERB 008
Chair: Tina Morin	Chair: Douglas Smith	Chair: Edward Welch
Olli-Paavo Koponen and Juho Rajaniemi (Tampere University). 'New Urbanism as a Populist Utopia'	Pekka Kilpeläinen (University of Eastern Finland). 'The Politics of Urban Transcultural Utopiascapes: Contact Zone, Heterotopia, and Utopian Enclave'	Clara Zgola (Harvard University). 'The <i>Grand Paris</i> Project Present Past: Literary Investigations about the French Capital Futures'
Claire Downey (University of Limerick). 'Night-walking: Encountering Possibility in the Nocturnal Urban Landscape'	Sunjay Mathuria (Toronto). 'Displacement, Dispossession and Unjust Places in Canada: The Idea of Home and Ownership in Kerri Sakamoto's Floating City and Wayde Compton's The Outer Harbour'	Annie Girardin-Halpin (University of Limerick). 'Utopia or Dystopia: The Ambivalence of the Supermarket in Annie Ernaux's <i>Look at the Lights my Love (Regarde les lumières mon amour)</i> '

Elisabeth Haefs (University of Duisburg-Essen). ‘Another World is Plantable’: Urban Planning and Utopian Gardening’	Markku Salmela (Tampere University). ‘Retreating to the Urban: Representations of Private Liberation at the City Centre’	Maša Uzelac (NUI Galway). ‘Back to the Pastoral: Dystopian Urban Spaces and Idealised Countryside in Michel Houellebecq’s Fiction’
20.00	Conference Dinner [optional] (<i>The French Table</i>, Limerick City)	

Friday 13 December		
09.30 – 11.00	Parallel sessions 8-10 (Engineering Research Building)	
Panel 8: ERB 006	Panel 9: ERB 007	Panel 10: ERB 008
Chair: Anna Ryan Dominic Davies (City, University of London). ‘Image-Making in the Global City: Speculative Urbanisms and Water Politics in Capetonian Comics’ Callum Bateson (Trinity College Dublin). ‘From the City to the Sea: Rethinking Non-places and Nature with Matthias Nawrat and Sara Baume’ Marjolein Van Herten and Marieke Winkler (Open University of the Netherlands). ‘Imaginaries of the Future City. Envisioning Climate Change and Technological Cityscapes through Contemporary Speculative Fiction’	Chair: Yianna Liatsos Valérie K. Orlando (University of Maryland). ‘The Challenges of Writing the Poetics of Relation in La Littérature-monde: Globalization’s Dystopic Utopias in the Novels of Abdourahman Waberi, Abdelaziz Belkhdja and Maryse Condé’ Gbemisola Adeoti (Obafemi Awolowo University). ‘Politics and Governance of the Urban Space in Postcolonial Nigerian Literature’ Karen Boucher (University of San Francisco). ‘Flights of Fancy in Urban Congo: La tour et le trou’	Chair: Caroline Edwards Maxim Shadurski (Siedlce University). ‘The Unnamed City: The Politics of the (Un)Representable in Maggie Gee’s <i>The Flood</i> (2004)’ Minna Chudoba (Tampere University). Confronting Otherness. The Built Environments in Adrian Tchaikovsky’s <i>Shadows of the Apt</i> Eleonora Rossi (Birkbeck College, University of London). ‘Spaces of Oppression in Contemporary Feminist Dystopia’
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee Break	
11.30 – 13.00	Parallel sessions 11-13 (Engineering Research Building)	
Panel 11: ERB 006	Panel 12: ERB 007	Panel 13: ERB 008
Chair: Jason Finch Aleksi Rennes (University of Turku). ‘The Utopian Whatever: Unruly Spatiality in Italo Calvino’s <i>Invisible Cities</i> ’	Chair: Jean Conacher Stephan Ehrig (University College Dublin). ‘(Im-)Materialised Utopia: Alfred Wellm’s Morisco and the Construction of Halle-Neustadt’	Chair: Mariano Paz Cornelia Gräbner (Lancaster University). ‘Acquiescent Subjects in the Utopian City: Ray Loriga’s <i>Rendición</i> ’

<p>Olga Szmidt (Jagiellonian University, Krakow). ‘Dystopia of the Green Island. The Global Financial Crisis (2008) and Polish Urban Imagination’</p> <p>Matej Niksic (Urban Planning Institute of Slovenia). ‘Experimental place-writing: Crowdsourced photography with captions as citizens’ narrative of their neighbourhood’</p>	<p>Joachim Fischer (University of Limerick). ‘Werner Illing’s Utopolis (1930): Re-reading a Social-Democratic City Utopia of the Weimar Era’</p> <p>Hanna Henryson (Uppsala University). ‘Community is the one true capital’: The Ideologies and Realities of Communal Living in Anke Stelling’s Berlin Novels’</p>	<p>Carla Almanza-Gálvez (Lima). ‘Dystopian Consumerism and Oppressive Spaces in Ray Loriga’s <i>Tokyo Doesn’t Love Us Anymore</i>’</p> <p>Adriana Martins (Universidade Católica Portuguesa). ‘Saramago’s <i>Baltasar and Blimunda</i> or When Fiction Transforms a Town’</p>
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch (Buffet, Engineering Research Building)	
14.00 – 15.30	Parallel sessions 14-15 (Engineering Research Building)	
<p>Panel 14: ERB 006</p> <p>Chair: Marieke Krajenbrink</p> <p>Ruth Glynn (University of Bristol). ‘Between Utopia and Apocalypse: Literary Explorations of Symbolic Politics in Naples’</p> <p>Giulia Brecciaroli (University of Warwick). ‘Authoritarian City: Milan and Turin in the Novels of Luciano Bianciardi and Paolo Volponi’</p> <p>Bianca Rita Cataldi (University College Dublin). ‘The City is a Circus: Urban Fables and the End of Utopia in the Novels of Carlotta De Melas’</p>	<p>Panel 15: ERB 008</p> <p>‘Navigating Beyond Gender: The City in Feminist Science Fiction’</p> <p>Katie Stone (Birkbeck). On Raccoona Sheldon’s ‘Your Faces, O My Sisters! Your Faces Filled Of Light!’ (1976)</p> <p>Sasha Myerson and Tom Dillon (Birkbeck). Reading Sheldon with Laura Mixon’s <i>Glasshouses</i></p> <p>Raphael Kabo (Birkbeck) and Rachel Hill (Goldsmiths). Reading Sheldon with China Miéville’s <i>Perdido Street Station</i></p> <p>Amy Butt (Reading University) and Sinéad Murphy (KCL / LSE). Reading Sheldon with Nalo Hopkinson’s <i>Brown Girl in the Ring</i></p>	
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break	
16.00 – 17.15	<p>Keynote 2 (Engineering Research Building –ERB 001)</p> <p>Chair: Tom Moylan</p> <p>Antonis Balasopoulos (University of Cyprus)</p> <p>‘The Dialectics of Reverie: Daydreaming and the City, Fair and Unfair’</p>	
17.15 – 18.00	Closing Discussion	
18.00 – 19.00	Closing Reception (hosted by the Centre for European Studies, UL)	

Book of Abstracts

(by panel)

Thursday 12 December

Panel 1:

Can We Feel Like Insects and Wiggle Our Way Around the Earth Like Worms? Looking for Relational Utopias in Dystopian Fiction and Critical Theory

Henriette Steiner, University of Copenhagen & Maria Finn, Independent Scholar (Copenhagen)

Works of fiction from the last couple of decades that deal with future cities and societies seem to teem with characters from the animal world who take on allegorical characteristics. Just think of the butterflies and ants in A.S. Byatt's novellas *Angels and Insects* (1993), the coyote and the spider in Ursula K. Le Guin's collection of texts *Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight* (1994), the fish and the giant slug in Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), or the dream of whale music in Megan Hunter's debut feminist cli-fi novel *The End We Start From* (2017). Thus, the age-old theme of relationships between humans and animals, the human and the other, or human and non-human agents – terms often employed in contemporary theory – is explored by writers who consider (often intertwined) utopian and dystopian alternatives to our present. Similarly, contemporary critical theory also employs animals as characters to explore such relationships and even the very idea of relationality itself. Think of the spider Donna Haraway's influential feminist book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016), architectural scholar Mark Wigley's interest in insect antennae in the exhibition *The Human Insect: Antenna Architectures 1887–2017* (2018), or the ideas of wormy composting and interspecies symbiosis in the volume *fermenting feminism*, edited by curator and writer Lauren Fournier (2017). Moreover, in light of the recent surge in animal studies and post-humanist thinking, which feeds into discussions around climate change and the Anthropocene, the exploration of human/non-human relationships offers a welcome opportunity to reconsider or even dismantle modern ideas of human exceptionalism. However, such theoretical tenets run the risk of slipping into extreme visions of relationality, visions which have recently been critiqued as potentially levelling ontological, political and economic inequalities and differences (e.g. Zoe Todd, 2016; Kathryn Yussof, 2018; Joanna Zylińska, 2018). In this sense, as we propose in this paper, we may say these visions risk building a form of 'relational utopia' (Steiner and Veel, 2020). Working across utopian and dystopian positions on modern cities and societies in fictional writing, as well as recent theoretical work across fields such as post-humanism, actor-network-theory and animal studies, this presentation explores the 'relational utopia' in contemporary thought. The work is a collaboration between artist Maria Finn and cultural theorist Henriette Steiner. Using a traditional scholarly paper as well as an art film to do so, we will explore recent relational thinking across the human-animal spectrum to reveal the premises, potentials and difficulties that emerge when such thinking builds relational utopias.

