FCJ–141 Spaces for Play – Architectures of Wisdom: Towards a Utopic Spatial Practice.

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There still exist – and there may exist in the future – spaces for play, spaces for enjoyment, architectures of wisdom or pleasure. In and by means of space the work may shine through the product, use value may gain the upper hand over exchange value: appropriation, turning the world upon its head, may (virtually) achieve dominion over domination, as the imaginary and the utopian incorporate (or are incorporated into) the real.

Henri Lefebvre, 1991 The Production of Space, 348.

Introduction

This paper proposes a Utopic Spatial Practice that seeks to rehabilitate utopianism in a digital age. Such a Utopic Spatial Practice might utilize the practices and technologies of locative media to more fully realise utopia as a specifically spatial form. It might also harness locative media's potential as a dynamic mechanism for radical social transformation. These technologies plot media to geographical coordinates, so that, via mobile devices, virtually experience can come into real world spaces. This provides scope for an artistic practice that relocates the 'no-place' of utopia in the midst of the here and now. By superimposing speculative other-worlds on real-world spaces, and thus creating incongruity within the same space, a Utopic Spatial Practice would seek to instigate a critical dialectic between *virtual* and *real* to create what Henri Lefebvre imagined as alternative 'spaces for play' and 'architectures of wisdom' (1991: 348).

To pit the *virtual* and the *real* against each other in this way may appear a perverse and rather regressive step, particularly in relation to locative media. Its technologies and practices have shifted digital encounters away from the desk-bound screen, where the virtual was much more readily understood as 'a space apart' (Dourish, 2006), and out into the material world, where there is 'a clear articulation between the physical and the informational' (de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2011: 24). To elaborate, these technologies and practices include the use of GPS-enabled mobile devices to tie information and media (text, images, sounds) to the geographical location of the user. These have been employed to guide users to locations of interest and attach additional information to these locations (directions and reviews for a restaurant, for example), as well as to augment the user's experience of a specific site (through history and heritage applications, for example). They have also enabled the development of location-based social networks (through applications such Loopt and Foursquare) and, for many, have become an everyday part of urban experience, supplemented by other technologies that place information into the environment through urban screens, RDF tags, QR codes, Bluetooth, and so on. These developments have also provided opportunities for artists to variously augment the experience of place and to instigate playful encounters with real spaces through the creation of virtual fictional scenarios (as in the case of location-based mobile games). All of these developments, which together I describe as 'locative media', have led to a blurring of the boundaries between the categories of 'virtual' and 'real', in place of which discussion has revolved around notions of *hybrid*, *mixed*, or else *augmented*, realities.

Whilst acknowledging that *hybridity* now more accurately describes the experience of users on the ground, this paper makes the case for artists working with locative media to retain some notion of the virtual as 'a space apart'. While locative media artists have long made claims about the radical potential of their work, locative media's ability to intervene in and transform urban spaces (McGonigal, 2010; Flanagan, 2009: 204; de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 608), it is difficult to see what *difference* these interventions might make when the real and virtual are collapsed into the *same* space. The radical *potential* of such interventions becomes confined to the quotidian tactics of users on the ground, drawing on the *possibilities* contained within pre-configured sets of computational data (what Adriana de Souza e Silva and Daniel Sutko (2011: 25) refer to as a 'technological virtual'). By restoring to virtuality the sense that it creates potential through the production of difference and therefore multiplicity, as explored in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and developed in Pierre Levy's account of the processes of *virtualization* (Levy, 1998), we might begin to more fully realise the radical potential of these spatial practices. Real and virtual should be seen as distinct not in terms of a separation between material and informational elements but by virtue of the different world views they present. It is proposed that Utopia offers a model for creating such a distinction because of the way it constructs an *other* world as a coherent space –a virtual 'space-as-it-might-be' in contradistinction to 'space-as-it-is'. In building such imaginary spaces and thus creating new sites for social experimentation, locative media

technologies and practices provide powerful tools for introducing new layers of meaning that are geographically aligned with, but conceptually distinct from, existing real-world spaces. Rather than producing an *augmented* reality, however, a Utopic Spatial Practice would conspire to bring about a confrontation between *different* realities, strategically creating incongruity, rather than seamless user experiences, to prise open a space between worlds in which social, political and personal transformation might be achieved.

In addition to reconfiguring our understanding of the relationship between the virtual and real, pursuing this unlikely relationship between the elderly, predominantly literary form of utopia and the juvenile digital practices of locative media has a number of other consequences which will be explored throughout this paper: it suggests a much stronger notion of authorship than we have been used to; it argues for a more serious engagement with the complexity of existing (material, social and informational) spaces and for a strategic/global rather than tactical/local response to this complexity; it forces us to distinguish between virtual worlds that are dynamic and potential-generating and those that offer only an escape into fantasy; and it suggests that there are older traditions of spatial practice, architecture for one, that we might usefully draw on.

From the start, it must be acknowledged that this paper is often as speculative and rhetorical as the methods and approaches that it proposes, and therefore leaves many questions unanswered and paths to be pursued. As with utopia, this sketch for a Utopic Spatial Practice may be read as a plan of action, a critique of existing practices, or as a catalyst for novelty and the creation of potential. It is also wise to acknowledge from the outset that utopianism has been largely discredited and discarded because of the way it is seen to lead to rigid, even totalitarian, social and built structures. Care is needed, then, to distinguish from these dystopias a dynamic and novelty-generating utopia that is capable of producing what Lefebvre describes as 'the space of the human species' (1991: 422). In doing so, we turn to two (quite different) writers who (in quite different words) help us to describe this mechanism: Digital theorist, Pierre Levy, in his account of *virtualization* (1998) and French philosopher, Louis Marin (1984), in his analysis of Thomas More's *Utopia*.

