

**Distopia: The utopia of dissidence and cultural pluralism
in three generations of Dutch artists**

by

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SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

This study develops a utopia, named distopia, positioned as a utopia of dissidence and cultural pluralism, also described as difference. The term distopia is a neologism formulated to invoke productive elements of utopia (such as a vision for an improved sociocultural sphere), with aspects of dystopia (namely, scepticism regarding the prevalent), whilst evading the potential naiveté of utopia as well as the hopeless resignation that dystopia can encourage. The term also denotes the political expedience of dissent. Utopia is analysed in terms of its form, content, or function, and according to its underlying sociocultural dynamic, which is, in turn, determined by intersecting permutations of space and time. This study furthermore categorises utopias as either representative of the same (that is, of the institutional, political, discursive, ideological and sociocultural status quo), or of the other. The other is defined here as an agent marginalised along the vectors of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Distopia is, accordingly, a dissenting utopia of the other, formulated to address, in particular, sociocultural exclusion and human rights violations linked to the parallel projects of neocolonial exploitation and of destabilising globalisation practices driven by neoliberal ideology. The utopias of three Dutch visual artists, namely Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005), and Jonas Staal (b. 1981) in collaboration with Moussa Ag Assarid (b. c.1975), are critiqued through the lens of distopia. This is done in order to assess the status of productive difference and engagement with the other in their respective utopias, created over the course of a century.

Key terms:

Constant Nieuwenhuys; distopia; Ernst Bloch; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; Homi K Bhabha; *jetztzeit*; Jonas Staal; Michel Foucault; Moussa Ag Assarid; New World Embassy; Piet Mondrian; smooth space; third space; utopia; Walter Benjamin.



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SIGNATURE

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and aims of study

1.1.1 Background

This study focuses on devising a particular kind of utopia named distopia, a utopia of dissidence and cultural pluralism, also described as difference. Distopia is a neologism denoting utopia, dissidence and cultural difference, and represents an attempt to formulate a relevant response to current identifiable sociopolitical crises which include rising authoritarianism within western states, the effects of accelerating resource appropriation and regional destabilisation on global communities, and increasing socioeconomic inequality. The utopias of three generations of Dutch artists, namely Piet Mondrian, Constant Nieuwenhuys, and Jonas Staal in collaboration with Moussa Ag Assarid, are compared to distopia to clarify their engagement, if at all, with difference and cultural pluralism over the course of a century (c 1920-2014). Such longitudinal analysis facilitates a clearer understanding of utopia as a specific kind of sociocultural expression, namely as an alternative social system created in order to reform or subvert existing constructs. Utopias thus represent the expression of a desire to resolve social conflict or to "transform chaos into cosmos" (Manuel 1973a:xii; Starrs & Wright 2005:101). For Frederic Jameson (2005:15), utopia's emergence "registers the agitation of the various 'transitional periods' within which most Utopias were composed".

Signifying the way in which utopia springs from social stresses, a survey of twentieth century utopian literature reveals two significant eras for utopian discourse, namely the decades following World Wars I and II, respectively. Utopian publications, conferences and artistic praxis proliferated during these eras. In The Netherlands, interwar utopian thought took shape in the art and writing of Piet Mondrian, co-founder of the Dutch movement De Stijl, whereas post-World War II utopianism in visual art is embodied by Dutch painter Constant Nieuwenhuys, who spent more than a decade constructing models of a utopian global city he called *New Babylon*. In the twenty-first century, Dutch artist Jonas Staal addresses the deterioration of human rights in the west and globally in the name of national

security, prevalent after 9/11. The work of the three selected artists is interpreted here as utopianising artistic praxis in the aftermath of the three most traumatising and disruptive events of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in the west, and is analysed as such in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, respectively. A reading of utopias created over the course of a century makes it possible to hermeneutically sound the social conditions from which utopias can be seen to emerge, and contextualises the formulation of dystopia in the current socioeconomic and political sphere (briefly described above) as apt, and necessary.

Because responses to sociopolitical constructs vary, utopia itself appears in virtually limitless variations. Starrs and Wright (2005:97) mention five broad categories of utopian thought: Political-economic, psychosocial, military, religious and apocalyptic. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Within this framework, utopias can furthermore be classified as variously "religious and secular ... misogynist and feminist ... peaceful and profoundly violent", and they can lead to "racism, sexism, paranoia, environmental destruction, and the loss of civil liberties, personal autonomy, and actual lives" (Starrs & Wright 2005:100, 114). Such threatening materialisations of utopia foreground the dialectal relationship between the two constructs, utopia and dystopia. Dystopia is defined as a negative assessment of society based on fear, in contrast with utopia which is defined (for the most part), as future orientated and based on hope (Bloch 1986:12, 76; Carey 1999:xi-xii; Levitas 1990:7, 181, 191; Wright Mills in Mosco 2004:15; Starrs & Wright 2005:115). A core difficulty in differentiating between utopia and dystopia is that the boundaries between these two constructs are culturally and ideologically determined (Starrs & Wright 2005:113), and that what is regarded as a utopia by its protagonist can be a severe dystopia to an observer or coerced cohort. Further demonstrating the close relationship between utopia and dystopia, both utopian and dystopian tendencies can be seen to heighten during and after apocalyptic events, these being circumstances experienced as collectively shocking to the point of challenging faith in society and humanity. An apocalyptic event can engender a break in historical consciousness, such as occasioned by Auschwitz, a "massively traumatic genocidal catastrophe [that] demonstrated [the] human potential for systematic and unbounded violence" (Ray 2004:1), the two World Wars of the twentieth century, and the events of 11 September 2001. In this way, both utopian and dystopian constructs are created in response to that which is threatening or unfathomable. The complex relationship between utopia and dystopia, and the way in which their entanglement impacts on the positioning of dystopia, is unpacked in greater detail in Chapter Two (see 2.4).

1.1.2 Aims

The aim of this study is to develop a discursive framework for a specific utopia, named distopia, the utopia of dissidence and difference. The neologism distopia references the terms utopia, dystopia, dissidence and difference. Distopia is formulated as a subversive and disruptive utopia created to challenge lingering global deep-structural biases, specifically with regard to race and culture. In order to contextualise and position distopia sociopolitically, an overview of utopias is provided, taking into consideration the form, content and function of utopia as it has unfolded in the west during the period of modernity (since More formulated his utopian vision), up to the late modern period (c.1960 to the present). The historical development of utopia is taken into consideration, and it is argued here that the nature of utopia can be seen to have shifted from a modernist (predominantly totalitarian) manifestation to a late modern positioning as (often) anti-systemic. Distopia is accordingly formulated as an anti-systemic, late modern utopia of the other. It is positioned to function as a sociopolitically necessary performance of agency to counter a globally expanding and increasingly disruptive (and violating) dispensation constructed along the intersecting axes of neoliberalism, neocolonialism and heteropatriarchy, which can in turn be interpreted to be increasingly aggressively normalised. As such, distopia is an attempt to rupture the seemingly inexorable procedure whereby dissent is assimilated and even commodified by the systemically same. Precisely what distopia entails is further clarified in Chapter Five.

The theoretical framework of distopia as a mode of sociocultural critique and as an anti-systemic utopia of the other, is developed with reference to relevant constructs extracted from eight key theorists, namely Michel Foucault, Louis Marin, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha, and David Harvey. The elements borrowed from these theorists are clarified below, in the literature review. Relevant aspects of the work of Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch frame the strands of thought amalgamated in the theoretical framework of distopia. The work of three Dutch visual artists mentioned above, regarded as representative of Dutch utopian world-making as it developed over the course of a century, is lastly analysed with reference to the distopian discursive framework developed in this study. The central consideration in the development of distopia is the notion of cultural pluralism, and the artists were chosen for the reason that, being Dutch, they represent a community that positions itself as defined by

cultural tolerance (Bregman in Cahalane 2016; Lovink 2008; van de Vijver, Breugelmans & Schalk-Soekar 2008; Victor 2004). Yet despite the discernible normative value placed on tolerance in Dutch society, two assassinations of well-known Dutch cultural and political figures,¹ both directly linked to sociocultural tension around the existence and characterisation of Moslem communities in The Netherlands, indicates that the cultural and political milieu in the Netherlands is strained. This discrepancy (between generally declared liberalism and tolerance, and the extremes of cultural opposition that the assassinations suggest), makes The Netherlands a highly relevant sociogeographical site for the exploration of discourses around cultural pluralism. An analysis of the nuances and inconsistencies that can be detected on a structural level when engaging with discourses around cultural pluralism, is facilitated by interrogating the nature of *utopias* devised by members of the society in question. The work of each of the three Dutch artists will therefore be analysed in terms of their engagement (or lack thereof) with the themes outlined above, and, in particular, with difference and dissidence – the central considerations of dystopia. Briefly, an increasing focus on cultural pluralism and dissidence is discernible in the sequential analysis of the three utopias in question.