“Nothing is Utopian. Everything wants to be”: Improvising the Commons in Contemporary Poetry

Ellen Dillon, Dublin City University

Women from a flat windswept settlement called Utopia focus on the intricate life that exists there. (Lisa Robertson, R's Boat). The idea of the commons as a hard-won, shared and transient urban space is central to a strain of contemporary political and poetic thinking that encompasses Stefan Harvey and Fred Moten's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* and Silvia Federici's *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. This paper will take these texts as a starting point for its exploration of the utopian potential of the provisional urban commons, drawing on Eirik Steinhoff's poetic record of the 2012 Oakland Commune, *A Fiery Flying Roule*, a text that seeks to embody the utopian commons from which it emerged and to which it serves as memorial. It will then turn to the work of Canadian poet and essayist Lisa Robertson, whose 2003 collection *Occasional Works and Seven Walks from the Office of Soft Architecture*, proposes a vision of utopia that is active and ambulant, an urban and conditional 'utopia of improvised necessity' (171). This section will trace the interactions between individuals, groups and shared urban spaces through which such utopias can be improvised, and identify the poetic and political potential of such acts of commoning, drawing on the improvisation of urban commons in recent poetry by Lisa Robertson, Anne Boyer and Fred Moten.

Peopling the Future Fair City: Affordances of Literary Fiction, Planning and Policy

Lieven Ameel, University of Turku

Narrated future visions of (un)fair cities are about putting in place meaningful storyworlds (or cityworlds), with distinct spatial, temporal, moral, social, linguistic, and metaphoric dimensions and guided by their own modalities. But as important is the way in which these storyworlds are peopled in a way that gives readers of such future visions access to the qualia – the 'how it feels like' – and to situated agency. This paper draws on Adam and Groves' *Future Matters* (2007), in which the authors warn against an "emptying of the future" (ibid., 2), in a bid to consider how different textual genres envision and people the future fair city. It aims to examine the affordances of literary fiction, urban planning, and policy, for imagining fair future cities, and the possibilities to act towards fair futures. Drawing on recent examples from New York City's planning and literary fiction, I will argue that literary fiction is geared more toward embedding and embodying moral dilemmas, while planning and policy texts tend to focus on embedding decisions. However, the increasing use of non-fictional elements (reportage, lists, scientific detail) in future fiction, and the increasing use of fictional elements (fictional characters, personal experiences) blurs such clear-cut distinctions.

Panel 2

The Prophet of the Modern City: Louis-Sébastien Mercier and the Politics of Utopian Modernism

Peter Janos Galambos, Independent Scholar (Toronto)

While perhaps not as well known today as Plato's *Republic* or Thomas More's *Utopia*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'An 2440* is amongst the most important works of utopian writing. Despite being full of references and call-backs to his more well-known utopian predecessors, Mercier's *L'An 2440* is a true innovation. In this essay, I make the case for why Mercier's *L'An 2440* represents the full expression of an entirely new kind of utopia - a plan for a future city that is complete, concrete, and unambiguously sincere. Mercier's *L'An 2440* is noteworthy as it is the first utopian work to be set not in a lost or forgotten space but in distant future time. With

reference to the history of Enlightenment city planning practices (which includes a case study of Napoléon III and Baron Haussmann's redesign of Paris), I highlight the extreme presence of Mercier's portrayal of future Paris. Drawing attention to some of the more curious elements of Mercier's *L'An 2440*, such as its elitism and erasure of urban elements deemed undesirable (for example, vagrants, drunkards, and prostitutes), I reveal how Mercier prophetically anticipates both the ideal of the modern city and the archetype of the kind of architect that would seek to build it. Altogether, in this essay, I propose that Mercier's "plan" for future Paris is the utopia most responsible for solidifying, for better or worse, the relationship between the concept of utopia and authoritarian city planning practices like those of Haussmann and Le Corbusier within the contemporary urban imaginary.

Utopia and Agoraphobia in 1920s Marseille: Empty Space in Moholy-Nagy and Kracauer

Douglas Smith, University College Dublin

Moholy-Nagy's film *Marseille, Old Port* (1929) apparently begins with a striking visual wish-fulfilment of a modernist dream, the city as tabula rasa or empty site awaiting reconstruction. A map of central Marseille is punctured by a pair of scissors that proceed to cut out the area to the north of the Old Port, a quarter long regarded as a morally reprobate slum destined for demolition. What the cut-out section reveals behind the map, however, is not the blank slate of future development but the teeming life of the present streets and quays. The film shows what the actual excision of the Old Port would remove from the city: the communities and lifestyles of an ethnically mixed working-class quarter that included but was not defined by the city's red light district. Moholy-Nagy indirectly demonstrates how the public health and safety arguments in favour of redevelopment, often framed in terms of hygiene, also served as an alibi for ethnic and social 'cleansing'. If the emptiness of the tabula rasa would remain an ideal for architects such as Eugène Beaudoin, who envisaged transforming the Old Port into a vast civic square, it functioned very differently for others, such as the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, for whom the existing public space of the city elicited an agoraphobic reaction, a sense of exposure to malevolent surveillance. In fact, as Moholy-Nagy's film also documents, Marseille already possessed a vast empty space in close proximity to the Old Port: the cleared slum site behind the Stock Exchange that lay undeveloped for decades due to stagnant property values and political corruption. In 1920s Marseille, a blank slate could well remain blank, reducing the modernist utopia to a literal non-place, impossible to envisage as anything but yet another empty space, and quite possibly one with a distinctly sinister atmosphere.

Build the Imaginary: Spatial Planners and the Limits of Utopia in Post-War France

Edward Welch, University of Aberdeen

In 1965, the French government published the Schéma directeur d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région de Paris. Ordained by President Charles De Gaulle, it was one of the most ambitious planning initiatives in post-war Europe. Its aim was to reshape and prepare Paris for the Year 2000 by modernising infrastructure, improving transportation, and creating new urban environments. With its insistence on the efficient and productive use of space for the economic benefit of the nation, it came to represent the sort of imperious, technocratic and rationalist urbanism decried by radical spatial theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, and against which more creative and utopian visions of urban futures could define themselves. At the heart of the initiative were the teams of spatial planners at work on its different projects. Charged with

turning ideas into workable solutions, they exemplified the figure of the technocrat, who had emerged as a key protagonist of post-war French modernization. The technocratic corps became viewed with suspicion as self-appointed agents of progress, willing to forge ahead with what they saw as best for the nation, even in the face of a resistant population. Not only were the planners imagining the future in the present, but they also had the means to bring those imagined worlds into being. They could give material form to urban possibilities in a way that had a direct bearing on how the inhabitants of the Parisian region would live, perceive and imagine their futures. This paper has two aims. In the first place, it examines the discursive and iconographic material generated by the Schéma directeur, and the imaginative work it performs, from maps and planning documents to memorial accounts written by the planners. In the second place, it explores the problems that emerge as imagined landscapes are translated into built environments; the temporal lag and inertia to which utopian visions succumb as they are inscribed on the ground; and how such challenges are lived by the planners themselves. It does so through a discussion of filmmaker Éric Rohmer's 1975 documentary, *Enfance d'une ville*, which portrays the creation of the New Town of Cergy-Pontoise, and the planners' efforts to give built expression to the urban futures they envisioned for the Paris region.

Panel 3

Fairness and Unfairness in Space City: Retrospectively Reading Houston Planning Texts, 1929-2003

Jason Finch, Åbo Akademi University

Within the framework of Deep Locational Criticism (Finch 2016), my paper practices a self-consciously retrospective reading that relates multiple pasts, presents and futures in historical urban planning documents found in visionary planning texts of a single US city: Houston, Texas. Specifically I read various Reports of the City Planning Commission (CPC) of Houston (especially the 1929, 1940 and 1941 texts), *Urban Form* by the Houston CPC (1966), and *Houston Freeways: A Historical and Visual Journey* by Erik Slotboom (2003). My reading focuses on absences. Founded in 1836, Houston has been growing at a spectacular rate since the 1860s. In the twentieth century, after bitter disagreements, Houston emerged as the largest US city without zoning laws. This absence makes industrial, commercial and residential properties overlap and replace one another in the history of Houston's wards and neighbourhoods. Yet the history of residential segregation in the city is nevertheless peculiarly brutal and inhumane. The city has long-established African-American and Mexican-American populations, yet these groups are strikingly absent from the texts at the heart of my paper. Since the nineteenth century they have frequently been displaced, their homes threatened and sometimes destroyed. Scale and magnitude apply when such acts of unfairness have operated more on black Houstonians than on Hispanic citizens. Compared with cities of the Midwest, the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast such as St Louis, Memphis and New Orleans which also built their wealth on transit and port functions, Houston's story since 1900 is one of dramatic success, as it outpaced rivals and became the hub of the space and oil industries of the whole USA. Its success partook in utopian thinking, particularly about roads and automobiles, yet these texts implicitly narrate immense unfairness. The reading offered here seeks, retrospectively, to restore the right to the city to these inhabitants.

The Consumers' Brewery: Reflecting the Utopian Potential and Limits of Interracial Radical Unionizing and Immigrant Identity in the New Orleans Beer Industry, 1905-19

Anne Gessler, University of Houston-Clear Lake

Plotting an alternative, nonviolent course of interracial and cross-industry cooperation deeply at odds with industrial capitalism and segregated trade unionism, the Consumer's Brewery thrived from 1905 to 1919, when Prohibition shuttered the plant. The brewery's architectural plans and press coverage illuminate the dynamic interplay between David Harvey's utopianism of spatial form and social process. As a union-staffed cooperative, it insulated its German saloonkeeper members from capricious wholesale merchants. Members desired an "alternative urbanism" challenging a capitalist system underwritten by white supremacy and Social Darwinism. Notably, the brewery's architectural design deviated from City Beautiful urban planners and utopian socialist writers like Edward Bellamy, whose technocratic, Neoclassical urban future excluded immigrants and people of color. Instead, the brewery's German architect featured rounded archways and stepped brick dentils to symbolize members' participation in German associational life. Additionally, the brewery's location within overlapping German, Chinese, Orthodox Jewish, and black communities established sociability patterns between residents and liquor retailers that encouraged the cooperative to pursue economic equality for all. Consequently, interracial industrial unionists built and operated the plant. Further, the brewery allied with government, business, and labor interests funding civic improvements, city services, and transportation infrastructure. It then constructed an "urban ecosystem" of unionized factories, transportation, food, and educational cooperatives deploying modernized infrastructure to democratize the city. Yet, without a cohesive political ideology, the brewery became an ambiguous utopian space profiting its owners, while disregarding laborers and residents' economic and physical health. Although its legacy remains as a staunch protector of German traditions and community development, by championing (white) American civic life, it ultimately reaffirmed southern industrial capitalism's segregationist logic. The brewery thus models Harvey's argument that transformative "rebel cities" can only emerge when politically influential, racially and economically diverse communities commit to extending social welfare programs and economic safeguards to their most vulnerable residents.