Utopia as Transformational Mechanism

First published in 1516, Thomas More's *Utopia* describes an island society in which harmony and stability is secured by the exclusion of the temporal forces of social change and their replacement by a fixed and enclosed spatial form. It is tempting, but mistaken, to think of More's *Utopia* as a depiction either of his hopes for a future society or a veiled

representation of contemporary society. Louis Marin's (1984) detailed semiotic analysis of *Utopia* shows that it is neither the presentation of an ideology nor a blueprint for action in that it has a far more complex relationship with the time and place in which it was conceived: 'It does not *signify* reality, but rather *indicates* it discursively'(197). *Utopia* is 'a critique of dominant ideology insofar as it is a reconstruction of contemporary society by means of a displacement and a projection of its structures into a fictional discourse' (195). While this 'obverse' fiction is a product of the society in which it was written, it exists as a 'fable-producing discourse' outside of that society, history and ideology (in a timeless *no-place*) (195). Neither simply representational nor ideological, *Utopia* creates a space (the 'utopic stage') for a critical discourse that lies *between* the utopian and the real. This dialectical process, which Marin describes as 'spatial play', is a powerful, radical tool that creates the 'historical conditions of possibility'; in the case of More, argues Marin, creating no less than the ideological preconditions for the growth of capitalism (198).

In other words, the 'utopic figure' remains an object outside of the discourse it creates and sustains. Utopia is 'not a goal of action', as Krishan Kumar (1991: 61) puts it, but 'primarily a vehicle of social and political speculation' (24). We need to look beyond the apparently fixed, prescriptive image that utopia presents to understand it as a dynamic and innovative process 'by which a specific system complete with spatial and temporal co-ordinates is changed into another system with its own coordinates, structures, and grammatical rules' (Marin, 1984: 242). This transformation is a product of processes of *displacement* and *projection*, including the spatialization of historical forces and social relations to produce a map, rather than narrative, but also the *tinkering* with one or more elements of the here and now to deliberately create difference; in More's *Utopia*, for example, the removal of money from human transactions. Rather than providing a blueprint for action (the construction of a society without money, for example), utopia is a rhetorical device that is designed to instigate a critical discourse that 'wedges itself in between reality and its other' (a discourse that reveals the impact of money on society and suggests alternatives) (Marin, 1984: 197). Utopia is a catalyst rather than end, and its transformative potential lies in the dynamic discourse that it creates and through which, in the words of Lefebvre, 'the imaginary and the utopian incorporate (or are incorporated into) the real' (Lefebvre, 1991: 348).

Though using a quite different language (one in which 'utopia' does not figure), Pierre Levy (1998), in his account of the processes of *virtualization*, describes a mechanism for transformation that is strikingly similar to that described by Marin (1984). Drawing the parallels between the two might allow us to start thinking about the construction of virtual worlds in terms of utopic processes.

Levy describes the operations of virtualization (which, it should be stressed, is in no way limited to digital phenomenon or the digital age) in terms of a 'trivium' of *grammar*, *dialectic* and *rhetoric* (Levy, 1998:103-118). At the level of *grammar*, Levy suggests that all *signs*, *things* and *beings* can be fractured and spatially and temporally displaced into 'abstract atoms' or 'virtual particles' which are 'detachable, transferable, and independent of living contexts' (110). It is through the recombination of these abstracted 'atoms' that 'the production of new qualities, a transformation of ideas, a true becoming' is achieved (25). Virtualization produces another place, a 'second world', that sets in motion a *dialectic*, an 'infinite process of doubling, return and correspondence', that moves between *virtual* and *real* and, through *actualization*, changes the real in the process (117). But these processes are not simply neutral and organic. They 'deliberately orient the ongoing evolution' through the deployment of *rhetoric* (146). Levy writes that; 'The rhetorical act, which is the very essence of the virtual, asks questions, embodies tensions, and suggests objectives. It introduces them, sets them in motion within a vital process' (117-118).

The notion of 'rhetorical acts' allows us to think about creative interventions that not only generate difference and possibility but also *suggest objectives*. Levy's approach is quite different from those, such as Kevin Kelly's, that invest in the workings of the 'hive mind' enabled by the Internet, the potential for *emergent* phenomenon (Kelly, 2008: 14). These promote, in the words of Fredric Jameson, 'a delirious contemporary rhetoric about which it is difficult to decide to what degree it is really Utopian – the Internet as an immense collectivity –or merely as a substitute for and displacement of the Utopian' (Jameson, 2005: 104). By contrast, we might read *Becoming Virtual* (Levy, 1998) as an attempt to resurrect utopianism in a digital age. Although nowhere does Levy use the word 'utopia', the idea of a rhetorical 'second world' (117), designed to set in motion a critical dialectic through which social transformation might be achieved, bears many of the hallmarks of utopia. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that much of Levy's work derives from that of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who are more explicit in describing the role of utopianism in virtualization. As Eugene Holland summarizes their position, 'It is in turning away from history that the utopian dimension of thought re-potentiates virtuality and restores to it the chance of becoming other than what it was' (Holland, 2006: 230). For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy's 'highest calling is to create concepts' (cited in Bonta and Proteri, 2004: 30) that, in similar manner to Levy's virtualization, abstract from actual events (history) to examine 'the virtual multiplicity of all that a society can be in order to call for an experiment that will create a new society' (cited in Bonta and Proteri, 2004: 34).