The formulation of dystopia is furthermore undertaken in order to contribute to discourses concerning cultural pluralism and dissidence from a minority perspective, or the perspective of the *other*, in order to challenge the discursive, ideological and institutional frameworks of the sociopolitically 'same'. The creation of a utopia of the other in contravention of the systemic same is informed specifically by the work of Michel Foucault (2008 [1967]) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1993 [1987]), who directly invoke these terms. To summarise, this study is positioned as a twenty-first century response, in the form of a utopia of the other, to inimical sociocultural and economic practices and frameworks implemented and disseminated by western institutions and governments. These practices and frameworks include the negative effects of capitalist cycles of creation and destruction on workers and global communities; the noticeable discrepancy between the liberalist ideology of individual rights (defended as a primary contribution of western culture to world history), and continued systemic discrimination based on class, race and gender

¹ Right-wing Dutch politician Wilhelmus Simon Petrus (Pim) Fortuyn was shot in 2002 by fellow Dutch citizen Volkert van der Graaf, who claimed he was acting to protect Muslim minorities in The Netherlands from political exploitation and scapegoating (Evans-Pritchard & Clements 2003). Anti-Islamic film director Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed by Mohammed Boyeri, of joint Moroccan and Dutch nationality, in 2004 (Victor 2004).

perpetrated in and by western institutions; the increasing commoditisation of basic resources; and intensifying militarised resource appropriation and resultant regional destabilisation.

1.2 Literature review

The following discourses are central to this study:

- a) The development of utopian thought and praxis in the west during the period of modernity. (Dystopian thought is interpreted in this study to be a subset of utopian thought, and, more importantly, as irrelevant to the development of *constructive* utopian praxis and thought. The focus thus falls on utopia);
- b) Strands of thought from selected cultural theorists interpreted as relevant to utopian discourses that engage productively with cultural pluralism, difference and dissidence, and thus as important for the formulation of distopia;
- c) The utopian thought and artistic praxis of three selected Dutch visual artists in order to compare their utopias with each other and with distopia.

1.2.1 Modernity and the development of utopian thought

In order to form a coherent framework for comprehending the nature and development of utopia, the work of seminal writers on utopia (who have themselves endeavoured to form an overview of the phenomenon) were consulted. Important texts include Ernst Bloch's *The principle of hope* (Volumes 1-3) (1986 [1954, 1955, and 1959]) and *The spirit of utopia* (2000 [1918]). Bloch's texts are indispensable to a study of utopianism, and they were also utilised for the formulation of the framework of distopia. Further important texts that were referenced in the current study include George Kateb's *Utopia: the potential and prospect of the human condition* (2008b [1971]); Krishan Kumar's *Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times* (1987); Frank E Manuel's *Utopias and utopian thought* (1973a [1965]); and Lewis Mumford's *The story of utopias* (1968 [1922]). Essays important for devising an overview as well as for a particular theoretical stance regarding utopia in this study include Judith Shklar's *The political theory of utopia: from melancholy to nostalgia* (1965); Mumford's *Utopia, the city and the machine* (1965); Valérie Fournier's *Utopianism and the cultivation of*

possibilities: Grassroots movements of hope (2002); Christopher Grey and Christina Garsten's Organized and disorganized utopias: an essay on presumption (2002); Roy Stager Jacques's What is a crypto-utopia and why does it matter? (2002); and Zygmunt Bauman's Living in utopia (2005). The essays by Fournier and Stager Jacques were important for the development of the notion of dystopia as a dissident critical construct. Both Fournier and Stager Jacques critique the currently dominant utopias of, for instance, neoliberal capitalism and western cultural supremacy, and outline alternative anarchic or grass roots utopias, interpreted in the current study as utopias of the other. Their work was thus helpful in nuancing the differences between utopias of the same and of the other; in emphasising the sociopolitical usefulness of certain utopias; and in developing the notion of a utopia of resistance and subversion.

In *The concept of utopia* Ruth Levitas (1990) discusses utopia in terms of function, form and content, and this framework was adopted in order to create a coherent structure for the formulation of dystopia (in Chapter Five), and for the comparative analysis of the three selected utopias in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The presentation *Imagining no-place: The subversive mechanics of Utopia* by Steve Duncombe (2011) is important for the current study's formulation of the dialectical relationship between utopia and dystopia.

1.2.2 Space and utopia: poststructural, subaltern and Marxist theory

The work of eight key theorists in the fields of critical studies and geography was central to the formulation of dystopia as a utopia of cultural pluralism and dissent, as well as of newness and agency, regarded as inseparable from the former (that is, cultural pluralism and dissent). The theorists are, in order of discussion in Chapters Three and Four, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Louis Marin, Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha, and David Harvey. The key texts assimilated for the formulation of dystopia are, in order of publication: *Of other spaces* (Foucault 2008 [1967]); *Culture in the plural* (de Certeau 1997 [1974]); *The practice of everyday life* (de Certeau 1988 [1980]); *Utopics: the semiological play of textual spaces* (Marin 1990 [1984]); *Heterologies: discourse on the other* (De Certeau 1986); *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 1993 [1987]); *The frontiers of utopia* (Marin 1993); *The location of culture* (Bhabha 1994); *Spaces of hope* (Harvey 2000); and *For space* (Massey 2008 [2005]). These texts

were furthermore correlated with the work of Ernst Bloch (*The spirit of utopia; The principle of hope*).

Key concepts foregrounded by the eight theorists are: subversive and bi-locational spaces, or heterotopias (Foucault); dissident and agentic space, referred to as smooth space (Deleuze and Guattari); utopia as resistance to normalisation (Marin); the subversive potential of the other and the everyday (de Certeau); the spatialisation of globalisation discourses (ordinarily perceived temporally as the inexorable unfolding of neoliberal processes) (Massey and Harvey); and space as a zone constituted by cultural work and destabilising hybridity, referred to as third space (Bhabha). The temporal framework of *jetztzeit* explicated by Bhabha (and indispensable to rendering space agentic), was identified as indistinguishable from the notion of now-time as formulated by Ernst Bloch.

The theorists have in common a discussion of space in terms of alterity with regard to dominant systems, institutions, and discourses and foreground spatial praxis in terms of minority tactical agency. The term minority in this study is used to indicate the sociopolitically other, in relation to the same, defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1993:105) as "the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language".

1.2.3 The utopian theories of three selected Dutch visual artists

The framework distilled from the key texts discussed in Chapters Three and Four, and adapted to the formulation of distopia in Chapter Five, is utilised to analyse and compare three utopias by Dutch artists whose praxis span the course of a century, from Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), to Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005), and Jonas Staal (1981), who collaborated with Moussa Ag Assarid (c.1975).

The artists produce(d) voluminous texts in which they explicate(d) the nature of their utopias, and these were consulted in order to facilitate an analysis of their respective utopias. The key texts consulted are:

a) *The new art – the new life: the collected writings of Piet Mondrian*, edited by H Holtzman and MS James (1986), in which the following essays were of importance: The new plastic in

painting; Natural reality and abstract reality: a triologue (while strolling from the country to the city); Neo-Plasticism: The general principle of plastic equivalence; The realization of neo-plasticism in the distant future and architecture today; Purely abstract art; and Home-street-city.

b) *Constant's New Babylon. The hyper-architecture of desire*, edited by M Wigley (1998), in which the following essays and declarations by Nieuwenhuys were important: Inaugural report to the Munich Conference; The great game to come; Another city for another life; Description of the Yellow Sector; Unitary urbanism; Discipline or invention?; New Babylon: outline of a culture; New Urbanism; About the meaning of construction; On traveling; The principle of disorientation; and New Babylon – ten years on. Nieuwenhuys's New Babylon, a nomadic town (1974), was also utilised.

c) *The art of creating a state* edited by J Staal and M Ag Assarid (2014) was an important text explicating the nature of the utopia created by Staal and Ag Assarid, as were two essays by Staal, namely To make a world, Part I: Ultrnationalism and the art of the stateless state (*E-flux* 57, September 2014) and To make a world, Part II: The art of creating a state (*E-flux* 60, December 2014).

1.3 Theoretical framework

In this study, poststructuralism, postcolonialism / subaltern studies, and Marxism are regarded as the analytical / theoretical frameworks most relevant to an analysis of trends within and reactions to western hegemony, with specific reference to the relationship between the same (defined above), and the other.