Utopia, Ltd.? English Garden 'Cities' and Liberal Capitalist Utopianism during the Crisis of Capitalism, 1926-39

Adam McKie, Royal Holloway University of London

For historians of utopianism, the idea capitalism has an inherently utopian core has often been alluded to but rarely explored: utopianism often being a term used to discredit the political left. My paper will propose a theory of liberal capitalist utopianism which centres on three core axioms: liberty as self-determination; efficiency as universal opulence; and justice as unity of interests. In this philosophy, inequality and class hierarchies were essential aspects of a 'fair' and seemingly meritocratic system. I will outline these three concepts through intertwining the first two 'faces of utopianism' – literary and utopian social theory – with the third face – the communitarian – in order to interrogate how capitalist utopian idealism was pursued as a reified urban reality at a time when the political economy was in ideological and functional crisis. The communitarian examples I intend to outline, which are the topic of my PhD, are two self-titled 'utopian' company villages built in Essex between the wars: Silver End (1926-39, Crittall Manufacturing Company) and East Tilbury (1932-9, Bata Shoe Company). Unlike forerunners such as New Lanark, Bournville, Port Sunlight and Saltaire, these isolated garden villages, which were originally conceived of as cities, have received very little attention from academics but were in many ways far more ambitious than these earlier attempts. Intended to be self-contained, the companies built, owned and/or operated their own factories, housing, newspapers, governance,

public utilities, transport, farms, shops, restaurants, emergency services, educational programmes, financial investment schemes, welfare and recreational facilities. Their business philosophies, which embraced technology and mechanisation, were reflected in the modernistic architecture adopted: they were the only interwar working-class built in this style modernist in Britain. I will end the paper by briefly outlining the paradoxes and fallacies of liberal capitalist utopianism – a philosophy roundly rejected by British voters after the Second World War – and explain how these utopian visions fragmented and collapsed.

Panel 4

Utopia as Urban Testing Ground

Jana Čulek, TU Delft

The use of utopia as a method for proposing and speculating on potential futures in architecture has slowly declined since the modernist period and has until today almost completely vanished. Until the 1970s architecture and literature were equally active in employing the utopian genre to propose, test and critique society, but architecture has somewhere along the line stopped in its tracks, while literary utopia flourishes. Drawing inspiration from questions of our time, utopian fiction plays out numerous scenarios, affecting both the social and spatial aspects of life. In an attempt to bring focus and interest back to architectural utopias and to demonstrate the productive relationship architectural utopian proposals can have with literary ones, this paper will travel back in time in order to examine one such productive historical pairing - Ebenezer Howard's *The Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902) and H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895). The text will show that, although there has been no previous link which has been established between the two works, they share the same ethos. Created after the Industrial Revolution and reflecting on the development of the modern metropolis, both works propose an ideal alternative. Situating their inhabitants outside of the grey of the metropolis and into lush nature, they share a nostalgia for simpler pastoral times. But Howard's architectural proposal, radical as it was, does not play out the potential consequences of his garden city. Wells, however, employs the full freedom of the literary genre and transports the self-contained and functionally zoned garden city far into the future where he speculates on the long-term effects this utopia could have on humankind. While architectural utopias have the capacity to propose large scale spatial alternatives, and even speculate on potential societal changes, they lack the means to play out these scenarios in time. But literary utopias don't. By examining the two examples, the text will demonstrate how utopian works from the fields of architecture and literature can be read together in order to provide different viewpoints and portrayals of utopian ideas. Which brings us back to our current times. With a multitude of utopian (and dystopian) scenarios which have already been played out in the literary field, it could be easy for architecture and urbanism to reclaim their utopian ambitions. The future utopian cities which respond to our current times have already been (and continue to be) written. They just need to be designed.

Recycling Old Ideals? A Circular Utopia

Deborah Lambert, Vrije Universiteit, Brussels

Ever since the rapid industrialization of European cities during the 19th century, urban imaginaries about socially and ecologically sustainable urban societies have taken root. Today, the 'circular economy' (CE) is promoted as a key recipe against environmental chaos and economic distress. In this paper, I use the notion of utopia to look critically at the dominant narrative

around circularity as well as contesting imaginaries expressed in concrete urban food practices. Practically, this paper has two aims. First, it attempts to re-historicise and re-politicise the discussion on circular urban food systems by placing them in a range of utopian imaginaries. Second, it provides a framework for inquiry into both a hegemonic circular narrative and food practices illustrated for the case of Brussels (Belgium). The paper first pinpoints the place of food and the relation between urban and rural in three utopian fictions (Thomas More's *Utopia*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking backward*, William Morris' *News from nowhere*). It proposes an analytical framework based on Paul Ricoeur (1986), Jean Servier (1967) and Louis Marin (1973) writings on utopia. Subsequently, I show that the utopian figure of circularity neutralises the opposition between the finitude of resources and the expansion of the economy, proposing a third term of resolution through the notion of decoupling. Thanks to decoupling, the circular city offers a reassuring vision of a future where both sustainability and growth can be attained thanks to technological innovation. Yet, the circular city utopia restates as well the ideal of a synthesis between the rural and the urban. This analysis illustrates the tension in the circularity narrative between integration and subversion (Ricoeur 1986). In the last section, I study three food projects in Brussels and suggests that they can only start to challenge the growth ideology when utopian imaginaries of equality, mutual aid, reciprocity and solidarity are involved.

Plotting Futures: Industry, Colony, and Speculative Storytelling in Urban Spaces

Hanna Musiol, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

This project focuses on the co-constitutive relationship between narrative, rights, and urban futures. It is animated by a crucial question it asks after David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre: “who has the right to the city?,” and who can usurp the right to *narrate* it, and how?

As many scholars note, the city is the econopolitical and cultural capital of globalized culture, and as such, it occupies a contentiously central space in the realm of legal and cultural rights practices. Despite being tied to civilization and uplift discourses (the city is supposedly where civilization and culture happen, so to speak), urban sites are then equally sites of opportunities and of disasters, of creativity, segregation, displacement, and concentrated violence. They can also be sites of narrative resistance and political imagination. Thus, instead of exploring how turbulent urban transformations haunt cultural narratives or how they are reimaged in contemporary fiction, this paper turns to site-specific narrative experiments in collective storytelling of urban futurity and urban justice (many of which originated in utopian literature classrooms, but which are never locked there).

The key argument of the paper is that being marginalized, being removed from urban sociality is an econopolitical, spatial, but also a *narrative* process. George Lipsitz's argues that that “culture creates conditions of possibility” and often becomes a “rehearsal for politics,” and “*Plotting Futures*” traces efforts to publicly and collectively narrate urban spaces in order to reclaim urban speculation and storytelling from its corporate authors and institutional dreamers. Drawing on our work in *Narrating the city* (Boston), *Just Fiction*, *Of Borders and Travelers* and urban storytelling interventions in Trondheim, the paper will reflect on efforts to redress the narrative crisis of urban imagination and arch our urban plots differently via collective transmedia storytelling with scholars, artists, students, designers, migrants and residents.

Panel 5

New Urbanism as a Populist Utopia

Olli-Paavo Koponen and Juho Rajaniemi, Tampere University

Thirty years ago, Prince Charles published *A Vision for Britain*, a pamphlet promoting traditional architecture and against the modernist one, or as he puts it: pro human and against inhuman architecture. He is not alone in his history-orientated dreams. In the 19th century, A.W.N. Pugin, John Ruskin and William Morris sought utopian solutions for future England from medieval context. And as well known, 20th century totalitarian regimes favored ancient Greece and Rome in the creation of contemporary architecture. Since the early 1980's a vital and diverse movement called New Urbanism has been manifesting "the revival of our lost art of place-making" and "re-ordering of the built environment into [...] the way communities have been built for centuries" with over 4000 projects in the United States alone. There are a lot of examples to be found also in Europe, even in such countries of remarkable modern architectural heritage as the Netherlands and Sweden. Leon Krier, an architect with a strong connection to New Urbanism, has been co-operating with Prince Charles himself in realizing a built prototype of their utopia in Poundbury, on the outskirts of Dorchester. In our article, we are not discussing whether New Urbanism has a solid theoretical foundation. Nor will we examine the aesthetic values of the movement. Instead, we claim that the nostalgia behind New Urbanism has been largely neglected, or at least underrated, as a genuine utopia seeking a better future with the help of the past. We also posit that nostalgia in urban design and architecture is often accompanied with populist arguments, and claimed to act in favor of "people", "most of us" or "the vast majority of tenants", as in Prince Charles' writings.

Night-walking: Encountering Possibility in the Nocturnal Urban Landscape

Claire Downey, University of Limerick

Night disrupts the continuity of urban plan. Rather than mirror the diurnal city, it challenges dominant assumptions of social and spatial organisation. In darkness, zones of occupancy and activity shift. Perceptions of time and space are altered. It is this, altered city, that offers what Henri Lefebvre defined as 'moments' of possibility. Each moment represents an instance of dis-alienation that expands our understanding of the city. Each has the potential to be acted upon, building momentum for change. This paper explores Lefebvre's concept of moments in the context of the urban night and its pedestrian narratives. As example, it turns to a recognisable yet radically differentiated twentieth-century Paris, referencing night walks in Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), and Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 film, *La Haine*. The proposal fits within a larger body of research into nocturnal landscapes, looking to navigate from 'no place' to the 'hopeful place', its inseparable counterpart in the utopian metaphor. The evolution of the night-walking narrative coincided with the development of the modern city, its illumination, and subsequent opening to nocturnal appropriations. Wandering a city transformed by artificial light and shadow, dichotomies of fair/un-fair are perceived as safe/unsafe, accessible/closed, liberating/alienating. The nightwalker traverses multiple nights, multiple cities, both actor and observer of the nocturnal experience. These collected experiences are all the more pertinent as present-day urban nights grow in active populations, while going darker, reducing night-time lighting levels in response to global warming and light pollution. The need to re-evaluate perceptions of darkness and generate 'good' experiences of the nocturnal city has become an increasing focus of current, multidisciplinary studies into the urban night, from which this paper will draw.