This function of abstraction, or *grammatization* [1], also features in a discussion of utopianism by Fredric Jameson (1997). In *Is Space Political?*, he speculates that a utopian architecture might begin to 'think of spaces that demand new kinds or types of living' (260), by breaking down the 'linguistic or semiotic apparatus' and establishing 'equivalencies' to

produce 'minimal units' –'rooms', 'corridors', 'doors' for example (261). From these building-blocks of architectural grammar might then be built conjectural spaces that 'dialectically challenge' the spaces from which they derive (261). Elsewhere, he provides this apt and colourful image of the process; describing 'a kind of Utopian workshop like the inventor's, a garage space in which all kinds of machinery can be tinkered with and rebuilt' (Jameson, 2005: 14).

The mechanism of transformation that is performed in Jameson's 'garage space' becomes clearer when we draw the parallels between Marin's *utopics* and Levy's *virtualization*. Both take the here and now as their raw material. Both involve a process of abstraction from it: for Levy (1998), a 'grammatization' involving 'substitutions' and 'correspondences' (117); for Marin (1984), a 'displacement and a projection' (195). Both involve the setting-up of a conversation (a 'dialectic' for Levy; a 'discourse' or 'infinite polemic' (xxii) for Marin) that relates the virtual/utopian 'second world' to the real. And both of them are envisaged as radical transformative projects; the one driven by rhetoric, the other by the utopian imagination. For both, speculation (the question 'what if?') is the motor that drives the radical project. Crucially, both the utopian and the virtual exist outside the creative processes they instigate: artificial architectures that never fully reveal themselves but which nonetheless create spaces in which new things may be realized - a virtual 'garage space' from which new machines may yet be wheeled out.

It is on the basis of this understanding of utopia as a dynamic, potential-generating mechanism for transformation that we can begin to suggest a Utopic Spatial Practice and think about a methodology for such a practice. Marin, Levy and Jameson's accounts all suggest that a process of abstraction from the here and now is essential to the design of rhetorical 'second worlds' that neither simply mirror nor turn away from existing conditions. We somehow have to conceive of a process of abstraction and novel recombination that is neither representational nor random but (indirectly) engages with *the real* - rhetorically, dialectically, creatively, even playfully - by asking questions, embodying tensions and suggesting objectives.

This process of abstraction has been variously described in terms of 'grammatization', 'atomization', 'displacement and projection', and the establishing of 'equivalencies' to produce 'minimal units'. It produces 'correspondences', 'substitutions' and 'inversions' in relation to the here and now. It can involve moving between unlike things, so that colours, sounds, sentences, actions, objects all become interchangeable (The way in which belief was once mapped into a 'sacred geometry' might be one model of this). It also, since this is specifically what utopianism does, involves translations between temporal and spatial plains (What is the shape of a piece of music, for example, and what space does it occupy?). We

need to think of it primarily as a philosophical enterprise. It is, for Deleuze and Guattari, the philosopher's production of concepts that fuels the utopian process. For example, More's *Utopia* is still powerful for Jameson in that it takes one concept (the abolition of money) and then maps out its consequences to produce a radically different picture of society (Jameson, 2005: 229). We may only need to produce one powerful twist in order to extrapolate from this a world that is entirely *other*. Crucial to the process of abstraction and construction of rhetorical 'second worlds' is the question, "what if?": What if money no longer existed? What if people could only travel in a clockwise direction? What if social hierarchy consisted of an alphabetical arrangement of first names? It is in this way that we produce what Jameson calls a 'scandal for the mind' (Jameson, 2005: 180) or Marin describes as a 'fracture', by which 'we catch a glimpse –as if illuminated by a flash of lightening – of the free force of unlimited contradiction' (Marin, 1984: xxii).

Utopia and Liminal Play

The utopic 'what if?' question produces difference through processes of dissassembly and reconfiguration that are characterized by playful experimentation and lead to the creation of new 'thresholds'. We might therefore describe these processes as 'liminal' and turn to anthropologist Victor Turner's account of liminal rituals to further explore this quality. (Turner, 1982). For Turner, these 'playful and earnest'(35) rituals, often involving rites of passage, were central to the life of pre-modern cultures and consisted of the isolation and disassembling of the elements of a culture and their 'free and "ludic" recombination into any and every possible pattern, however weird' (28). An example Turner gives is the use of a 'monster disguise' that combines 'human, animal, and vegetable features in an "unnatural" way' (27). These rituals are potentially subversive, challenging the accepted norms of a society, suggesting 'new models, symbols, paradigms' (28). Turner's notion of liminal play, like Levy's *virtualization* and Marin's *utopics*, also describes an alchemical process: 'Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements' (Turner, 1982: 27).

Ron Shields, who also sees *the virtual* as a liminal space, makes explicit the connection between liminality and utopia: 'liminality offers a utopian moment in which the weight of limiting social regulations is lifted', (Shields, 2003: 12) and there are further parallels to be drawn: both are marked by a profound distancing from normal, everyday reality; both involve stopping the clock and stepping outside routine time frames; and both involve spatial practices, specifically a narrative of journey. The traveller's tale of distant utopian lands, an essential ingredient of literary utopias (Kumar, 1991: 52 & 89), is every bit as much a rite of passage or pilgrimage in the manner Turner describes. It is tempting to suggest that the production of utopias, as a *liminoid* activity 'born with modernity' (Turner, 1982: 51),

has taken-on some of the symbolic functions, or incorporated within its form a memory, of pre-modern liminal ritual. Both can be seen as mechanisms for cultural experimentation that take us outside our everyday lives and contain what Turner calls 'the seeds of cultural transformation' (45). Marin also seems to acknowledge this link in writing of utopia that 'it knows nothing of time, and the only time it knows is the rhythmic cycle of rituals' (Marin, 1984: xxiv).