James Williams (2005:1) explains poststructuralist thought as based on the notion that there are limits to knowledge, and that these limits do not frame the core of knowledge like a periphery, but characterise and permeate it, 'making up' the core. Simply, this can be summed up as scepticism toward incontestable and totalising claims of knowledge (the dominant discourse of the same), as found within the preceding Structuralist project, which can be regarded as a late extension of the Enlightenment project. Poststructuralist theorists

can thus be seen to formulate a counter-discourse of the other, indispensable to the notion of distopia as formulated in this study.

If poststructuralism seeks to approach knowledge about any system in terms of the traces left by disruption of the system, or in terms of the disconcerting play of limits within such a system (Williams 2005:3), then it is applicable to an analysis of the disruptions which arise from the friction between the discourses of the same and of the other, and also in the detectable inconsistencies *within* the discourses of the same. One such inconsistency (referred to above), is the contradiction between liberalist notions of equality and the simultaneous demonisation of cultural constructs deemed incommensurable with liberalism. Equality becomes subject to gate-keeping which hollows out and nullifies the foundational assumptions of liberalism from within. Thus the disruption of a secure sense of meaning, identity and the role of history in the present (Williams 2005:3), is more productive of insight and alternative ways of viewing systems than can be gained from regarding such systems in terms of their (illusory) stable cores, positioned to be fixed, true and non-negotiable. The value of poststructuralism hence lies in its "power to resist and work against settled truths and oppositions [which can] help in struggles against discrimination ... [and] guard against the sometimes overt, sometimes hidden, violence of established values" (Williams 2005:3-4). Addressing various sociocultural constructs (such as 'grammar' or the western penal system), in terms of problematic power relations, the writings of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva are seen as the major contributing texts in poststructuralism (Williams 2005:3-7). In this study, the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, and Marin inform the dissenting and destabilising framework essential for distopia. Their work is significant in that it engages with notions of *space* in a way that is helpful in framing utopia as potentially agentic.

Postcolonial / subaltern theory destabilises majoritarian discourses similarly to the way in which poststructuralism does, and the work of Homi Bhabha is adopted here in order to address cultural pluralism specifically. Lastly, all the key theorists cited in this study are critical of capitalism, as one of western modernity's most insidiously threatening projects, and in the case of Bloch and Harvey, are overtly Marxist in their approach.

1.4 Methodological framework

This study is qualitative in nature and is furthermore exploratory and investigative. Rather than establishing 'truths', it investigates, analyses and interprets the following: existing utopian scholarship in order to formulate an overview and structure by means of which utopianism itself might be understood; poststructuralist theorists relevant to the creation of a specific utopia of dissidence and difference; and the utopian praxis of three Dutch visual artists whose work spans the course of a century, which might facilitate an understanding of the evolution of dissidence and cultural pluralism in their respective utopias over this period.

The research methodology thus entails a qualitative study that comprises the following:

- a) A literature survey of utopias and utopian studies;
- b) A literature survey of key poststructuralist, postcolonial and Marxist theorists relevant to this study, which addresses space in terms of minority agency;
- c) An application of the utopian framework formulated from a correlation of the relevant theories listed above, to an interpretation and comparative analysis of the writings and artworks of three Dutch visual artists, chosen for positioning their own praxis as world-making, and because they have created their utopias in a society that broadly validates liberal 'tolerance' of cultural difference.

1.5 Overview of chapters

Chapter Two provides an overview of utopian thought from the sixteenth century, when Sir Thomas More committed his thoughts on an ideal society to paper as *Utopia* (1516), to the late modern period in order to clarify how classical or traditional utopias (arguably totalising and coercive) have evolved into discourses which, in some cases, critique the dominant system and seek to circumvent the coercion of traditional utopias, as well as that of the prevailing system. The relationship between utopia and dystopia is also clarified in order to evade the binary framing of these two constructs, and to emphasise the dialectical relationship between them. This positioning of utopia *vis-à-vis* dystopia is significant for the formulation of distopia in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three explores the work of five key theorists relevant for the development of distopia as a spatial zone of sociocultural contestation and dissent, namely Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Louis Marin, and Michel de Certeau.

Chapter Four focusses on the work of key theorists Doreen Massey, Homi Bhabha and David Harvey. Bhabha and Harvey approach spatial discourse from a postcolonial and Marxist perspective, respectively, and Massey and Bhabha emphasise the effect of spatial praxis on cultural pluralism, central to the notion of distopia.

In Chapter Five, the theoretical framework and sociopolitical significance of distopia are distilled by reading the work of the theorists discussed in Chapters Three and Four through the work of seminal utopian theorist Ernst Bloch, who preceded them. This is done as a performative re-enactment in the text of a subversive temporal mode, namely now-time, crucial to distopian dynamics. Now-time as explicated by Bloch is indistinguishable from *jetztzeit* delineated by Walter Benjamin, and applied by Bhabha to the concept of third space. The function and dynamic of distopia are contextualised against this temporal matrix which is shown to co-constitute the space of distopia.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight respectively analyse the utopias of the three Dutch visual artists mentioned above – Piet Mondrian, Constant Nieuwenhuys, and Jonas Staal, who developed his utopia in collaboration with Moussa Ag Assarid. The three utopias are compared in terms of their function, form and dynamic, and are lastly analysed through the lens of distopia, focussing specifically on the variable prevalence in each of dissidence and difference, two essential themes of distopia.

Chapter Nine is the final chapter. It summarises the preceding chapters and offers concluding thoughts. The limitations and contributions of the study are highlighted and suggestions for further research are made.

CHAPTER TWO

UTOPIA

This chapter provides an overview of utopian discourse as it has unfolded in the west, particularly since the naming of the phenomenon as such by Thomas More in *Utopia* (1516). Utopian praxis in the form of the establishment of ideal communities, principally in the nineteenth century, is also briefly clarified. The scope of the current overview is limited to western discourses around utopian constructs, and this chapter does not attempt to present an exhaustive or global survey of utopia. A framework by means of which to analyse the vast field of utopian art, theory and praxis is adopted from Ruth Levitas (1990), sociologist and leading figure in utopian studies, who classifies utopia in terms of its function, form and content. An overview of utopian thought and praxis makes generalisations of the function, form and content of utopia possible, and furthermore facilitates an alternative ordering of utopias, complementary to but divergent from Levitas's classification: this study differentiates between utopias of the same, and utopias of the other. What this differentiation entails is briefly defined below, and addressed in greater detail in the following chapters. A combination of these two interpretive frameworks (which foreground the function, form and content of utopia, and that distinguish between utopias of the same and of the other), provides the context for devising a particular kind of utopia namely dystopia (see Chapter Five), the primary contribution of this study, and facilitates the subsequent comparative analysis of the utopias of the selected Dutch artists. Lastly, this chapter explores the relationship between utopia and dystopia, as well as objections to and justifications for utopia, particularly with regard to utopia's perceived relationship to the 'real'. This is done in order to clarify this study's positioning of utopia as a (very real) mode of sociopolitical reform, as well as to nuance the dialectic nature of dystopia, which contains elements of both utopia and dystopia.

2.1 Utopia defined

Utopian thought as the capacity to imagine a different and better world is argued to be as old as humanity itself (Burrell & Dale 2002:106). Ruth Levitas (1990:1) notes that many cultures have constructed imaginary worlds as reflected in their various origin- and destination mythologies and that these point toward a utopian urge. This utopian impulse is

furthermore so widespread that some theorists and commentators (though not Levitas), feel that it represents a universally human propensity (Bloch 1986:294; Mucchielli 1961:7-8)¹ or even an ontological inescapability (Tillich 1973).² Other commentators explicitly or implicitly restrict themselves to western conceptions of utopia. Eugen Weber (2008:88), for instance, designates utopia as characteristic of western culture specifically, where it manifests as an urge to create order, and German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf (2008:124) similarly argues that western thought is founded on utopian conceptions of society. Krishan Kumar (1987:3, 425) contends that utopianism is found only within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Giving a broad definition of utopia when describing it as a way of re-conceptualising the world that has been in existence for three millennia (Kumar 1987:ix), Kumar subsequently drastically narrows the definition of utopia down to a specifically western phenomenon, in literary form, as invented by Sir Thomas More in *Utopia*. Kumar (1987:3, 425) notes that "the modern western utopia invented in the Europe of the Renaissance – is the only utopia", and continues by observing that the western utopia does not exist in non-western and non-Christian culture. (The circularity of the statement escapes him). Whilst conceding that "[o]f all non-western civilizations, China does indeed come closest to developing some concept of utopia", he nonetheless dismisses these 'proto-utopias' as possessing a "generally backward-looking, peasant character" (Kumar 1987:428). In contrast, Frank E Manuel (1973a:xv) more generously concedes that China and the Muslim world do have utopias but that they have been neglected by western scholars.