‘Another World is Plantable’: Urban Planning and Utopian Gardening

Elisabeth Haefs, University of Duisburg-Essen

Urban gardening is commonly seen as community-fostering activity that promotes diversity and inclusion. In green city planning, these small “outdoor community centres” are posited as utopian spaces of hope – one could also call them a bright ‘clearing’ in the urban jungle. In a utopian and ecotopian gesture, the postindustrial city of Essen (Germany) advertises its community gardens as “spaces of possibilities” that show how “another world is plantable.” However, there is a thin line between utopia and dystopia when it comes to gardening: As illustrated by e.g. Zygmunt Bauman, gardening metaphors always carry notions of weeding and cleansing with them, which appear fundamentally opposed to (bio-)diversity and inclusion – they can imply disease, dangers, and contamination coming from an Other. Thus, the urban garden does not automatically signify inclusion, diversity and community – it can have divisive connotations which manifest themselves in the texts that revolve around urban gardening. For instance, pollutants or pests are presented as ‘contaminated soil’ or ‘unwelcome guests.’ These expressions cast a different light on the urban garden, which, additionally, is subject to gentrification and segregation as much as any other urban space. Consequently, this paper might serve to illuminate how far the social gardening utopia reaches, and if it reaches beyond the garden fence at all. It aims to analyse how urban gardening oscillates between social utopia on the one hand, and an exclusive, maybe dystopian movement – such as a middle-class ‘escape’ from the city – on the other hand, and how this ambiguity emerges from the texts and documents that make up urban planning.

Panel 6

The Politics of Urban Transcultural Utopiascapes: Contact Zone, Heterotopia, and Utopian Enclave

Pekka Kilpeläinen, University of Eastern Finland

Urban spaces as fields of force where cultural encounters occur provide important insight into the geographies of memory and identity. If we read cities as crossroads of overlapping transnational flows, urban spaces are understood as sites of inquiry into complex histories and ideologies, and into the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. In this paper, I will discuss the theory of transcultural utopiascapes as a way of mapping urban spaces and the cultural encounters they host. My thinking builds on three seminal concepts, that is, Mary Louise Pratt’s contact zone, Michel Foucault’s heterotopia, and Fredric Jameson’s utopian enclave. In short, the city is grasped as a contact zone of cultural encounters. It encompasses heterotopic spaces, places of otherness, where the ideologies that underlie these encounters can be transgressed and contested. This facilitates the construction of transitory utopian enclaves, where new modes of social being can be imagined and experimented on. This tripartite conceptual construct guides my readings of urban spaces, cultural memory, and the utopian impulse, as literary narratives grapple with the problematic legacies of colonialism and the memory of slavery. The transcultural utopiascape is not merely a spatial, but also, crucially, a temporal concept. The often conflicting histories and memories that collide and grapple with each other in cultural encounters are interwoven in the contact zone, reshaping and being reshaped by the present. In heterotopias, embedded within the contact zone, the utopian impulse is constructed as an imaginary solution to real historical contradictions, which transforms the tangible space of heterotopia into a utopian enclave, an imaginary space where alternative futures can be envisioned. These inherently political spatiotemporal processes will be exemplified by a reading

of Paris as a transcultural utopiascape in James Baldwin's *Just Above My Head* (1979), where questions of race, sexuality, and black music are highlighted.

Displacement, Dispossession and Unjust Places in Canada: The Idea of Home and Ownership in Kerri Sakamoto's *Floating City* and Wayde Compton's *The Outer Harbour*

Sunjay Mathuria, Independent Scholar (Toronto)

The stories of Canadian cities are marred by historical trauma and repeated dispossession of Indigenous lands. For Indigenous and many racialized communities, the concept of home is one of containment and spatial marginalization. Rising costs of housing and shelter across Canada has further exasperated dynamics of displacement for more vulnerable populations. In *Race, Space and the Law*, Sherene Razack discusses the imprints of white settler systems (colonization, Canadian law, urban planning) on how racialized and Indigenous bodies access and utilize space. Speculative fiction allows us re-imagine our cities, while also responding to systemic issues that prevent cities from being just spaces. In this paper, I will examine two Canadian novels *Floating City* by Kerri Sakamoto and *The Outer Harbor* by Wayde Compton, and seek to answer the following questions: How does historical legacies of displacement and place trauma impact an individual's relationship to and concepts of land and shelter? How does urban planning instil power dynamics that prevent communities from asserting change? In *Floating City*, Sakamoto places the story of Japanese internment during World War II within a story about a man's relationship with land and housing -- continual dispossession of land and denial of access to property spurs the protagonist to engage with capitalist systems and aspire to become a real estate mogul in Toronto. Similarly, the City of Vancouver connotes disparities in wealth and exorbitant housing costs; a city that is highly desirable yet unattainable. Here, Compton imagines how both the government and City inhabitants respond to the emergence of a new island in the City's harbour, formed by a volcanic activity. The arrival of this new space in a coveted City prompts questions surrounding Indigenous land claims, migrant surveillance and detention, and the pressures of real estate development in Vancouver.

Retreating to the Urban: Representations of Private Liberation at the City Centre

Markku Salmela, Tampere University

Moments of egalitarian release, of temporary liberation from the pressures of late capitalist individuality, are a staple of many urban narratives. Often such moments also occur in stories that are not focused on the urban environment as such but include brief respites in the city. In Hari Kunzru's *Gods Without Men*, a character who has been under great mental pressure checks into a hotel in New York, his home city, merely to experience liberating anonymity in "an ant colony in which he was an ant who'd followed a pheromone trail to this place in which he was programmed to rest" (334). Such opportunities to retreat to anonymity stem in part from the very definition of the city (by Louis Wirth) as a relatively large and permanent human settlement with high density and diversity. In stories of the city, these usually passing sentiments embody the paradoxical nature of urban experience as both entirely community-based and emphatically private. From different characters' perspectives, the retreats to the city centre have various specific motivations but generally seem to express some version of an equitable standard that neutralises ideological pressure or the effects of interpersonal conflict. Comparable scenes take place in numerous stories, including Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Doreen Baingana's "Tropical Fish" (2003), Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), and many novels by authors

such as Paul Auster and Don DeLillo. With reference to some representative examples, this paper seeks to explicate further the pattern of the private city retreat and its role among other tropes of city literature.

Panel 7

The *Grand Paris* Project Present Past: Literary Investigations about the French Capital Futures

Clara Zgola, Harvard University

The Grand Paris project originates from a need to enlarge and readapt the French capital to the challenges of the 21-st century via infrastructure and communication improvements. It is first and foremost an urban, social, and economic development project of great ideological weight, largely discussed in the late 20th century by many prominent philosophers, urbanists, and politicians. This paper will examine the topics of renewed metropolitan city imaginary, spatial segregation, injustice and inequalities of ghetto high-rises in the suburban (*banlieues*) in the context of urban postmodernist and contemporary utopias. In this purpose, my interpretation proceeds from three particular examples of contemporary and experimental urban narratives: *Paris Ars Universalis* by Raphaële Bidault-Waddington (L'Harmattan 2017), *Les États et empires du lotissement Grand Siècle* by Fanny Taillandier (P.U.F. 2016) and *Le Grand Paris* by Aurélien Bellanger (Gallimard 2017). The first one is a design-fiction about imaginary Universal Exhibition to take place in Paris in 2025. The second one, an essayistic post-apocalyptic fiction exploring the utopian past of suburbs first imagined by William Levitt. The last one, a novel dedicated to The Grand Paris project's political origins and possible developments. The authors use a documentary material (archives, sociological and philosophical inquiry) and the tools of fiction – alternated points of view, different narrative voices – to create a story about various types of violence, power structures and discriminations present in everyday urban life. Furthermore, upon closer examination, it became interesting to consider such fictions as a distinctive genre – literary archaeology of an urban utopia. I will, therefore, analyze their work regarding the tradition that provides them literary or intellectual references and the methodological tools drawn from cultural urban studies and critical theory.

Utopia or Dystopia: The Ambivalence of the Supermarket in Annie Ernaux's *Look at the Lights my Love (Regarde les lumières mon amour)*

Annie Girardin-Halpin, University of Limerick

Regarde les lumières mon amour is unusual in Annie Ernaux's work. It was first published in 2014 and it explores a nouveau genre in-between essay and personal journal, and a topic considered unworthy of literature: the supermarket or even the hypermarket. In a journal, the writer recounts a year of observations in a hypermarket in Cergy near Paris. She describes the place, the customers, the staff, the marketing plans, as well as anecdotes and personal remarks. In this paper, I analyse the way Ernaux writes about the everyday aspects of life, about those that are often disregarded in literature. She sees supermarket as new places for social constructionism. She has written about supermarkets in her previous works, though never taking it as the main subject. In literature, as well as in social sciences, big shopping malls are often described as the evil of consumerism and soulless places with one purpose which is capitalism. Although Ernaux portrays this side of the argument, she also notices a place where people like spending time and interacting to each other. At the end of the book, she even foresees a certain nostalgia for the

supermarkets in suggesting that they may disappear in the future with virtual shopping. However, this book is an argumentative testimony against mass distribution which alienates consumers and mainly the most vulnerable ones. Interestingly in 2014, the author denounced the fact that the dominated are too complacent and need to rebel. We will see that she was very much active in writing articles in favour of the yellow vests movement in the past few months. Hence, in this paper, I also look at her views on mass distribution and the yellow vests and if she makes a link between her last book and the recent events.