The claim that liminal play can be used to achieve social transformation is one that runs through the literature concerning mobile, pervasive and locative urban games. For their advocates, these 'games are a powerful platform for change' (McGonigal, 2010), leading to 'a form of empowerment for participants' (Flanagan, 2009: 204) in which they 'decenter the power relations' (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 608). I would argue that these games diverge significantly from the Utopic Spatial Practice I am proposing here in that they are most often geared to the production of seamlessness and coherence rather than difference and incongruity, and do not employ the kinds of dissociative processes of abstraction and translation that might produce 'a scandal for the mind' (Jameson, 2005: 180). As Rob Shields writes, 'Today's commercialized, digital virtualities are liminoid in that they derive from the liminal but do not entail rites of passage' (Shields. 2003: 17). However, in their concern with the radical potential of urban play, their use of a game mechanic to create novel social interactions, and the methods they employ to build and deploy imaginary scenarios in material spaces, these urban games do provide a foundation for the development of a Utopic Spatial Practice.

Utopia and Space

The aim so far has been to establish that utopia is able to supply a dynamic mechanism for achieving social transformation, and it has been suggested along the way that this mechanism has a liminal quality that aligns it with some aspects of locative media, but what has yet to be made clear is how a predominantly literary phenomenon can inform *spatial* practices and so it is to an elaboration of the spatial nature of utopia that we now turn.

Utopia, for Marin, is a distinctly spatial form in that it creates a timeless 'no-place' in order to arrest temporal (social-political-historical) forces and hold them up to critical examination. Utopia introduces 'the sudden distance by which contiguities and continuities of time and space are broken' (Marin, 1984, xxiv), producing 'a plurality of places whose incongruity lets us examine the critical space of ideology' (Marin, 1984: 201). In other words, the utopian mechanism creates the potential for transformation specifically through the production of an-*other* space.

Clearly, as in the case Thomas More's *Utopia*, these utopian spaces may remain confined to the page, achieving form only in text, maps and plans, but Henri Lefebvre's account of the production of space insists that social transformation is brought about specifically 'In and by means of space' (Lefebvre, 1991: 348). Capitalism, for Lefebvre, perpetuates itself through the production of 'Abstract Space', which conceals fractures and contradictions by representing space as homogenous, neutral, and transparent. Abstract Space has as its goal the 'total elimination of what is *different*' (371). Since 'new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa' (59), the task of producing social change becomes the task of producing a *different* space: 'a counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing "real" space' (349). These counter-spaces produce a *maximal* difference that 'presupposes the shattering of a system' and emerges 'from the chasm opened-up when a closed universe ruptures'. (372). They operate by 'exploring the dialectical relationship between 'possible' and 'impossible' (60) and Lefebvre turns to "art", which 'puts its faith in difference' (175), as a model for exploring this relationship: 'On the horizon, then, at the furthest edge of the possible, it is a matter of producing the space of the human species – on a model of what used to be called "art"' (422).

Lefebvre's concept of *counter-space* reiterates the radical potential in creating speculative 'second-worlds' and helps us to reconsider the closed and distant utopian form as one that might be exercised in real world spaces. This bringing together of space-as-it-is and space-as-it-might-be is one to which the practices of locative media are ideally suited. They are able to give geographical shape to virtual worlds and superimpose them directly onto the landscape. Their rhetorical power is enhanced by their ability to produce direct geographical correspondences and anomalies through the collision, the collapsing, the folding one upon the other, of real and virtual spaces. They create incongruity through scenarios in which otherness and difference, if only for the duration of 'play', is experienced within, and in relation to, everyday spaces. And in this there lies the possibility of creating new thoughts and actions; novel ways of looking at the world and acting in and upon it.

In order to produce this kind of dynamic interplay between worlds, the design of utopian counter-spaces must first take serious account of the real social spaces into which these might intervene. Too often, the works of locative media have treated space as a neutral container or scenic back-drop for the playful activities they instigate, adopting what Lefebvre critiques as 'a view of space as innocent, as free of traps or secret places' (28). Mary Flanagan, for one, is critical of locative games that produce 'an abstracted, loose relationship to the location in which they are played', thus 'commodifying the landscape' (Flanagan, 2009: 199). In contrast, a Utopic Spatial Practice would need to understand the ways in which people inhabit and use spaces, the 'flows' of information that pass through them, and the complex ways in which power and ideology shape and produce these spaces, at both a local *and* global scale. In other words, there is a need to more fully embrace *the*

spatial turn, drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose ideas underpin it, as well as that of David Harvey, Manuel Castells and Edward Soja, in the field of human geography.

A brief summary of some of these ideas, particularly as they relate to globalization, is helpful here, since they also point to an enhanced role for utopianism. Lefebvre gives us the idea that capitalism survives only by 'occupying space, by producing a space' (Lefebvre, 1976: 21) in order to resolve its internal contradictions, a development of which is Harvey's notion of the *spatial fix* (Harvey, 1982). For Lefebvre, the radical response to this lies in reclaiming the 'right to the city', the re-occupation of the centre by the peripheral (discussed in Elden, 2004: 151), an idea that persists in Harvey's 'uneven geographical development' (Harvey, 2000: 73-94) and Soja's notion of 'spatial justice' (Soja, 2010). And from Castells, we have the concept of the 'space of flows' to account for the complexity of space in a digital age and its production of, for example, the 'informational city' and 'megacities' which are globally connected and locally disconnected (Castells, 1989).