When insisting that Thomas More had invented not only the term utopia, but a new phenomenon, it becomes clear that the only utopia according to Kumar (1987:23-24) is the western, Christian conception, in literary form, of a perfect society. In sharp contradiction to such a framing of utopia, philosopher and semiotician Luis Marin (1990:5) observes that "utopias have never been just books".³ Theorist Ernst Bloch (1986:15; original emphasis) also reasonably claims the opposite, that "to limit the utopian to the Thomas More variety ... would be like trying to reduce electricity to the amber from which it gets its Greek name",

¹ Bloch (2000:193) emphasises the centrality of the feeling of amazement to the utopian impulse, as it is the catalyst for the perception of what is not yet, but what could be. He posits furthermore that all societies are pervaded by the experience of such "absolute astonishment", making astonishment the conduit of radical newness into the world (Bloch 1986:294).

² In his *Critique and justification of utopia*, Paul Tillich (1973:296; original emphasis) notes that "the first positive characteristic [of utopia] to be pointed out is its *truth* – utopia is truth. Why is it truth? Because it expresses man's essence, the inner aim of his existence".

³ Paul B Sears (1973:137) similarly comments that to consider utopia as exclusively a literary phenomenon, is to disregard its general sociocultural prevalence.

and furthermore states that "the utopian coincides so little with the novel of an ideal state that the whole totality of *philosophy* becomes necessary ... to do justice to the content of that designated by utopia".⁴ Bloch (1986:294) subsequently defines utopia in terms of an extremely broad range of human endeavours and activities and, like Tillich, regards utopia as an inherently human predisposition. Bloch includes fairy-tales, myths, traveller's accounts, daydreams, sea voyages and alchemy under the banner of utopia, and he regards the arts, particularly literature, music and architecture, as important manifestations of utopian consciousness. Bloch (1986:14), in essence, correlates the utopian urge directly with artistic praxis, and he describes great art as the exploration of "something that overhauls, something perfect which the world has not yet seen". His alignment of significant artistic praxis, socially transforming newness and utopia is considered in the development of dystopia (see Chapter Five), and applied to a comparative analysis of the utopias of Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys, and Staal and Ag Assarid (Chapters Six to Eight). What these utopias have in common is their capacity to 'dream forward', which, for Bloch (1986:12, 76), is what produces the future.

This study rejects the definition of utopia as representing a specific form (for example the utopian novel), or as a phenomenon that can be traced back to a particular text published five hundred years ago, and also finds the notion of utopian endeavour (if defined as hope for a better future), as a peculiarly *western* phenomenon, improbable. The position taken in this study is that the utopian propensity is probably globally prevalent among diverse societies, but the study does not entail a global survey of utopias. Only those utopian constructs regarded as suitable to lay a foundation for the understanding of utopianism as such, and that aid in establishing the parameters for dystopia (which specifically addresses global problematics emanating from the agenda(s) of the western bloc), are discussed or referred to.

In her monograph *The concept of utopia* (1990), Levitas delineates a useful framework for the analysis of utopia, based on categorising utopia in terms of its form and content, or in terms of its function. Definitions of utopia which revolve around form focus on utopia as a particular mode of self-expression, such as a novel, which is distinct from, for instance,

⁴ Bloch's attempts to sufficiently address the notion of utopia culminated in *The principle of hope*, a 1400-page, three-volume treatise written between 1938 and 1947. The volumes were published in 1954, 1955 and 1959 respectively.

poetry or philosophy. (Kumar's definition of utopia, discussed above, serves as an example). Definitions of utopia according to content value detailed descriptions of utopian societies. Inclusions of utopias defined according to form or content in anthologies and commentaries vary according to the motivations of the editor(s), and discussions around them are often normative, especially with regard to the notion of 'reality' (Levitas 1990:4). Thus, form and content definitions, by and large exclusionary and arbitrary, are unhelpful in a general survey of utopia and of utopian studies.

Conversely, definitions of utopia which revolve around the function of utopia tend to be wider and less normative (Levitas 1990:5), even though this function might vary among theorists. Utopia's function of envisioning a better future is closely tied to the concept of utopia as a form of constructive criticism (Kateb 2008a:19; Knights & Willmott 2002:79; Reedy 2002:170) or as compensation (Bloch 1986:12; Marcuse 1955:206; Thomas-Neely 1997:63) or escape (Mumford 1968:15-21). In each case, utopia is conceived specifically in terms of its social or personal function, regardless of its form or content. Yet Levitas argues that none of the varying definitions according to form, content or function are categorical as she is seeking what remains constant despite any and all possible variations in existing definitions. Her conclusion is that what remains constant and therefore constitutes the essence of utopia, is desire (Levitas 1990:7, 181, 191). It is thus, according to her, desire for a better way of living – a comprehensive conception of utopia compatible with that of Bloch – that defines utopia in the broadest sense, and allows for the inclusion of a vast amount of material under the collective banner of utopia.

In this study, cognisance is taken of this overarching definition of utopia as desire for a better way of living, but the study foregrounds the sociopolitical *function* of utopia, which, in turn, can be seen to establish its internal social dynamic. A utopia's sociopolitical dynamic determines whether it is conducive to agency, newness and a productive engagement with difference, for instance. In addition, the central assumption of this study is that the sociopolitical dynamic (and function) of a utopia hinges primarily on whether the utopia in question represents the interests of the same, defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1993:105) as the "adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language", or those of the other (see 3.3). This study thus seeks to interrogate the difference between utopias that function to entrench the privilege of the sociopolitically same, and utopias that

challenge the status quo from the perspective of the other. This differentiation has a direct bearing on the framing of distopia, which is expressly positioned as a utopia of the other.

To summarise, utopia is variously defined as either a global phenomenon or as a uniquely western occurrence (regarded here as an implausible position). Utopia is accordingly defined in rather narrow terms as having its origin in a relatively recent and specific form (namely More's novel), and also in more comprehensive terms as a ubiquitous desire for and vision of an improved society which drives history. As a phenomenon, utopia can furthermore be categorised in terms of its form, content, or function, a framework devised by Levitas that facilitates the analysis of a utopia's deep-structural sociopolitical dynamic. Utopia can, lastly, be interpreted to represent the interests of either the same or the other, regarded here as an essential differentiation between those utopias that encourage dissidence, agency and cultural pluralism, and those that seek to eradicate these qualities from society.

Below follows a brief survey of utopias from the early sixteenth century to the late-twentieth century, in order to trace the genealogy of the western concept of utopia since the commencement of the modern era during the late Renaissance (c. 1500-1600).

2.2 Utopia imagined

This section briefly traces the development of utopia, mainly in literary form, in order to facilitate insight into the broad themes addressed by utopians.

Utopian studies can form a crucial part of cultural studies and critical theory, as utopias reflect and react to perceived deficits in sociocultural and political practices (Bloch 1986:479; Golffing & Golffing 2008:38; Mumford 1968:11). Conceptions of utopia accordingly evolve as utopia adapts to changes in society. For Fredric Jameson (2008:396, 392) a utopia functions to oppose the "basic contradictions" of the period it is created in, and comprises "mental operations to be performed on a determinate type of raw material given in advance, which is contemporary society itself". Levitas (1990:189) similarly notes that "the utopias current in a society tell us much about the experience of living in it, because they tell us in a way that we cannot directly ascertain where the felt absences are

in people's lives". Manuel (1973a:xii; 1973b:70) also reads utopia as "expressive of specific social conflicts which it presumes to resolve", and describes utopias as "psychological documents that significantly reveal the sensibility of the particular historical societies in which they appeared". For instance, events such as the English Civil War (1642-1651), the impact of proliferating accounts of voyages of discovery to the 'new world' on sixteenth century thought, and the Enlightenment, Industrialisation and French Revolution of the eighteenth century, are captured in the utopian thought and literature of these eras.⁵ A brief sample of relevant utopias shows how utopian constructs can be seen both to react to, and have an effect upon, history.

A survey of utopias starting in the sixteenth century begins with utopia as conceived by Sir Thomas More. More, who gave a name to this vast category of expression, though not having invented the phenomenon, as argued by Kumar, created an ideal society which served as a critique of the political and social failings of Tudor England by detailing their opposite.⁶ (This interpretation of the purpose of More's utopia is explored in greater detail below). Thus, More (1997:74-75) describes the lack of greed in human conduct on the island and its superior urban hygiene. This form of utopian speculation, where the practices and beliefs of the existing society are turned on their heads in an effort to expose their absurdity or offensiveness, is often referred to as satire, where inversion is used as a more or less subtle form of critique.