Back to the Pastoral: Dystopian Urban Spaces and Idealised Countryside in Michel Houellebecq's Fiction

Maša Uzelac, NUI Galway

Physical spaces play an important role in the fiction of Michel Houellebecq, as they are tightly connected to the problem of the “quest for identity”. The seemingly aimless *déambulations* of his protagonists evoke this desperate pursuit of the lost identity whose reconstruction Houellebecq sees as possible only in the context of a particular geographical location. I argue that this somehow marks his turn to the traditional Morian representation of utopia: an *elsewhere* which offers a possibility of a radical social reorganization. In this regard, Houellebecq opposes the hostile, alienating urban spaces of Paris to the idyllic rural zones of provincial France. The increasingly accelerated world of the global city is contrasted with the traditional pre-globalisation values preserved in the countryside. This pastoral mythicisation of rural France represents Houellebecq's romantic reaction against 21st-century capitalism, embodied in cosmopolitan urban spaces. The countryside thus becomes a fetish for the modern city-dweller: “la campagne était redevenue tendance”, says the narrator of *The Map and the Territory*. However, the protagonist of the novel admits that “the map is more interesting than the territory”, which implies the illusionary character of this idealised rural utopia. This paper argues that Houellebecq's use of the image of rural purity, in its opposition to dystopian urban representations, reflects Zygmunt Bauman's idea of the shift in our *liquid modern* society from the “longing for independence” to “longing for belonging”. Houellebecq's *Serotonin* only confirms that the desired “*fusion sublime*” between individual subjects is no longer possible in the urban environment, which makes them roam through contingent social interactions like elementary particles, as the title of one of his earlier novels suggests. However, the fantasised harmony of the countryside appears to be nothing more than a spectacular escape from violent reality and not a real alternative to it.

Friday 13 December

Panel 8

Image-Making in the Global City: Speculative Urbanisms and Water Politics in Capetonian Comics

Dominic Davies, City, University of London

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the city of Cape Town has increasingly made pretensions to global, or ‘world class’, status, implementing a range of neoliberal urban policies and building a signature skyline that attracts the super-rich and displaces the poor. Locally

produced South African comics are overwhelming drawn to this city, where the lingering spatial scars of apartheid are now exacerbated by this more recent, ‘global city’ rebranding. In this paper I will discuss the representations of Cape Town’s continuing urban divisions and infrastructural inequalities in South African comics, as these not only critique the city’s ‘global’ image, but also attempt to set out another vision for the city through their speculative, ecologically themed responses to it. Drawing on a range of subcultural genres, from Afrofuturism to Solarpunk, these comics explode the way in which the Cape Town peninsula is ‘imaged’ as a utopian city-space ‘delinked’ from the rest of South Africa (not to mention the mainland African continent). And they achieve this political work through a notable visual and narrative preoccupation with one resource in particular: water. By honing in on the fraught issue of water (and its ownership, distribution and pollution), contemporary Capetonian comics use a range of speculative scenarios to reveal the dystopian carceral logics and resource inequalities that in fact underpin the supposed ‘fantasy’ or ‘utopian’ image of the global city. Read together, these comics build cumulatively through their different speculative urbanisms to remind readers that Cape Town’s spatial inequalities, as well as the utopian imaginaries that patrol them, are not only continuations of the city’s colonial and apartheid histories. They also reveal the ways in which such divisions result particularly from Cape Town’s global rebranding, doing so in order to challenge an image-led urban governance regime that attempts to smooth away rather than account for the city’s continuing spatial tensions.

From the City to the Sea: Rethinking Non-places and Nature with Matthias Nawrat and Sara Baume

Callum Bateson, Trinity College Dublin

In *From Places to Non-Places*, Augé imagines a world where cities and towns are eroded into so called ‘non-places’ – those without history, identity or relation. The rise of new capitalism has accelerated life to the point where the centres and crossroads that used to function as vectors of place-making are reduced to historical footnotes. This rush towards super-modernity has as its aim the atopia of efficiency, a state where inconveniences such as sleep, eating and illness are removed. The immediate casualty of this, in Augéan terms, is place. Yet, twenty years after Augé’s text, this urban-skewed perception of place/non-place seems insufficient, for although western society remains locked into new capitalism, we live amidst the collapse of the natural world. Given the immensity of the effect nature has on the human experience, and by extension the city, it seems necessary to re-assess the enduring anthropocentric view of nature in spatial theory, which relegates it to a benign aspect of place within the human sphere. By foregrounding the underrepresented phenomena of the “natural atopia” (Carroll) and the utopian “mystical space” (Tuan), this paper aims to show how two contemporary novels, namely *Unternehmer* by the Polish-German writer Matthias Nawrat and *A Line Made by Walking* by Irish novelist Sara Baume, challenge this out-dated viewpoint. Late modernity fetishizes and commodifies nature but ignores its inherent dangers and potential atopic capabilities. In *Unternehmer*, set after an unnamed future economic crisis, these atopias find form in a man-made landscape reclaimed by nature, while Baume’s narrator leaves a city of non-places only to arrive in a rural space depopulated and in the process of its own natural atopic transformation. Taken together, these texts offer a view of a world that is dominated by a nature that is very much contemporary and capable of forming non-places of its own.

Imaginaries of the Future City. Envisioning Climate Change and Technological Cityscapes through Contemporary Speculative Fiction

Marjolein Van Herten and Marieke Winkler, Open University of the Netherlands

How does narrative fiction function as an integrating discourse in constructing and shaping (collective) imaginations of a safe future city? This is the departing question of our interdisciplinary research project *Imaginaries of the Future City. Envisioning Climate Change and Technological Cityscapes Through Contemporary Speculative Fiction* of the Open University of the Netherlands. In this project, researchers of different fields of study – literary studies, environmental studies and psychology – cooperate to investigate their use of narratives in thinking about and conceptualizing the future city. Our focus lies with the impact of climate change and technological developments on future city-life. In this paper we would like to share the first findings of our interdisciplinary research group, focusing in particular on the field of literary studies. The notion of ‘speculative fiction’ links to literary narratives that shape and constitute imaginations of the future city and society. In these narratives, cityscapes play a central role: they represent nodal points in which the anxiety surrounding contemporary urban problems and their impact on individuals, societal groups and their environment, are projected. For example, in the Dutch speculative novel *De goede zoon* (2018) the predominantly grey cityscape has infiltrated ruthlessly into rural areas; even when the protagonist finds himself ‘in nature’ the landscape is highly artificial (the dears in the forest turn out to be robots). Hence, the author confronts the reader with the question of the impact of urban planning in a globalizing world just by imaginatively ‘extrapolating’ present day developments. Even when not explicitly moralizing, the narratives produced within the framework of contemporary speculative fiction show a profound dystopian point of view raising the question to what extent they contribute to productive awareness (Anker 2018; Pierrart 2018). By analysing the way speculative fiction represents the future city this paper addresses the question to what extent speculative fiction can contribute to productive awareness of the impact of climate change and technology. Also, it offers reflection on the importance of narrative analysis in contemplating and conceptualizing the future safe city in other fields of study such as environmental studies and psychology.

Panel 9

The Challenges of Writing the Poetics of Relation in *La Littérature-monde*: Globalization’s Dystopic Utopias in the Novels of Abdourahman Waberi, Abdelaziz Belkhouja and Maryse Condé

Valérie K. Orlando, University of Maryland

In his *Poetics of Relation* (*Poétique de la relation*, 1990) and the later *Philosophy of Relation* (*Philosophie de la relation*, 2009), Martinican philosopher Edouard Glissant displaces the singularity of nationality, language and ethnicity, and argues for adopting multiple rooted identities in the wake of the historical legacy of trauma caused by colonialism and migration as well as the current realities of global capitalism. Glissant insists on poetics as a means for building new imaginaries that enrich our understanding of our place, even as it situates this place within the larger global context, what he calls *Le Tout-Monde* (the world in its entirety); “le monde qui fait bouger choses et gens” (the world that makes things and people move). Glissant’s theories of relation in the *Tout-Monde* were particularly in vogue in the mid-to late 1990s and used to explore *post*-post-colonial realities as depicted in literature of French expression from authors throughout the French-speaking world. By pursuing Glissant’s relational project with respect to other postcolonial theoretical frameworks from this period up to the early 2000s, this presentation seeks to explore the diverse and transient identities of migrant subjects, as well as the utopias and dystopias they occupy in the contemporary cosmopolitan *Littérature-monde* (a Literary World in French). Specifically, the presentation will discuss three contemporary works written by authors from

Africa and the Caribbean: *Aux États-Unis d'Afrique* (2006, In the United States of Africa) by Abdourahman Waberi (Djibouti), *Le Retour de l'éléphant* (2003, The Return of the Elephant) by Abdelaziz Belkhodja (Tunisia) and *Les Belles ténébreuses* (2008, Dark beauties) by Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe). Although Glissant meant for relations to bring fruitful, positive outcomes in the Tout-Monde, the transnational relations taking place in the novels by Condé, Waberi and Belkhodja demonstrate that worldly cosmopolitanism is often, in the era of hyper-globalized capitalization, dystopic, causing angst for the migrant subject who has been left without a map or a compass to navigate the mire of our complicated post 9/11 world.

Politics and Governance of the Urban Space in Postcolonial Nigerian Literature

Gbemisola Adeoti, Obafemi Awolowo University

Contemporary Nigerian literature has contributed substantially toward the construction, dissemination and popularisation of metropolitan ethos. Whether in the narrative mode of the novel, the performative mechanism of drama or in the euphony of poetry, literature is a socio-cultural space where the subalterns of contemporary metropolitan centres find their voices and negotiate their marginality. It is also the means through which wielders of politico-economic power construct realities of their dominance on those living on the fringes of urban existence. Interestingly, both the powerful and the powerless are claimants to and keen contestants for the urban space. That is much evident in the framework of conflict, characterisation, subject and narrative techniques of postcolonial Nigerian literature, as evident in the works of Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Kaine Agary, Chimamanda Adichie and Ahmed Yerima among others. In specific terms, the study examines the re-presentation of the urban experience and the kind of politics that shape this experience in Nigerian literary productions. It examines how writers of different gender, political and ideological persuasions have responded to the challenges of urban politics and governance. It contends that there is a sense of continuity and renewal in the literary representations of pains and pleasures of living in “Naija” cities as well as the challenges posed to governance and development. Ordinarily, the city is supposed to be the driving engine of modernisation and development. However, the reality of many Nigerian cities is that they are attracting more people than their facilities can decently cater for. That puts huge pressure on employment, education, health facilities, housing, transportation and recreational spaces. Consequently, the opportunities to “make it big” are shrinking, thus, widening the gap between the privileged few who have access to the good things of life and the less privileged ones who are denied them.