It is in response to this complication of space that a revitalized role for utopianism has been envisaged. In *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey (2000) sees utopianism as essential in bridging an ever widening gulf between the macro-scale of the global and the micro-scale of the individual, which has fragmented and confounded radical political action. For Jameson, too, it provides a means of rising above the '"parcellated" subject positions characteristic of postmodernity' (Jameson, 2005: 214) and the 'opposition between global and local' (216). The role of utopianism lies in bridging the dislocations and anomalies between centre and periphery that are produced by globalization; arguing against *everyday local tactics* and for *strategic global action*, characterized by the 'radical break': 'it is the very principle of the radical break as such, it's possibility, which is reinforced by the Utopian form, which insists that its radical difference is possible and that a break is necessary' (Jameson, 2005: 231).

While it need not and should not propose a particular political programme, a Utopic Spatial Practice *is* an inescapably radical undertaking. It proposes the deployment of rhetorical strategies in which the designer becomes a political actor of sorts, suggesting a much stronger version of authorship than we have been used to. A Utopic Spatial Practice is not about creating neutral spaces for emergent phenomenon but, rather, producing radical provocations as a catalyst for radical change. It proposes a strategic response to power and ideology that is capable of reclaiming the centre ground. It acknowledges that local, tactical and peripheral actions, alone, leave untouched the centres of power, or, as Lefebvre put it, 'neglects the centres and centrality: in a word the global' (Lefebvre, 1976: 116). A strategic response to globalization must equally repudiate a simplistic and depoliticized *positive* rhetoric of globalization, common in discussions of the Internet, which studiously overlooks the forces driving globalization, and its spatially complex, scattered consequences. In other

words, the radical project requires that we re-think the link between micro and macro scales in ways that are more complex, more dynamic and more politically charged than the rhetoric of either 'global village' or local community would have it. It is utopianism that offers a strategy for rising above this dualism and surpassing the everyday to imagine alternative futures.

Asking works of locative media to address power and ideology on a global scale may appear overly ambitious but one can begin to imagine how global-local relations might be built into, or even form the basis of projects. Paula Levine's *San Francisco-Baghdad*, for example, overlays a map of Baghdad onto San Francisco and situates geo-caches in its streets to correspond with bombings in the Iraqi capital. Levine writes that, 'Collapsing "foreign" and "domestic", these maps bridge local and global, and allow walkers/viewers to experience spatial and narrative contiguity between separate and distant locations' (Levine, quoted in Farman, 2012: 50). Projects such as Esther Polak's *MILK* have also used locative technologies to tag and track products from their producers to consumers so as to explore the social and economic relations behind their production and distribution. Though not pursued in the *MILK* project itself, there are clearly radical implications to revealing global relations of use and exchange in this way.

Degenerate Utopias

In arguing for the continuing relevance of the utopian form and its applicability to locative media practices, there is also a need to acknowledge that it has been much abused. Examining the dangers that are inherent in its application helps us to define more precisely the precarious nature of the relationship between utopic and existing spaces.

Contemporary proponents of utopianism, though anxious to find in it a means of rescuing the radical project, are nevertheless cautious in its application and keen to make some fine distinctions, particularly between the speculative, unachievable utopia described by Marin, and those that are designed to be materialized in physical space. David Harvey, for example, uses a discussion of utopian urban schemes (including those of Le Corbusier, Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright) to argue that the materialization of utopia is inextricably linked to authoritarianism and even totalitarianism (Harvey, 2000: 163-166). To implement one of many possible spatial orderings is to close-off the alternatives through an imposition of will and invokes 'spatial systems of surveillance and control' (163). Marin, too, in a discussion of Disneyland, provides a graphic example of what may occur when utopia takes

physical shape. This 'degenerate utopia', as he describes it, produces 'ideology changed into the form of a myth' (Marin, 1984: 239). It represses dialectic by freezing disparate moments of history into a sanitized, mythologized, spectacular pastiche that is rendered in fixed spatial form and controlled through surveillance by hierarchical forms of authority. It perpetuates rather than critiques the fetish of commodity culture by offering a 'fantastic journey into a world of spatial play' (Harvey, 2000: 167).

It is in this slippage from utopias to fantasy worlds that this discussion of the fraught attempts to build utopia on earth mirrors similar debates within the literature on digital media and games; where issues surrounding surveillance, authority and spectacle also appear. Andreas Broeckmann (2003), for example, in contrast to the positive claims made about the radical potential of locative media, condemns it as the 'avant-garde of the "society of control"'. To return to the idea that *utopics* and *virtualization* are comparable processes, we might argue that, just as reducing dynamic utopic processes to a prescriptive 'utopia' produces a degenerate utopia, similarly degenerate forms are produced by reducing the dynamic process of virtualization to a virtual which, rather than instigating a dialectic, becomes the discourse in itself. It is a virtual that has become thing-like, an end in itself, robbed of rhetorical/utopian power. 'What if?' becomes simply 'is' and the potential to re-imagine and transform the world vanishes: As Levy puts it: 'we need to distinguish between a virtualization in the process of creation, on the one hand, and its alienating, reifying, and invalidating caricatures on the other' (Levy, 1998: 17). These caricatures abound as 'utopian' fictions in which interaction *within* the virtual world replaces a critical dialectic with the world outside. In contrast, Marin sees utopia as an object outside of the discourse it creates, not one containing it. The radical function of utopia is to produce a critical discourse that, to reiterate Marin's phrase, 'wedges itself in between reality and its other' (Marin, 1984: 197). In a 'utopic game', for example, players would not be asked to inhabit utopia but, rather, to respond to it discursively, in a dialectic with the world outside.