With growing awareness of voyages of discovery to territories such as the Americas, Pacific Ocean Islands, and Australia, European utopian imagination shifted to exotic locations populated by 'noble savages' or by imaginary peoples. Such utopias include Gabriel de Foigny's *A new discovery of the Terra Incognita Australis* (1693), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's travels* (2002 [1726]), and Louis de Bougainville's (1772) description of his travels

⁵ Two such accounts of voyages to previously 'unknown' territories include Peter Martyr D'Anghiera's *Decades of the new world* (1912), published in several, progressively more complete editions between 1511 and 1530, which records Columbus's voyages of discovery and describes life in Hispaniola (Haiti), as untroubled by the evils associated by the author with the European institutions of money and property. Similarly, in a letter written in 1503 to Lorenzo de Medici, Amerigo Vespucci (Florentine navigator between 1499 and 1502 after whom the American continents were named), describes the Americas as peacefully inhabited by people in possession of vast amounts of gold, it being, nonetheless, not greatly valued by them (Kumar 1987:70). The idea of the worthlessness of gold to society is taken up by More in *Utopia*, where gold is used for the manufacture of chamber pots.

⁶ The term as devised by More ambiguously references both the Greek terms *eutopia* ('good place') and *outopia* ('perfect place' or 'no place') (Mumford 1968:1).

to Tahiti in which he portrays the island community as the epitome of virtue and happiness (in Carey 1999:98-100, 153-157).

Early utopias of rationality and progress herald Enlightenment ideology, and include Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), where scientists busy themselves with genetic engineering and create robots and submarines. Similarly subscribing to a humanist belief in rationality and progress, eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet (1755 [1795]) construes history as a progressive succession of eras which would culminate with politics conducted according to scientific and mathematical principles. Somewhat later, in 1833, American writer John Adolphus Etzler envisages a luxurious, mechanically driven paradise in which the landscape has been drastically transformed: mountains have been levelled to the ground, rivers diverted to man-made channels and forests obliterated (Carey 1999:229).

The nineteenth century can be described as the definitive century of socialist reform movements in the west. Examples of early socialist utopias include Henry J Forrester's (1848) clean and crime free England described in *A dream of reform* (in Carey 1999:238), and, in the same year, Karl Marx's (1995) *Communist manifesto* (1848). Although Marx insisted that his socialist scheme was 'scientific' and self-evident as opposed to utopian in the (for him) derogatory sense, his communist conception is nevertheless interpreted as a utopia inspired by a vision of social and economic equality. Social abuses under capitalism are also addressed in Etienne Cabet's (2003) *Travels to Icaria*, published in 1839 and Edward Bellamy's *Looking backward, 2000-1887* (1960 [1888]). Cabet's ideal society, Icaria, is communist but, unlike Marx's self-regulating society, highly legislated.⁷ *Voyage to Icaria* became popular among the French working class as it described a world of social equality and regulated labour, where property, produce and resources are communally owned and distributed. Edward Bellamy's *Looking backward, 2000-1887* similarly sought to do away with the core elements of capitalism, including the generation of profit through the

⁷ Cabet's protagonist Eugene (in Carey 1999:232-233; original emphasis) describes the laws regarding every minutia of the Icarian's life: "[E]verything concerning food has been regulated by the *law* ... A *committee* of scientists ... has made a list of all known foods ... and they have indicated which are necessary, useful and agreeable ... The Committee ... has also discussed and indicated the number of *meals*, the time at which they should be eaten, how long they should last, the number of courses ... and the order in which they should be served". A list of suitable clothing was drafted by another committee, and the cut and colour of an Icarian's dress and headgear are determined by age, gender and occupation.

exploitation of labour.⁸ In addition to the numerous theoretical and literary utopias devised in response to the effects of capitalism, countless communist, socialist and anarchist communities sprang up during the nineteenth century, particularly in North America. As concrete utopian schemes, these are discussed in a brief overview in 2.3.

Besides the negative effects of industrialisation and capitalism, nineteenth-century utopias grappled with the philosophical and moral implications of contemporary scientific discoveries and theories, and their perceived limitations. The intersection of utopia with science prompted the genre of science fiction which simultaneously draws on scientific developments and imagines a world beyond current scientific (and human) possibilities. Such utopias include Edward Bulwer-Lytton's (2007) *The coming race*, published in 1871. It describes an advanced people, the *Vril-ya*, who live underground and possess intelligence and technology superior to that of surface dwelling humans. Their sociocultural advantage derives from their manipulation of *vril*, a substance similar to electricity, but also used medicinally, to enhance telepathy and in weapons such as death rays.⁹

Nineteenth-century English Romantic and socialist William Morris (1970) found Bellamy's "cockney paradise" (Levitas 1990:108) to be repugnant, and wrote his *News from Nowhere*, first published in 1891, in response. In *Nowhere* private property has been abolished, and the citizens live a communal life (as described by Cabet and Bellamy above), but in a much less regimented fashion, and with, most importantly for Morris, joy in labour, which consists mainly of making beautiful and useful craft objects. Morris's description of exactly how such a state of felicitous co-existence is to be achieved, remains vague: the transition is not described, nor are the agents of change identified. Contemporaneous romantic utopian sensibilities are also represented by Oscar Wilde's (1990) anarchistic rally to aestheticism and disobedience (*The soul of man* – 1895). If utopias are born when "the imagination finds no satisfaction in existing reality" and if they are the "[c]omplementary colours in the picture of the reality existing at the time" (Mannheim 1936:184), a survey of nineteenth-century utopias and alternative schemes clearly indicts industrialised capitalism and shows the

⁸ In Bellamy's America in the year 2000, education is compulsory up to the age of 21, when all women and men are conscripted into an industrial army. In this future ideal state there is full employment, no exploitation and very little crime. Workers retire at the age of 45, women when they have children. People live in serviced apartments and have their meals at local communal dining halls. Salaries are the same nationally, irrespective of job, rank or gender, and money cannot be saved from year to year.

⁹ The name of the fantastic substance *vril* was appropriated for the beef extract known as Bovril, invented in 1889. The name Bovril combines '*vril*' with '*bos*', which is the Latin term for ox (Carey 1999:261).

tremendous amount of theory and practical effort that went into ameliorating its effects. All the theorists discussed in Chapters Three and Four similarly proscribe capitalism, as does distopia.

World War I changed the nature of utopian conception for the worse: after the War it became increasingly problematic to conceive of an ideal society. Lewis Mumford (1968:1) observes that the period immediately after the War still echoed aspects of the hopeful spirit of the preceding age but that the buoyant idealism of the nineteenth century had vanished. The aftermath of war, where the survivors lived in a state of panic or despair (Mumford 1968:17), was fertile ground for the new dystopian genre. The relationship between utopia and dystopia is clarified below. Reacting to this tendency, a pro-utopian Mumford (1968:307) rallies: "Our most important task at the present moment [1922] is to build castles in the air". His exhortation is contemporary with the efforts of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian, who formulated an intricate theory, Neoplasticism, based on a utopian urge to transcend this period of turmoil and violence (see Chapter Six).

Utopian writing became more prevalent again in the 1960s: Jameson (2008:386) notes "[n]ot the least unexpected thing about the 1960s was its reinvention of the question of Utopia". Contributing factors to the mid-century revival of utopias were post-World War II economic and industrial growth, the emergence of a rebellious counter-culture, and, it can be argued, attempts to positively address the trauma of the War. The economic and technological boom gave rise to a renewed wave of optimism prompting notions of 'real' utopias made possible by the elimination of scarcity. Writing in 1965, Manuel (1973a:x) observes "within the past decade, and not only among the committed, the word utopian is beginning to be divested of an overtone of derision".

Manuel (1973b:87-88) describes how, during this period (the 1950s and 1960s), "imaginative life-scientists" amalgamated elements of the natural sciences with notions of expanded human consciousness. Sir Julian Huxley, brother of Aldous Huxley and prominent scientist in his own right, adapted the theory of biological evolution to the notion of the transformation of human consciousness. Palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1959) similarly formulated a theory of the evolution of human sensibility, described as a kind of "cosmic utopianism" by Kumar (1987:391) and as spiritualised Darwinism by Manuel (1973b:88). Teilhard's utopia entailed a conception of the lithosphere, a lifeless layer of

inorganic matter supporting a layer of living organisms called the biosphere. The biosphere is, in turn, superseded by the noosphere, a 'thinking layer' enveloping the earth (Kumar 1987:391). This emerging layer signalled a new era of communal consciousness consisting of an intimate and dense network of mental communication (Manuel 1973b:88). The noosphere would, in its final, self-communing phase, close in on itself, independent of the earth's biosphere, which would eventually waste away (Kumar 1987:392). Mid-twentieth century British world historian Arnold J Toynbee similarly refers to an approaching 'etherialisation' of humankind, and his contemporary, German psychiatrist Karl Jaspers, likened the anticipated transition in consciousness to the axial period of the eighth century BCE (Manuel 1973b:89).