Flights of Fancy in Urban Congo: La tour et le trou

Karen Bouwer, University of San Francisco

Cities in the global South are often seen as concrete dystopias that represent the future of urban life the world over. In “Living in Dystopia: Past, Present, and Future in Contemporary African Cities” (2010) Jennifer Robinson critiques this approach (exemplified by Mike Davis’s *Planet of Slums*, 2006), arguing that such deep pessimism can be considered a form of anti-utopian dystopia since it has been robbed of the cautionary value normally inherent to dystopic discourse: It has erased possible futures based on a lived—and diverse—present which always contains spaces of hope (Harvey, 2000). In order to explore utopic flights of fancy and the possible alternative pathways to the future they may contain, I turn to a building in Kinshasa (often evoked as the epitome of urban dystopia) and a novel set in Lubumbashi (the mining capital of the DRC which, through its association with ruthless extractive economies and

ecological disaster, represents an equally dystopic space). In their film *The Tower* (2016) photographer Sammy Baloji and anthropologist Filip de Boeck explore the utopian impulses that inspired the construction of an unlikely structure in Kinshasa. The tower's aspirational verticality attempts to defy the prevalence of "the hole" theorized by De Boeck in *Suturing the City: Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds* (2016). Sinzo Aanza's novel *Généalogie d'une banalité* (2015), with its more literal reading of holes in the ground, serves as a noteworthy counterpoint to this meta-concept for material degradation. As opposed the exceptionality of the tower, here the utopic dream is one of equality: If riches are to be found in the ground, why not optimize one's chances of striking copper by starting to dig up the dirt right at home? The two works, representing a unique landmark ("la tour") and the excesses of extractive economies ("le trou"), provide the opportunity to reflect on critical dystopias, those that have not foreclosed all spaces of hope.

Panel 10

The Unnamed City: The Politics of the (Un)Representable in Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004)

Maxim Shadurski, Siedlce University

This paper explores the representation of an unnamed city in Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004), with a particular focus on the duality into which that city splits in the narrative chronology 'before' and 'after'. The city before the flood forms an isolated and internally segregated enclosure, inflected by global crisis (climate catastrophe and war) and pre-existing social tensions. Gee avails herself of a series of allusive codes: references to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* aid representation of urban experience as a matter of an always already alienated existence in a complex network of interconnections. The city after the flood, in turn, shrinks to a much smaller spatial enclosure, modelled on London's Kew Gardens, where tensions have been resolved by virtue of minimalized social interactions. Symbolically, this city represents a version of Noah's Ark, comprised of the 'broken images' that the narrative has salvaged from before the flood. In Gee's novel, representation finds its limits precisely when it gestures beyond a critique of global capitalism, on the one hand, and the cultural allusions associated with urban experience, on the other. Symptomatically, the novel's concluding paragraphs rewrite Ernst Bloch's dictum found at the end of *The Principle of Hope*. The city after the flood becomes a site where everyone has already been and comes to lie down; its existence is sustained by dreaming, which requires rest. This paper investigates the meaning and political implications of the unrepresentable, glimpsed into as only a mediation of antagonisms. In doing so, I set out to re-evaluate the understanding of landscape as a representation of dominant socioeconomic relations, as well as an index to the struggle taking place therein (Don Mitchell, Denis Cosgrove, Kenneth Olwig).

Confronting Otherness. The Built Environments in Adrian Tchaikovsky's *Shadows of the Apt*

Minna Chudoba, Tampere University

Confronting otherness is a common theme in the fantasy fiction genre. In the series *Shadows of the Apt*, British author Adrian Tchaikovsky underlines this theme with the dichotomy of apt-inapt – giving a distinctive twist to technological urban utopias. This dichotomy is enhanced by insect-derived traits of the protagonists, which also define the various urban environments. The architecture of ant-people is naturally different from that of butterfly-people. Architecture is thus

utilized to provide a background from which the characters confront a foreign reality. The otherness of the urban environment exists in layers, starting from the known reality of the familiar, continuing to the description of the unfamiliar, a foreign utopia. This presentation gives a reader interpretation of the confronted otherness. The focus is on the urban spaces and the architecture, both on the immediate surroundings and the general setting of the fantasy world. In this reading, Michel de Certeau's distinction of strategies and tactics is used as a framework, to help in understanding the various scales of the everyday spaces of the story, as well as the spatial practices of the protagonists, as they move about in both the familiar and the unfamiliar surroundings, confronting otherness. The emphasis is on the protagonist's point of view and, therefore, the tactics.

Spaces of Oppression in Contemporary Feminist Dystopia

Eleonora Rossi, Birkbeck College, University of London

Over the last few years, Western society has witnessed a rediscovery and rise in popularity of dystopias authored by women. This is to be examined in the context of a shifting political climate, characterised by a widespread pushback on liberal values and a high degree of political polarisation. Within this context, one of the most widely debated topics is women's reproductive rights which, in numerous countries, are currently under the threat of de-liberalisation. This topic is also central to the narrative of most contemporary feminist dystopias, such as *The Water Cure* by Sophie Mackintosh, *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich, *Gather the Daughters* by Jeannie Melamed, and many more. These novels illustrate futures whereby fertility and birth rates have plummeted, and women's reproductive rights have thus become a matter of state control. In these dystopic societies, female bodies (particularly if pregnant or fertile) are confined and segregated by means of urban detention centres, walls, fences, and other isolating (and sometimes isolated) instruments. In my paper, I wish to look more closely into such modalities of gendered urban segregation, paying particular attention to the ways in which future cities are re-imagined to manifest current anxieties concerning women's reproductive rights as well as, more broadly, their space in society.

Panel 11

The Utopian Whatever: Unruly Spatiality in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*

Aleksi Rennes, University of Turku

In Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* (*Le città invisibili*, 1972), Marco Polo recounts tales of his travels around the empire of Kublai Khan. In total, the novel comprises 55 short descriptions of different cities that Polo has encountered. These descriptions assemble into a non-linear and complex textual meshwork that correlates with the constantly shifting and ramifying spatiality underlying the depicted cities. Over the course of the novel, the heterogeneous and often paradoxically interlinked spaces begin, in a cumulative fashion, to unsettle the ideologically structured unity and order of Kublai's empire. In my paper, I will examine this practice of constructing space in *Invisible Cities* as a utopian endeavour where utopia is likened to a disruptive force resisting all fixed hierarchies and ready-made representations. I will attempt to extract a specific notion of utopia from Calvino's novel by linking it to Gilles Deleuze's concept of "any-space-whatever" (*espace quelconque*). For Deleuze, space can be defined as a real, generative condition of experience that has no formal existence beyond the differences and movements it conditions. Within this theory, any-spaces-whatever demonstrate the ability of space to oppose

procedures of homogenization. Furthermore, the non-determinable “whatever” refers here to the differential processes that precede the establishment of stable localities and distinct, recognizable identities. My hypothesis suggests that a similar attachment to the unruly domain of the pre-individual is adopted as a technique of urban writing in Calvino’s novel. From this theoretical point of view, I will consider *Invisible Cities* as a reworking of the literary genre of utopia and particularly of the status of the city within that tradition.

Dystopia of the Green Island. The Global Financial Crisis (2008) and Polish Urban Imagination

Olga Szmidt, Jagiellonian University, Krakow

Global financial crisis of 2008 had a great impact on economy, society and public discourse. The crisis has affected almost every Western and Northern national economy. The problem started a year earlier with a crisis in the subprime mortgage in the USA, rapidly growing into banking crisis and bank failures in the USA and Europe. Due to the direct link between the crisis and the housing and mortgage markets, the recession quickly became a topic for culture. A variety of texts – ranging from movies and non-fiction books to tv series and novels – not only helps with understanding *what actually happened?*, but also follows social and cultural impact of the crisis. But not in the case of Poland. Polish famous *avoidance of recession* seems to be on the one hand kind of a blockade for actual recognition of the crisis’ impact, on the other hand – re-invention of the ideology of *tightening the belt* vividly remembered by Poles from 1989 transition. Multiple optimistic opinions such as *the only economy to grow* (Matteo Napolitano) or *the green island on a red map* (Donald Tusk) overshadowed growing austerity, pay freeze, housing crisis and mass emigration (especially to the UK). In fact Polish solution to the crisis was part of the problem. It did, however, successfully stopped or slowed down culture in recognizing this topic. I would like to discuss dystopian ideology and imaginary of the latent crisis. The imaginary of the island, used by multiple utopian narratives since the founding of the literary genre, creates a space for further questions. How has the crisis affect urban space? How does the most problematic Warsaw estate in Bialoleka reflect the mortgage crisis? How does Warsaw post-transition urban chaos let us tell our *hidden crisis story*? How are individual cases represented in Polish crisis dystopia? Can a city be fair or not fair to the society during any crisis? Was the *silencing the crisis* a way of embracing national identity? I would like to offer critical reading of philosophy of Polish *dystopia of the green island* as much as the analysis of particular texts concerning crisis. Visual, urban, monetary and dystopian imagination seems to create a very unique understanding of the urban space itself.