It is this distinction, between utopias in which we are wholly immersed and those that retain a distance, which Jameson describes in terms of 'The Great Schism' between fantasy and science fiction (Jameson, 2005: 34). The former is dominated by 'utopian fancy' (the everyday experience of its content), the other by the 'utopian imagination' (with its closed, distant form) (227). While science fiction, for Jameson, retains 'that system of radical difference with which we associate the imagination of utopia' (101), fantasy involves losing ourselves in a magical 'private fantasme' (76) and holds no power to instigate 'a restless and speculative Utopian search' (231). This distinction helps us to distinguish between virtual worlds that bear only the outward signs of utopia, and the kind that we are seeking to define here.

'Utopian fancy' is not an optional ingredient, however. Constructing imaginary worlds in all their 'fanciful' detail 'lends emotional conviction' (Kumar, 1991: 89) by engaging us in experiences rather than confronting us with arguments, demonstrating what social theory can only explain, and thereby making palatable that which would otherwise be alien and threatening. In this, once again, there is a fit between the *modus operandi* of utopia and the methods of locative media, particularly where imaginary worlds are constructed as immersive experiences within a game scenario in which the novel, strange and incongruent can, as in a liminal state, be playfully, safely and coherently experienced 'as if' it were real. As Harvey writes of utopia, 'it allows us to conduct a "thought experiment" in which we imagine how it is to be (and think) in a different situation' (Harvey, 2000: 238). It opens-up those spaces in which it is possible to experiment with 'a vast range of competing ideas about social relationships, moral orderings, political-economic systems and the like'(161). However, 'utopian fancy' must remain tethered and subordinate to the 'utopian imagination' if these immersive experiences are not to detach themselves from and refuse to address the real conditions in which they are staged. In other words, we need to be careful about what kinds of 'second worlds' we build; dynamic, potential-generating ones rather than their 'alienating, reifying, and invalidating caricatures' (Levy, 1998: 17). Just as there is a danger that our utopias may simply reproduce current conditions rather than transcend them to create difference, and therefore potential, there is also a danger that they lose their grounding in, and critical engagement with, the here and now, and instead produce a flight of utopian fancy.

In practice, we might maintain this engagement with the real world by incorporating the utopic dialectic we are seeking to create into the design process itself; using it as a tool to negotiate the delicate relationship between virtual and real, rather than simply arriving at a virtual scenario. This dialectical approach to design might also help to resolve a particular conundrum that faces a Utopic Spatial Practice; that its work must remain largely invisible. For Marin (1984), the traces of a 'utopic practice' are only discernable in the 'utopic figure' (utopia) as a model of a structure of differences, 'an ensemble of signifiers and signified in spatial play' (197). In other words, the utopias or second worlds that we build must always remain just the outward sign of the largely intangible productive force involved in creating a 'utopic stage'. The real work of a Utopic Spatial Practice exists not in the design of utopias but in the production of a dialectic that operates between the utopian and the real. Thus, for Marin, utopia is 'the presence of a lack whose space is that by which and around which space is organized' (263). A similar concept is Levy's notion that as a 'sculptor of the virtual' (Levy, 1998: 185) our task is to create 'a void in the midst of reality' (118). Granted, this notion of hidden work is difficult to grasp, but not insoluble. Levy's model of sculptor is apt since by employing a dialectical method of design we can, like a sculptor making a cast for a bronze, produce numerous 'plaster casts' to test and refine our 'void' or 'presence of a lack'. However, it should be stressed that this dialectical approach is more than just an extension of iterative design practices which are concerned only with what 'works' and what doesn't.

A Utopic Spatial Practice is driven by rhetoric and concerned not only with creating a virtual world but with producing and maintaining the delicate relationship between virtual and real that is required to generate a critical dialectic with transformative potential. In establishing the nature of this relationship and suggesting a methodology that is capable of producing it, it is useful to look towards the model offered by mapping practices.

Mapping Utopia

Mapping becomes an important conceptual and practical tool for a Utopic Spatial Practice. It provides a model for negotiating the relationship between *virtual* and *real*, as well as the *fanciful* and the *imaginative*, allowing us both to ground our utopias in the here and now and, at the same time, abstract from it to generate new possibilities.

Those producing locative and pervasive media scenarios will recognize that much of their work involves reading, annotating and producing maps of both the physical landscape and the 'mediascape' with which they overlay it. It is useful, then, to consider utopian processes at work in the act of mapping. As Denis Cosgrove writes, 'All utopias require mapping, their social order depends upon and generates a spatial order which reorganizes and improves on existing models' (Cosgrove, 1999: 15-16). While mapping can be an authoritarian and coercive act (for Michel de Certeau, an act of 'panoptic power' [1984: 95]), landscape architecture theorist James Corner also sees in the 'agency of mapping' an opportunity to reveal and realize hidden potential 'in a world where it is becoming increasingly difficult to both imagine and actually to *create* anything outside of the normative' (Corner, 1999: 214). The distinction between the two lies in the plea from Deleuze and Guattari to 'Make a map not a tracing!', which they go on to explain in the following way: 'What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely orientated toward an experimentation in contact with the real' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 12). So whereas tracing reveals only what is already known, 'mapping unfolds potential' (Corner, 1999: 213). For Marin, mapping is also an inescapably utopic act. The map's fixed, totalizing point of view occupies 'a point of space where no man can see: a no-place not outside space but nowhere, utopic' (Marin, 1984: 207). It is the 'privileged point' (203) at which narrative and space, discourse and itinerary, meet to produce a picture of 'all possible routes' (205). It creates what Marin calls 'a plural organization of spatiality' (xiv); a description that seems readily applicable to locative media.