It might be said that during the mid-twentieth century, utopia migrates into the mind. Aldous Huxley (1954) explores the use of mind expanding drugs, and Allan Watts (1978 [1962]) and Timothy Leary¹⁰ develop theories around the notion of eupsychia, or utopia of the mind. Leary also records his ideas on outer space as a spiritual medium of transcendence in his *Starseed* series, written in prison (1973). Besides psychedelic drug culture, 'alternative' religions and philosophical frameworks were also explored by members of a burgeoning counter culture: Hinduism and Zen Buddhism (or derived versions thereof) were adopted by the Beat poets of the 1950s, including Allan Ginsberg (Kumar 1987:401), and by the Hippies of the 1960s, as portrayed in the cult film *Hair* (Forman 1979). Philosopher Herbert Marcuse, in *Eros and civilization* (1955) explores the liberating potential of the libido freed from the Freudian 'reality principle'. In short, mid-twentieth century utopias are characterised by experimentation and exuberance, and author Charles Reich (1971:290-291) aptly describes their optimism and sense of alterity and agency: "The extraordinary thing about this new consciousness is that it emerged out of the wasteland of the Corporate State, like flowers pushing up through concrete pavement. Whatever it touches it beautifies and renews".

¹⁰ Leary's work on the spiritually and emotionally therapeutic benefits of LSD was brought to a larger audience by Robert Anton Wilson, in his *Prometheus rising* (1983). Because of the controversial nature of Leary's work and beliefs, Leary is referred to in many fringe films and novels around the theme of drugs. In Tom Wolfe's novel *The electric kool-aid acid test* (1973 [1968]), Leary is portrayed as a studious researcher who avoided using psychedelic drugs for recreational purposes, whereas his alleged egocentrism and excesses are portrayed in Hunter S Thompson's film *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas* (1971).

An example of a 1960s anarchist utopia includes Arthur P Mendel's *Robots and rebels* (1969). Mendel (2008:151) speaks of the Great Refusal, which is directed against consumer society and its "increasingly more absurd products", American militarism and burgeoning powerful corporations. Mendel and a generation of hopefuls was reacting against the war in Vietnam as well as perceived state and corporate monopoly and power. In language typical of the era, Mendel (2008:152) explains: "The Great Refusal is passive when the rebels just let go, step down from the treadmill of time and achievement into a timeless present, the residence of sensual and contemplative delight". The notion of the Great Refusal is derived from Herbert Marcuse's (1955:136) description of what amounts for him to the highest form of freedom, namely freedom from anxiety. Mendel's description of a timeless, sensual utopia is very close to Nieuwenhuys's description of *New Babylon*, formulated during the same period (see Chapter Seven).

After the 1960s, mid-century hope for and belief in the future was countered by mounting concerns regarding environmental degradation and resource scarcity, as well as the west's newly felt vulnerability in this regard, sparked to a large degree by the oil crisis of 1973.¹¹ Growing ecological awareness and heightened fear of overpopulation gave rise to a new category of utopia namely the ecotopia, of which Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1990 [1975]) is representative. Feminist ecotopias of the era include Ursula Le Guin's *The dispossessed* (1974), and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the edge of time* (1979), which describes a utopia of peaceful anarchy, ecological awareness and the elimination of gender differentiation. The technological utopias of the recent past came to be seen as increasingly nonviable or positively threatening, recast as dystopias.

The 1980s witnessed the conservative backlash of the New Right as reflected in neoliberalist, anti-working class Reaganism and Thatcherism. While alternative utopias of resistance seemed to dwindle into nonentities, the utopia of the free market rose like an invincible force. No opposing utopia seemed, (and seems, as argued by David Harvey – see 4.3), capable or, more importantly, willing, to challenge it head on, for the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century 'critical utopias' present themselves not as perfect alternatives and ultimate solutions, but as "imperfect, subject to difficulties, inconsistencies, faults,

¹¹ The oil crisis was precipitated when the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OAPEC, proclaimed an oil embargo in response to American arms supplies to Israel during the Yom Kippur war (1973).

change" (Levitas 1990:172). These critical utopias are described as "[o]ppositional cultural practices ... [to] be understood as part of a broader, ongoing cultural revolution" (Moynlan 1986:51), also known as postmodernism, or as encompassing certain aspects of critical postmodern discourse. At the end of the decade, Levitas (1990:159) notes that "contemporary utopias ... tend to withdraw into the interstices of a seemingly irredeemable actually existing society rather than confidently heralding its transformation". Practical attempts to implement utopia in the later twentieth century tend toward community building on a limited scale. Such a conception of utopia, as the small scale, or even personal, agentic utopia of resistance, finds expression in distopia.

The development of utopias since the time of More thus reflects sociocultural and economic changes that were perceived to impact negatively on society, or which captured the imaginations of the utopians in question as viable alternatives to prevailing conditions. These include the travels of the early explorers; the development of science and attendant value placed on rationalism; the effects of capitalism; the drug- and counter-culture of the 1960s; growing ecological concerns, and feminism. Utopias can furthermore be seen to increasingly avoid formulating overall schemes and focussing instead on modestly scaled interventions and alternatives. In the following section, practical attempts to create an ideal society are briefly explored. This is done to position utopia as a 'more concrete' phenomenon brought about by praxis 'in the world', in order to counter the perception of utopia as 'unreal'. The derogatory categorisation of ideas as utopian and hence unreal or absurd, is addressed in greater detail in 2.5 below.

The distinction between concrete and imaginary utopias as indicative of utopia's merit or lack thereof, is unhelpful, but an overview of concrete utopian communities and structures assists in positioning utopia as a form of social critique that has affected societies and history. The concrete utopias in question, however, originated as ideas, and the current study positions ideas as concretely impactful on the lived environment, as the following overview demonstrates.

2.3 Utopia realised

More than a century after *Utopia* was published, an early tangible utopia was established by pacifist Gerrard Winstanley. He founded a communistic peasant community in England in 1649, known as the Diggers or True Levellers. Reacting to the destabilisation of the English Civil War and the extreme economic disenfranchisement of the peasant class, Winstanley and a group of peasants cultivated a tract of wasteland in Surrey, and invited others to do so as well. Winstanley envisioned an egalitarian society without commerce or private property, and he saw his efforts as a contribution to the welfare of his fellow human beings (Carey 1999:67-68). This short lived utopian community was attacked by landowners and the military and was forced to disperse in 1650.¹²

In North America, communities seeking self-determination began to be established in the eighteenth century, culminating in a frenzy of communitarian activity in the nineteenth century. Mostly sectarian, the original communities included the eighteenth-century Shaker community founded in 1776 at New Lebanon, New York, followed by the Rappite community¹³ and groups such as the Moravian Brethren, the Separatists of Zoar,¹⁴ and the True Inspirationists of Amana.¹⁵ The societies were often millenarian, believing either that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent, or that it had already taken place, and attempted to establish a life of communal Christianity in preparation of the last judgement (Kumar 1987:84). Among these societies the Shakers were the longest to survive, and the most widespread. They were admired by Friedrich Engels (Kumar 1987:83), and John

¹² Similar treatment of the English peasants occurred in the eighteenth century, when wealthy English landowners began to 'reconceptualise' the countryside: a series of acts led to the enclosure of large tracts of previously common land, turning peasants into vagrants and criminalising them in the process (Burrell & Dale 2002:118-119). Burrell and Dale describe a concept of utopia from the opposite end of that of Winstanley and his peasants, from the point of view of the landed gentry and their quest for an Arcadian, garden-like utopian landscape. The birth of the utopia of private ownership and privatisation as such (the dominant trope of neoliberal capitalism), can also be seen in this geographical transformation of the English landscape. This utopia of the pastoral English landscape is reflected in the Picturesque genre in painting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹³ The Rappites were originally founded in Germany in 1785 by George Rapp, but were driven by persecution in Germany to set up a community in Pennsylvania in 1804. The community relocated to Harmony, Indiana in 1814.

¹⁴ The Separatists of Zoar were South German peasants who followed the teachings of Joseph Bäumeler. Persecuted by the Lutheran Church in Germany, they relocated to Zoar, Ohio, in 1817.

¹⁵ The True Inspirationists of Amana were Protestant Reformers who left Germany in 1842 to pursue their dream of finding a paradise on earth in America.