Experimental place-writing: Crowdsourced photography with captions as citizens’ narrative of their neighbourhood

Matej Niksic, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia

Many modernist urban neighbourhoods built across Europe were conceived as the model urban environments that shall reflect the new paradigms of a »better urban living« compared to the traditional urban forms. Nowadays and decades after their construction, many of these environments are utterly aged up and go through a process of a severe verification of their durability – can they persist as the long-lasting forms or will they get erased and replaced by new forms following the currently glorified paradigm of sustainability? The experiences across the continent are different. The presentation will put light onto the examples of the socialist large scale (post)socialist neighbourhoods in Slovenia. At the time of their construction, they reflected

not only the new living standards but were also the ideological representations of a »new, better future« that had just been met at the time of their construction. No matter how high their creators inspired in their design approaches this typology of urban environments is nowadays in a big need for a comprehensive regeneration to cope with the needs and expectations of contemporary residents. The expectations of current residents are hardly related to any of the conceptions from the times of the construction of the neighbourhoods and largely depend on perceptions and evaluations of the current state of the art. The presentation will focus on an experimental approach for revealing such perceptions which are based on crowdsourced analytical photography and attached captions used as part of regeneration of *Ruski car* neighbourhood in Ljubljana, Slovenia, during the Human Cities experimentation (<http://humancities.eu/story/human-cities-2014-2018-final-book-challenging-the-city-scale/>). In the experiment the citizens were empowered to tell their narratives of their living environments through an on-line application where they could submit their own photos with captions. The tool was initially developed as a supporting mechanism for revealing shared values among the members of the local communities as a starting point for setting up participatory urban regeneration strategies. However the materials that have been collected are an excellent example of the undermining not only the dominant ideology that originally produced the physical structures in the times of modernism but also the current neo-liberal ideologies – citizens' narratives that combine photographic and textual material in their own right reflect the freedom of the suburban neighbourhoods that have not yet been conquered by neo-liberal appetites for profits and stay nonconformist places within the contemporary spatial, social and economic ideologies.

Panel 12

(Im-)Materialised Utopia: Alfred Wellm's *Morisco* and the Construction of Halle-Neustadt

Stephan Ehrig, University College Dublin

The paper will investigate the rift between built reality and utopian imagination of the class-less, socialist city in Alfred Wellm's East German novel *Morisco* (1987). Set in Halle, the novel traces the struggle of the middle-class intellectual architect Andreas Lenk through his ascending career as a crucial architect of Halle-Neustadt, the only entirely modernist new city built for 60 000 workers of the local chemistry plants in East Germany between 1964-1975. Inspired by the modernist Charta of Athens (1993) and the restructuring of Stockholm's city centre from the 1950s, the ongoing construction proved to be more driven by economic austerity and political ideology than the idealist plans the architects had envisioned. In the novel, Lenk, who both admires the utopian process of building the 'new city' as well as vainly criticises the cheap means of production and monotony of the buildings, starts creating his own secret plans for the ideal city of Helianthis, a circular city for the class-less mass society in the tradition of the Enlightenment and German modernism, as a meta-commentary for the failings of post-war planning. Simultaneously, the citizens of Halle start preferring the comfortable modernist flats over the idealist plans of the architects, and the short-lived success of pure functionalism leaves Lenk disillusioned until he abandons the construction site and Helianthis altogether. Expanding on theoretical concepts of urban sociology and atmospheres, the paper will contextualise the novel as part of general trend of East German cultural production in the late 1980s that simultaneously supported this new modernist 'socialist space' as an idealised space for utopian political and personal opportunities on the one hand, and criticised the underwhelming

architectural and societal status quo on the other. It will thereby contribute to enhance current understandings of how post-war modernist architecture and planning impacted cultural production mirroring social life, class structures, gender relations and political utopias in the GDR and beyond.

Werner Illing's *Utopolis* (1930): Re-reading a Social-Democratic City Utopia of the Weimar Era

Joachim Fischer, University of Limerick

The German-language utopian tradition is still little known in Anglophone utopian scholarship, as evident in the Claeys/Sargeant *Utopian Reader*. It contains the *Communist Manifesto* as the only originally German-language utopia and even this rather an international rather than specifically German text. German utopias have generally entered scholarly discourse only where translations have been produced. *Utopolis* remains untranslated (only a translation into French appeared in 2009) and therefore largely unknown, though not entirely. Peter S. Fisher in his classic 1991 study *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison 1991) introduced Illing to Anglophone utopian scholarship while Sonya Fritzsche has explored his work as a precursor of GDR science fiction (*Science Fiction Literature in East Germany*; Oxford 2006). As to the period in question, the debate both on Weimar utopias and city literature centres on Fritz Lang's film classic *Metropolis* of 1926 and, to a less extent, on the related novel by his wife and collaborator Thea von Harbou of the same title published in English only a year later. This is by no means the complete picture, in fact Lang's film was to all intents and purposes a flop in Germany. There was also a strong socialist utopian discourse which deserves attention. The inclusion of Marx and Engels' text in the *Utopian Reader* indicates that we may perhaps look there for specifically German additions to the genre of literary utopias. *Utopolis* may serve as an example. The title *Utopolis* hints at a connection between Illing's novel and Lang's work and that it may in fact have been conceived as a left wing response to *Metropolis*. A study of the Weimar socialist utopian tradition also serves to counteract the gravitational pull of Jost Hermand's excellent and fascinating study of fascist utopias *Old Dreams of a New Reich* which, no doubt unintentionally, has reduced the debate of Weimar utopias specifically to a search for seeds of National Socialism. The conference aims to explore two problematics, the relationship between the urban and the utopian and the complex interconnections between the utopian the ideological. A study of the novel addresses both issues. It was written for a working class readership and published by the book club Der Bücherkreis which was linked to the publisher of the Social Democratic *Vorwärts*, the SPD party paper. The novel was commissioned by the publisher and continued a series of socialist novels started before World War I. *Utopolis* takes a clear ideological position and constructs in some detail an ideal proletarian city. This city, however, is under attack and the author does not content himself with a description of this utopian city but also clearly identifies its enemies which find their real-life correspondences in contemporary Weimar politics. Illing was also fascinated by technology which features prominently in the novel and makes it a science fiction classic. The novel ends in a victory of the proletarian defenders of their city and may very well stand out as one of the few hopeful texts of the conference which, easily understandably, I expect to be dominated by dystopias. I intend to explore whether this ninety years old text has still retained some of its *eutopian* energy and can say anything constructive to us city dwellers or visitors in 2019. Or indeed to all those who are watching the startling decline of Social Democracy all over Europe which is key feature of our political landscape.

Community is the one true capital: The Ideologies and Realities of Communal Living in Anke Stelling's Berlin Novels

Hanna Henryson, Uppsala University

Communal living arrangements have repeatedly been referred to as a “utopian” form of housing (Davis & Warring 2011, Sullivan 2016) that promotes an environmentally sustainable way of living, prevents isolation and contributes to social cohesion within a community (Williams 2005, Chiodelli & Baglione 2014, Hilder et al. 2018). In a European context, communal living is often ideologically motivated as a means of creating integrated and inclusive housing for different social and generational groups. However, private-collective communal living is also viewed critically by some researchers as in some respects similar to gated communities (Chiodelli 2015) or even as a potential driver of gentrification and segregation (Droste 2015). In this proposed paper, I would like to take a closer look at the Berlin novels *Bodentiefe Fenster* (literal translation: *Full-Length Windows*, 2015) and *Schäfchen im Trockenen* (idiomatic translation: *Feathered Nest*, 2018, awarded the Leipzig Book Fair Prize in March 2019) by Anke Stelling, that provide insightful literary representations of the ideologies and realities of communal living arrangements in contemporary Germany. The protagonists of both novels, Sandra and Resi, live with their families in a so called *Wohnprojekt* for ideological reasons. “We tried to make sure that our group would not be too homogenous, that also elderly and childless people, families with low income and without academic education would be included”, Sandra recounts, “because in today’s society, shaped by a thirst for profit and a lack of solidarity, community is the one true capital” (Stelling 2015: 15, my translation). As it turns out, however, the ideas and ideals of the *Wohnprojekt* are not easily realisable, which leaves both Sandra and Resi in a state of disillusion and frustration. The discrepancy between the ideologies and realities of communal living as depicted by Anke Stelling and in relation to research on this issue will be the object of my inquiry.

Panel 13

Acquiescent Subjects in the Utopian City: Ray Loriga's *Rendición*

Cornelia Gräbner, Lancaster University

In his 2017 novel *Rendición* Spanish author Ray Loriga's first person narrator relates, in an ongoing narration always trapped within the present moment, his and his family's transition from a rural village into a transparent city. They and their fellow villagers are re-settled in this eco-utopian urban space supposedly due to the threat posed by external enemies. My analysis will focus on the concept that sets the title of the novel, rendition, and on the ways in which the first person narration tracks and traces the gradual erosion of any capacity to resist or dissent the positive utopian rationale actualized in the transparent, ecologically sustainable architecture and urban life of the transparent city. My analysis will draw out the intersections between affects, the infrastructural and architectural features of the city, and the politically vacuous discourses and practices that are enacted in the city, and that then make worm their way into the subjectivity of the narrator as he normalizes them by narrating them. Adapting and re-theorizing conceptual approaches developed by Lauren Berlant from Affect Studies and Erik Swyngedouw from Urban Geography, and combining them with recent critical work on Infrastructure, I will trace the emergence of the ‘acquiescent subject’ in the utopian city. As I will show through a series of close, conceptually informed readings of the many instances of rendition, the narrator participates in his transformation into such an acquiescent subject by noticing the moments of his rendition without critically reflecting on them.

Dystopian Consumerism and Oppressive Spaces in Ray Loriga's *Tokyo Doesn't Love Us Anymore*

Carla Almanza-Gálvez, Independent Scholar (Lima).