Mapping incorporates the utopian mechanism of transformation we have found elsewhere: starting with a process of abstraction to a virtual geography (the map), which in turn sets-

up a dialectic with the terrain through which new potentials are revealed. Corner describes the process as a 'double projection' which 'both captures the projected elements off the ground and projects back a variety of effects through use' (Corner, 1999: 215). Its utopianism lies in 'first disclosing and then staging the conditions for the emergence of new realities' (216). As with utopia, the map itself is not the goal but rather the process it sets in motion; the process of producing virtual worlds that reveal and challenge the closed nature of ideology. It was in this spirit that the Situationist's produced their psychogeographical maps which, for example, turn Paris into an archipelago of urban islands: 'the city imagined as a psychogeographical sea, pushing and pulling the sensitive soul along its eddies and currents', as Simon Sadler describes it (1999: 88). If their cartographical methods seem obscure, this is not surprising, since in attempting to lift the veil of ideology and reveal another city, it was necessary to employ rather intangible, irrational, sensate criteria, creating a liminal sense of dislocation in order to elicit new ways of seeing.

There are some other examples of alternative, 'cognitive' mapping practices that are worth looking at because they make explicit the link with pre-modern, pre-rationalist societies: Examples include medieval maps which tell stories of journeys made (Certeau, 1984: 120), the use of *star compass* and *etak* by Micronesian navigators (Turnbull, 2000: 131-160), Tibetan maps which chart 'cultural fields' more than they do landscape (Huber, 1999: 59-60), and the art of Aboriginal Australians which can be seen as maps of the Dreaming (Turnbull, 2000: 37). Social anthropologist Tim Ingold characterizes such examples of mapping as acts of 'wayfinding', in which knowledge is acquired *en route*, in contrast to the point-to-point 'navigation' facilitated by scientific map-making, in which knowledge is imposed from above (Ingold, 2000: 219-42). In other words, these mapping practices produce a different way of knowing the world to that of the scientific map's abstract representation of space, and so we might draw on these practices to imagine and construct alternative world views.

It is not by chance that these 'liquid' maps (Careri, 2005a: 42), through which sailors, pilgrims and nomads found their way, culturally and spiritually as well as physically, return us to Turner's description of liminal rituals and rites of passage (Turner, 1982). While the mapping practices of nomads might be seen as a *liminal* activity, those of their urban, mobile-phone-toting, GPS-enabled post-modern counterparts (William Mitchell's 'electronic nomad' (2003: 159)) might be seen as *liminoid* -distinguishable by the voluntary nature of their participation but nevertheless engaged in liminal-like pursuits. What can only be hastily sketched here is the idea that in pursuing new spatial practices, we are somehow returning to a way of seeing the world that has many parallels with pre-modern and specifically nomadic cultures. It is the same idea that is contained in Marshall McLuhan's 'retribalization' and return to 'acoustic space' (Cavell, 2002: 112), as well as in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of nomadism and 'smooth' nomadic space (Bonta and Proteri, 2004: 118-119), and in Levy's work too: 'Virtualization reinvents a nomadic culture' (Levy, 1998: 29). It also figures, as we shall see shortly, in an alternative strand of architectural thought.

Building Utopia

As we look to models for spatial practice that are able to critique existing conditions and produce social transformation, it may appear odd to appeal to the figure of the architect. For Lefebvre, for example, the architect 'too often imitates or caricatures the discourse of power' (Lefebvre, 1991: 361) while for David Harvey, as has already been noted, the attempt to build utopia on earth has too often led to rigid authoritarian structures. However, as Krishan Kumar asserts, 'architecture has always been the most utopian of all the arts' (Kumar, 1991: 14) and both Lefebvre and Harvey, despite their reservations, are compelled to return to architecture as a model for radical spatial practices. Lefebvre, as we shall see, explores architectural forms that create a unity between built structure and *lived experience*, while Harvey emphasizes the capacity of the architect to both engage with real world problems and limitations *and* draw on the 'speculative imagination' to 'generate alternative visions' (Harvey, 2000: 237). He proposes as a model for radical action the figure of the 'insurgent architect', who works strategically across multiple spatial scales to construct utopian responses to power through a 'dialectical utopianism' that negotiates between the contingencies of the here and now and the desire for alternatives (241). Certainly, we can think of works of architecture that respond to this brief by producing social spaces that are dynamic and creative rather than rationalist and prescriptive. Bernard Tschumi's *Parc de la Villette*, for example, deliberately produces incoherence through the operation of three incongruous and conflicting structuring systems to create a space that is defined only by its use. Realised through 'multiple, diverse and transforming practices' (Kaye, 2000: 51), it is an architecture that is 'always in performance' (52).

Following on from the previous discussion of nomadism and wayfinding, we might also identify and draw on a 'nomadic' tradition of architectural thought. Francesco Careri (2005a), in his exploration of 'walking as an aesthetic practice', dispels 'the erroneous but common conviction' (66) that nomads, or 'homo ludens', are 'anti-architects' (29), unconcerned with the 'physical construction of space and form' (36). Instead he argues that 'there is a much more profound relationship that connects architecture to nomadism through the notion of the journey or path' and that it was nomadism that 'gave rise to architecture, revealing the need for a symbolic construction of the landscape' (36), resulting in the earliest architectural forms, including menhirs and stone circles.