Humphrey Noyes (in Kumar 1987:91) attributed to them the birth of an entire era of communitarian, socialist movements.¹⁶

Nineteenth-century Scottish industrialist Robert Owen attempted to put his ideas on humane factory management and education for the working class into practice in his cotton mills in New Lanark. As a socialist, Owen sought to abolish private property, profit, and competition, and explored the possibility of self-sufficient, co-operative villages (Carey 1999:207). In 1825 he bought the Rappite land at Harmony and founded New Harmony, where money was replaced with 'labour-notes', earned for labour in the community and exchangeable for goods. The notes were intended to preclude hoarding and greed and encourage modest living and consuming. New Harmony lasted approximately two years.

Early American anarchist Josiah Warren (1798-1874) was a member of Owen's New Harmony community and supported Owen's social reforms, but believed that it was the loss of individual autonomy that had led to New Harmony's downfall. He subsequently developed his ideas around an individualist form of anarchy (Riggenbach 2011), combined with private property, but rejecting a capitalist money economy. Warren opened a retail store in Cincinnati (1827) in which goods were sold at their cost price plus approximately 4%, which went to the upkeep of the premises. Warren did not earn a salary but was paid in labour-notes according to the amount of time it took him to assist the customers, to the following effect: "Due to Josiah Warren, on demand, ten minutes in needlework – Mary Brown" (Adams in Riggenbach 2011).

Warren founded four utopian communities along anarchist principles over the course of two decades.¹⁷ The last and most successful community, called Modern Times, was established

¹⁶ Noyes founded the Oneida community in 1848 in central New York State. The community believed that the Second Coming had taken place in 70 AD (Kumar 1987:88). According to the Shakers, the Second Coming had also already occurred, with Christ appearing as Mother Anne Lee, in 1776, the year in which the Shaker Church was founded (Kumar 1987:88). The Oneida community lasted 33 years.

¹⁷ The first community was founded in 1830 or 1831 (McKinley 1937:15; Timeline of Josiah Warren's life [sa]), in Claremont County, Ohio, but the village was decimated by disease (possibly cholera) by 1837 (Baillie 1906; Timeline of Josiah Warren's life [sa]). Warren attempted to establish a similar community in Tuscarawas County, Ohio in 1835, but it was also beset by disease – this time by malaria, as well as influenza. The village was abandoned within a few years (Baillie 1906; Timeline of Josiah Warren's life [sa]). Undeterred, Warren reorganised the community of an existing settlement named Utopia, in Clermont County, Ohio, in 1847. The original community, founded by the followers of French utopian Charles Fourier (1772-1837), had failed to successfully implement its communistic principles and, disillusioned, disbanded in 1846 (Baillie 1906). The residents were eventually displaced by rising costs of land in the surrounding area which made it impossible

(with Stephen Pearl Andrews) on Long Island, New York, in 1850 (Dyson 1964). Its situation on an island is notable, as is the naming of a geographical location in temporal terms. (The links between time, space, and utopia are clarified in later chapters). A 'time store', similar to the one in Cincinnati, provided the necessary goods and a system of labour-notes was once again instituted. The residents had absolute autonomy and practiced free love, in accordance with Warren's anarchist ideals, and the village flourished for a decade until a combination of external factors caused its demise. An economic panic in 1857, the American Civil War (1861-1865), and negative publicity contributed to the dissolution of the community. The village was renamed Brentwood in 1864, possibly to distance itself from its negative reputation, and the former enclave gradually merged with the general population of Long Island. The community based on the absolute autonomy of its members, where "[n]o two persons were expected to dress alike, think alike, or act alike [and where] nothing was in such disrepute as sameness" (Worden 2013), was re-absorbed into the homogeneous and all-enveloping matrix of the capitalist heteropatriarchal norm.

Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) is in the unusual position of authoring a utopia, *Voyage to Icaria* (1839), described above, and for taking practical measures to concretise it.¹⁸ Forced into exile (1834-1839) in England for his radicalism, Cabet met Robert Owen and subsequently shifted his focus from a republican opposition to aristocratic rule to a working class struggle against the bourgeoisie (Shaw 1884:7-8). These ideas were captured in *Icaria* and became popular immediately. Founded originally in Texas in 1848 by a French group of Cabet's followers, the community moved in the following year to Nauvoo, a settlement in Hancock County, Illinois which had itself been abandoned by a Mormon community (Shaw 1884:47).¹⁹ The numerous subsequent Icarian settlements form part of a plethora of

to expand. The alternative socioeconomic arrangements of Utopia were relinquished, although the village still exists (Baillie 1906).

¹⁸ As a Marxist, Ernst Bloch, though critical of the nineteenth-century socialist utopians, lauded Cabet for highlighting solidarity (over an individualist utopian vision), and for his focus on the role of the worker in addressing systemic oppression. Bloch (1986:561) notes that Cabet was "one of the first to turn to workers in this way and was felt to be a spokesman of their powerful future".

¹⁹ Cabet was expelled from the community just before his death (1856), and he and about 180 sympathisers left to set up in Cheltenham, St Louis. Internal strife plagued this group as well, and it was dissolved in 1864, consisting by that time of only eight families (Shaw 1884:71). Debt ensuing from the financial panic of 1857 and the Civil War (which had similarly led to the eventual disintegration of Warren's Modern Times), forced the Nauvoo community to sell their land and they resettled in Adams County, Iowa (1860), near present day Corning. A small group of Icarians (from Nauvoo) had settled here as early as 1852 (French Icarian Village 2013). The Corning community, once again, split (this time around the issue of the women's vote), and the younger members left to settle in Icaria-Speranza, Cloverdale in 1879 (Shaw 1884:144). This community came to an end in 1886. The remaining Corning community, having become progressively elderly, disbanded

socialist and anarchist communities in the nineteenth century, including the establishment of fifty communes in North America between 1870 and 1884 alone (Shaw 1884:186). This phenomenon can be ascribed to oppressive and persecutory conditions in Europe in contrast with a lack of such impediments (for the settlers) in the 'new' world. The history of Fourierist communes, or phalanxes, inspired by the writings Charles Fourier (1772-1837), is equally frenetic. Thirty separate communities were established between 1841 and 1845, and another in 1853. Of these, the North American phalanx established in Monmouth County, New Jersey in 1843 and ending in 1856, was the last remaining of the original communes, and Brook Farm, enjoying the support of the New England Transcendentalists, possibly the best known.²⁰

Austrian anarchist Theodore Hertzka's *Freeland: a social anticipation* (2004 [1890]) gave rise to a small community in Kenya. The community members enjoyed individual and economic freedom, and Hertzka rejected laissez faire economic practice on the grounds that it inevitably disadvantaged vulnerable members of a community (Mumford 1968:139). Marx's condemnation of utopia as such can be traced to the colonising activity of the many communities established in America and even Africa. Founders of the communities were not seen by Marx to engage constructively with socioeconomic problems in Europe, but merely to export an unjust system which they were ultimately unable to transcend. Bloch (1986:565) summarises his similar interpretation of why the communes failed (namely that they neglected to address the deep structural causes of economic oppression), stating "it is not association but organization which brings us closer to socialism". Both Marx and Bloch thus raise the point that to try and isolate oneself as part of a separate community from the dominant system is doomed to failure – an observation supported by the brief history of the founding and failing of communes given here.²¹ One could add that, in this sense, the communes, though tangibly 'real', are less constructive utopias than those that challenge the systemic causes of oppression, and that envisage a greater degree of human rights,

in 1898. Having been continuously settled from 1852 to 1898, it had been the longest surviving secular American commune (French Icarian Village 2013).

²⁰ For greater detail on the history of these communities see Hillquit (1910).

²¹ By the start of the twentieth century the majority of North American communities, both religious and secular, had come to an end, including the Zoarites in 1898 and the Rappites in 1904. In 1932, Amana became a joint stock company, as Oneida had in 1881 after Noyes had fled to Canada. The last Icarian community was abandoned in 1898. Currently the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine, constituted of only two members as of January 2017, is home to the last Shaker community (Gonzales 2017).

and less exploitation, at a deep-structural level. Dystopia positions itself as a utopia that attempts to achieve the latter.

An overview of the utopian visions and communities since the time of More highlights a focus on several broad sociocultural concerns, namely communalism, where societies are radically integrated and regimented; socialism, in reaction to capitalism; anarchism and radical autonomy; and feminism and ecological awareness, more noticeable from the 1970s onward. It is conspicuous that no reference is made to an expressly postcolonial utopia in any of the commentaries referred to in the compilation of the overview provided in this chapter. The notion of third space (interpreted as a utopia in this study), formulated by postcolonial theorist Homi K Bhabha, is, however, unpacked in Chapter Four, and is central to the formulation of dystopia and to the interpretation of the utopias of Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys and Staal and Ag Assarid. This summary outline furthermore demonstrates that whilst the form and content of utopias vary drastically, their function can be distilled as remedial of social problematics, from the perspective of the creator of the utopia. Having clarified utopia, whether 'abstract' or 'concrete', as an attempt to address social dis-ease, as shown in the brief discussion of various examples of both, the following section explores the dialectical relationship between utopia and dystopia.