Situated at the intersection of urban fantasy and science fiction, *Tokyo Doesn't Love Us Anymore* (1999) is the story of a travelling drug dealer who sells memory-erasing chemicals to those with recollections that they would rather forget. This anonymous salesman works for a global organisation known only as The Company, which sends him around the world, wandering through Arizona, Tijuana, Tokyo, Bangkok, Berlin, Madrid and other places. In Ray Loriga's enigmatic novel, a best seller in his native Spain, the unnamed narrator moves between hotels, bars and airports, selling drugs to similarly nameless, rootless customers. The feeling of uprooting is intensified by the alienating urban environment that surrounds the protagonist. As a consumer of his own product, the fragmentation of his identity and personality is a vehicle for questioning the essence of what it means to be human. Among other aspects, this paper seeks to examine the dynamics of the interaction between geographical and psychological spaces within the dystopian representation of a hedonistic and consumerist society in Loriga's novel. The analysis focuses on how the atmosphere of voluntary oblivion, anonymity and desolation that pervades the story shapes spatial relationships and urban identity in an oppressive, futuristic context. In addition to exploring the correlation between the outer space of the various cities visited by the protagonist and the landscapes of his own inner journey, the paper also looks at the representation of spatiotemporality in the light of Marc Augé's conceptualisation of non-places as timeless transit spaces with no specific identity. The thematic similarities between Loriga's narrative universe and that of other cult science fiction writers, such as J. G. Ballard, William Gibson, William S. Burroughs and Philip K. Dick, are also addressed in the discussion.

Saramago's *Baltasar and Blimunda* or When Fiction Transforms a Town

Adriana Martins, Universidade Católica Portuguesa

This paper aims to discuss José Saramago's acclaimed novel *Baltasar and Blimunda* (1982) that depicts the construction of the Monastery of Mafra as a result of a vow made by king John V in the 18th century. Mafra, which is situated next to Lisbon, has at the beginning of the 21st century a significant part of its economic development revolving around the monastery that is considered the town's major attraction due to its architectural grandiosity, its historical value, and, to some extent, the visibility Saramago's novel brought to it in Portugal and abroad. If one accepts that the town of Mafra exists because the monastery was built, the monument can be viewed as a kind of *pre-text* that would inform the design of the town's urban tissue, and would, therefore, reflect the social and economic inequalities of a specific historical and cultural context. This paper will examine how Saramago aesthetically explores and "chisels" the space of the monastery and transforms it into an ideological sign through which two narratives about outstanding constructions of the 18th century are brought together: that of the monastery, and that of Father Bartolomeu Lourenço de Gusmão's flying device (a kind of aerostat, whose construction Saramago transforms into a utopian project). The confrontation of these narratives transforms Saramago's novel into a challenging and provocative unofficial and symbolic depiction of history that has fed the imaginary of Mafra's inhabitants and of all those who visit the town to know the monastery since the novel's publication.

Panel 14

Between Utopia and Apocalypse: Literary Explorations of Symbolic Politics in Naples

Ruth Glynn, University of Bristol

Despite generating the canonical text of Italian utopianism, Tommaso Campanella's *La città del sole* (1602), Naples is rarely associated with utopian thought and vision. A notable exception is the so-called 'Neapolitan Renaissance' of the 1990s, when the regeneration of the historic centre, reinvigoration of civil society and relaunching of Naples as a city of art, culture and heritage resulted in a dramatic upturn in its fortunes and image. This is epitomised by Naples' success in hosting the G7 summit in 1994 and its selection as the setting for Italy's first national soap opera, *Un posto al sole*, launched in 1996 and underpinned by a utopian depiction of contemporary Italian society. Despite its historic importance for such a 'self-absorbed city' (Chambers 2008), the experience of the 'Neapolitan Renaissance' has been largely overlooked in cultural production. It is, then, highly instructive that the small literary corpus addressing the Neapolitan Renaissance brings an apocalyptic structure to bear on its utopian underpinnings. Giuseppe Montesano's *Nel corpo di Napoli* (1999) and *Di questa vita menzognera* (2003) and Ruggero Cappuccio's *Fuoco su Napoli* (2011) differ in their emphasis and interpretation but share a cultural fantasy of a Camorra-controlled apocalypse leading to a utopian recreation of Naples. The novels offer an important critique of the ways in which the symbolic politics of the Neapolitan Renaissance both re-evoked historical discourses of Naples as a 'paradise inhabited by devils' and lend themselves to exploitation by a new entrepreneurial Camorra. Analysis of the interrelation between the utopian and the apocalyptic, and of who controls the process of urban transformation will broaden out to a more general consideration of the ideological ramifications and power dynamics of discourses of urban regeneration that intersect with utopian visions of urban space cleansed of 'undesirable' bodies or practices.

Authoritarian City: Milan and Turin in the Novels of Luciano Bianciardi and Paolo Volponi

Giulia Brecciaroli, University of Warwick

My proposed paper examines two novels by Italian writers Luciano Bianciardi and Paolo Volponi, *La vita agra* (1962) and *Le mosche del capitale* (1989), set in Milan and Turin, respectively. While it was published in 1989, *Le mosche del capitale* was written during the decade of the 1970s, in which the story is set. Bianciardi's *La vita agra* famously portrays the Milan of the economic 'boom'. The novels are therefore tied to the complex post-war transition in Italy, during which it becomes clear that the aspirations of the Reconstruction period clash with the persistence of elements from the pre-war and Fascist past. Bianciardi's and Volponi's critical attention to urban changes, and particularly the inequalities brought about by modernization, result in a dystopic portrayal of post-war Milan and Turin, which are presented as sites of social injustice, anomie, and authoritative power. I argue that Italy's unprocessed past traumas reverberate through this representation for, in the examined novels, the ghost of totalitarianism lingers in industrial architecture, which is a visual reminder of the authority of state power, and the repressive way in which urban spaces are organized, in order to enhance individualism and maximize productivity. Moreover, in the novels, the parallel with Fascism is established through the presence of characters who retain a nostalgia for the Fascist *Ventennio*, as well as through recurring war metaphors. In the paper, literary analysis will draw on theories of the connection between power and spatial organization, elaborated primarily by Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre. As centers of political and economic power, Milan and Turin are a privileged observatory, which allows

Bianciardi and Volponi to reflect on the idiosyncrasies of Italian modernization and, consequently, on their failed utopian ambitions for post-war Italian society.

The City is a Circus: Urban Fables and the End of Utopia in the Novels of Carlotta De Melas

Bianca Rita Cataldi, University College Dublin

In her novel *Il circo dell'invisibile*, twenty-first-century Italian author Carlotta De Melas states that imagination is at the foundation of the circus. The idea of the circus, with all its colours and hidden dangers, is everywhere in her novels. Her stories could be easily read as urban fables, dark fairy tales in which a happy ending is often no longer possible. Her characters see things that ordinary people cannot perceive. To them, imagination is not only a way of daydreaming, but also the only escape possible from a tiring and grey everyday life. In De Melas' novels, and in *Randagi* in particular, the urban space is characterised by a post-industrialised and doomed atmosphere in which the characters try to find their place only to realise that they will always be the outcasts. De Melas denies the possibility of a twenty-first-century utopia: towns are dead, and the only escape is constituted by a fictional world that lives only thanks to the imagination. In this paper, I will analyse the concept of the "circus" in De Melas' representation of urban spaces, by focusing on her novels *Il circo dell'invisibile* (2016) and *Randagi* (2009). I will refer in particular to the studies on fantasy conducted by Terry Apter and Rosemary Jackson, explaining why these two novels constitute a bridge between fantasy fiction and realism.

Panel 15

'Navigating Beyond Gender: The City in Feminist Science Fiction'

Beyond Gender Research Collective:

Katie Stone, Birkbeck, University of London
Sasha Myerson, Birkbeck, University of London
Tom Dillon, Birkbeck, University of London
Raphael Kabo, Birkbeck, University of London
Rachel Hill, Goldsmiths, University of London
Amy Butt, Reading University
Sinéad Murphy, King's College London / LSE

In Raccoona Sheldon's short story 'Your Faces, O My Sisters! Your Faces Filled Of Light!' (1976) a woman runs through the streets of Chicago at night. She believes herself to be living in a utopian future in which the ruins of the city are occupied, communally and harmoniously, by inhabitants who are referred to as 'sisters'. The story moves between this hallucinated, dreamed or projected world and that of the author's present, in which the running woman is perceived to be an escapee from a psychiatric hospital whose carefree navigation of the city puts her at grave risk of attack.

In this session, we will read this story alongside three other works of feminist science fiction in order to interrogate gender, race, and disability as constraints placed on those who attempt to navigate urban space. Following David Harvey's argument that 'the most explicit connexion between social action and utopian thinking is at the urban scale', we are interested in how the

fearless roaming of the non-gender-specific 'sisters' of Sheldon's story opens up new, utopian ways of navigating, maintaining and performing the city. The interplay between the utopian space of Sheldon's imagined city and the heteropatriarchal structures of domination found in the 'real' city are instructive in terms of the role that queer, feminist science fiction plays in reformulating the boundaries of possibility which define what a city is and might be. As Morag Rose highlights, such feminist psychogeographical interventions create 'an alternative, more empowering practice' through 'unpredictability, risk and freedom, disturbing normality, transforming the mundane and encouraging embodied learning and spatial knowledge'. By following this delusional, utopian sister through the rain-soaked streets of Chicago as she hitchhikes, chats with sex workers and refuses to be subsumed into the heteronormative family, we hope to contribute to this redefinition.

This session will take the form of an initial introduction to Sheldon's work, by Katie Stone, followed by three short collaborative papers. The first will feature the work of Sasha Myerson and Tom Dillon as they read Sheldon's story alongside Laura Mixon's *Glasshouses*. Here they will discuss the multiply gendered possibilities which navigating the city via waldo evokes. The second paper, from Raphael Kabo and Rachel Hill, will discuss China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* with a particular focus on the lesbian commune occupied by the khepri as an example of both utopian possibility and ghettoization. Finally, Amy Butt and Sinéad Murphy will discuss the city in Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* as a site continually remade through acts of maintenance and a performance of vulnerability and resistance which resonates with the bodies of the queer cyborgs who fill these texts.

Building on the work of Doreen Massey we recognise urban space as offering the possibility of 'coexisting heterogeneity ... a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices' (Massey, 2005, p.9). By working collaboratively through a single common text, we seek to replicate the need for communality felt in the utopian cities of feminist science fiction and establish an interdisciplinary approach to studying the city. In this session, contributors with an expertise in urban studies will collaborate with specialists in science fiction, using the aforementioned texts to critique the constraints placed on the right to the city; both in terms of restrictions on movement and spatial agency, but also access to the theoretical fields in which those spaces are critiqued.