Following on from their experiments with the *dérive* and psychogeographical maps, the Situationists also engaged with 'nomadic' forms of architecture, developing a utopian 'unitary urbanism' in which 'inhabitants would rediscover the primordial aptitude for self-determination of one's environment' and culminating in Constant Nieuwenhuys's design for a New Babylon: a city for 'a new nomadic society' (Careri, 2005a: 108). Underscoring

once again a utopian transformative mechanism defined by processes of abstraction and novel recombination, Careri writes that 'while in the maps of Debord the compact city was exploded into pieces, in those of Constant the pieces are put back together to form a new city' (116). Constant's New Babylon was designed as a 'city for homo ludens' (Careri, 2005b: 100), promoting a new way of living that would be characterized by playful creativity. In this 3-D *dérive*, contained within a space-frame structure, partitions could be moved around and endlessly reconfigured to adapt to the nomadic wanderings of the city's inhabitants (Sadler, 1999: 132). It produced a 'megastructural, labyrinthine architecture, based on the sinuous line of the journey of the nomad' (Careri, 2005a: 116). Begun in 1956 and developed throughout the nineteen-sixties, New Babylon was never built, but exerted wide influence, not least on Henri Lefebvre who also envisaged an appropriation and diversification of space through an architecture of 'semi-public, semi-private spaces, of meeting-places, pathways and passageways' (Lefebvre, 1991: 145). Lefebvre also suggests that the production of 'a living space which is an extension of the body' (221) might be found in the 'poetry of monuments' (227). *Monuments* such as medieval cathedrals (in contrast to the functional *buildings* of modernity) embody a transformational mechanism of revolutionary potential: 'Buildings are to monuments as everyday life is to festival' (223). Lefebvre suggests that, by creating an experience of 'total being in a total space' (221), such monumental spaces may restore a lost unity of body and mind -but even he acknowledges that these thoughts on architecture are 'no more than suggestions, or pointers' (363).

It appears that many of the most intriguing utopian architectures remain un-built, tried and tested and it might be argued that their *virtue* lies precisely in their *virtuality*. If ever realised, the argument goes, they would lose the critical distance that allows them to speculate on alternative organisations of space. Harvey, for one, ultimately rejects purely spatial utopias as necessarily degenerate and argues instead for a 'dialectical utopianism' that recognizes the interplay, and negotiates the tensions between, spatial and temporal plains (Harvey, 2000: 182). But this objection to the building of utopias is, once again, to equate the virtual with the non-material, reinforcing an opposition that makes less and less sense. In what has been variously described as the 'media city' (McQuire, 2008) or 'informational city' (Castells, 1989), 'the virtual, social and physical worlds are colliding, merging and coordinating' (Rheingold, 2002, xviii). The distinction between architect and artist, bricks and media, is no longer so clear or important. It is not that a New Babylon could not or should not be constructed but how best to go about building it, and with what tools and materials. Architects have been amongst the first to take advantage of these new conditions, playing with the relationship between informational and material elements to stress 'the dynamic, transversal and performative character of architecture' (Feireiss, 2007: 220). However, artists working in the field of locative media have a distinct advantage in that the informational layers with which they predominantly work do not require a plot of land or planning permissions, and are quickly and cheaply erected, modified and demolished, arguably creating wider scope for playful experimentation. New Babylon may

yet be realized if conceived of as an informational layer that is superimposed on material space to produce a virtual labyrinth that experiments with novel forms of social space. In other words, while the differences between the two practices cannot be reduced to the old real/virtual dichotomy, since both work across and blur this distinction, the utopic potential of locative media does lie in the *relative* independence it enjoys from material conditions. It necessarily operates within and engages with material spaces but nevertheless produces distinctive and coherent informational spaces that might allow us to retain some notion of the virtual as 'a space apart'. It is the retention of this *difference*, utopia as 'an imaginary space within real social space' (Jameson, 2005: 15), 'a void in the midst of reality' (Levy, 1998: 118), 'an experimentation *in contact with the real'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 12; my emphasis) but not necessarily subsumed by it, that distinguishes a Utopic Spatial Practice.

However, architecture continues to provide inspiration for a Utopic Spatial Practice through the ways in which it engages with site, its experiments with the creation of dynamic social spaces, and, not least, in the sheer scale of its utopian ambition. While many works of locative media treat the urban landscape as a scenic backdrop for playful encounters, architecture doesn't hesitate to lay claim to the centre-ground, proclaiming its 'right to the city'. That isn't to say that, as media practitioners, we should don hard-hats and start building cities; rather that we should refuse limits on our practice that prevent us from strategically contesting the built spaces of the city, and which instead confine us to tactical interventions in the spaces between. It is a conceptual issue and, once resolved, allows us to focus our attention on the nature and purpose of the spaces we propose to construct. Whether these are material or informational, it ultimately matters little, because the key choice for us now, this paper argues, is between dynamic, potential-generating utopias in which 'the space of the human species' (Lefebvre, 1991: 422) might be created and their degenerate counterparts, producing spaces of consumption, spectacle and control. A Utopic Spatial Practice can contest the production of such spaces by reacquainting the city with the utopian impulse that once inspired it and formulating strategic responses to power that insist on putting the utopian imagination back to work in the heart of the city.

Biographical Note

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have used these to explore and critique different representations of time and space.

Notes

[1] Levy's notion of 'grammatization' is quite different from that of Bernard Steigler's which sees it as an outsourcing of human memory, by technical means, leading to an expansion of memory and consciousness beyond the human: discussed in, Bernard Steigler, 'Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith', in Tom Cohen (ed.), Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.70.

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