2.4 Utopia and dystopia

The dystopia, variously referred to as kakotopia (Mumford 1965:283), anti-utopia (Kumar 1987) and satire (Frye 1965:337; Manuel 1973b:71), is dialectically linked to utopia in such a way that it cannot merely be described as the opposite of utopia, and the complex relationship between utopia and dystopia sheds light on the nature of utopia itself. For instance, an intractable obstacle in attempting to definitively distinguish between utopia and dystopia, is that what constitutes a utopia for its protagonist can be a very dark dystopia to an onlooker, or a cowed participant (Knights & Willmott 2002:59). Furthermore, a dystopian novel (for instance) does not merely express the opposite impulse to a utopian one. Dystopia can be described as the expression of utopia in times where there is little hope of the realisation of utopia (Reedy 2002:171). In this sense, the dystopia is a utopia with a disheartened or anguished tone. John Carey (1999:xi-xii) notes that dystopias express fear, whereas utopias express aspiration, making dystopia "merely a utopia from another point of

view". According to Roy Stager Jacques (2002:30), dystopia employs identical rules of logic, space and time as utopia, and has the same function as utopia, namely to point out the perceived faults of a given system. In this form, dystopia is presented as a "tool for negating the negation and achieving the ideal state", which is also what the utopia aims to do (Stager Jacques 2002:30). Dystopia can thus seemingly be defined in terms of its form, content or function, in the same way that utopia can, and dystopia can be seen to spring from a longing for (if not hope in) a better way of living, which is according to Levitas (1990:7, 181, 191) what is definitive of utopias. Dystopia can accordingly be regarded as indistinguishable from utopia in crucial aspects, and indeed Kumar (1987:99) describes anti-utopia (dystopia) as utopia's "malevolent and grimacing *doppelgänger*", which has "stalked utopia from the very beginning".

The satire, more subtle than the dystopia, is described by Kumar (1987:105) as ambiguous, containing, as a mode of critique, elements of both utopia and anti-utopia. Thomas More's *Utopia* is cited as an example, where the author's own society, Tudor England, is painted in dark colours, making his utopian alternative more appealing. *Utopia* can thus be categorised both as a utopia and a dystopia. This ambiguity, aptly captured in the double meaning of the neologism 'utopia' itself, has provoked scholarship around its interpretation up to the present. Judith Shklar (1997:42) notes that "it is not clear what lesson More meant to teach". One answer to the sometimes puzzling opacity of the satire is that, in some cases, the satirist has to be careful to disguise their motives in a politically or morally repressive environment. This is a possible explanation for why it remains unclear whether More was subtly critiquing the system of which he was a part, or critiquing proposed reforms to the system by exaggerating their absurdity.

Steven Duncombe (2011) elaborates on the lingering opposition between interpreting *Utopia* as More's sincere attempt to outline an ideal state, versus reading More's work as satire critical of what would-be reformers were proposing. Duncombe (2011) argues that to exclude one reading in favour of another – sincerity in favour of humour and vice versa – is to miss the point of *Utopia* and to underestimate More's brilliance. He interprets several of the institutions implemented in *Utopia* as intentionally absurd: gold used for chamber pots; the banning of lawyers (by More, himself a lawyer), and the institution of women priests – in all likelihood a wholly inconceivable and objectionable proposition in More's day (Duncombe 2011). But for Duncombe *Utopia* is both earnest *and* absurd: More, in describing existence

on the island in such detail, normalises an alternative possibility, and then simultaneously destabilises the alternative by reverting to absurdity. Duncombe (2011) argues that this is the subversive strength of *Utopia*, and of utopias in general. A truly subversive utopia does not foreclose on future possibilities by insisting on a single fixed alternative, but, having "infected" (Duncombe 2011) the observer, stops short of providing an 'answer', thereby facilitating agentic consideration of existing sociopolitical realities and their radical alternatives.

Duncombe (2011), however, then insists on differentiating between utopia and dystopia by arguing that utopia "gives us something to imagine, anticipate and prepare for", whereas dystopias destroy the imagination (and agency) of the reader or viewer by neurotically centralising the spectacle of disaster – what he refers to as "disasterbation". If *Utopia* encourages thoughtfulness around existing social constructs by tactically harbouring its own dystopic elements in a way that obfuscates its reading as either an earnest utopia or a satirical dystopia, dystopia cannot be rejected as merely a genre or disposition that precludes productive engagement with, for instance, injustice. According to Duncombe's own reading of *Utopia*, dystopia, then, inheres in utopia, and utopia haunts dystopia in a way that precludes any attempt at definitively distinguishing between the two. Rejecting the conception of dystopia in favour of utopia reduces utopia itself, and is hence, counter-intuitively, self-contradictory.

Duncombe's reading of *Utopia* as destabilising and subversive is pertinent to the articulation of distopia, which is the utopia of difference and dissidence, in Chapter Five. Distopia seeks to merge the strengths of the utopia and the dystopia – that is, their respective ability to imagine the new, and to be cynically critical of the status quo – whilst seeking to avoid the pitfalls of these two constructs, namely naïve optimism, finality and coercion on the one hand, and disempowering pessimism on the other. The following section indicates the problematic aspects of utopia, whilst emphasising its importance for the potential renewal of sociocultural and economic systems.

2.5 For and against utopia

Utopian thought has elicited critique as well as defence. Generally, opposition to the notion of utopia has maintained that utopia has no bearing on the 'real' world, or that utopia is an escape from reality. Writers in favour of utopian thought and praxis claim the opposite: that utopian praxis can have a tangible and positive effect on the world, as can utopian conjecture, as change in conduct begins with thinking about change. From this point of view, utopian constructs, both theoretical and concrete, are seen as the primary means by which to improve sociocultural circumstances perceived to be problematic. These opposing attitudes toward utopia are reflected in the first use of the term utopia by More, as indicating a place that is both good and non-existent. Besides being regarded as either a waste of time or as a primary facilitator of improvement and reform, utopianism is also seen by some commentators as a definite threat to society. This negative conception of utopia, which is recast as 'dystopia', shows that dystopian thought is entangled with utopian thought to the extent that the terms mirror each other and are in some cases indistinguishable, depending on the observer's viewpoint (as clarified above). The conception of dystopia in this study reflects a belief in the positively reforming role of utopia, while not discarding the potential usefulness of a dystopian incredulity towards both established systems and norms, and towards professed alternatives to such systems and norms. The notion of utopia is, however, not widely supported, nor is it necessarily an appellation freely adopted by identifiable utopians themselves: utopia was a term scorned by Marx. A brief description of the reasons why utopia has been rejected, can, however, throw light onto the normalising machinations of the system itself.

Firstly, the term utopia is used pejoratively when an alternative scheme is accused by commentators of being unrealistic (Engels 1880; Foucault 2008; Houston 2014; Kilminster 2014). Thus, to reject an idea or a theory as utopian is to dismiss it as fantasy, myth or unreasonable conjecture. The designation of the adjective utopian as derogatory, so that it is favoured as a term of abuse directed at 'other' viewpoints and paradigms, points to utopia's status as an "ideological battle ground" (Levitas 1990:3, 4, 58). Levitas (1990:4) notes: "The rejection of other people's projects as utopian and unrealistic is part of the process of promoting the merits of one's own plans, and is thus an intrinsic part of the political process". Shklar (1997:41; original emphasis) similarly identifies the "abusive use of the word *utopian* to label projects that are regarded as ... undesirable and impossible".

The projects in question could refer to any envisaged alternative to existing sociopolitical frameworks that clash with the views of proponents of the normalised system, often framed as common sense, or the natural order of things. Such negative commentary can even take the form of personal attack. Manuel (1973a:xii) lists the psychologised characteristics of the typecast utopian: "[T]he perfect utopian would probably both hate his [sic] father and come from a disinherited class. A bit of schizophrenia, a dose of megalomania, obsessiveness, and compulsiveness fit neatly into the stereotype".²² From this perspective the utopian is thus reactionary, playing out an inability to come to terms with 'reality'.

In reaction to the notion that utopia is 'unrealistic' (a criticism which could be levelled at either abstract utopias such as socialist or anarchist schemes, or concrete utopias such as communes), theorists Christopher Grey and Christina Garsten (2002:10) state that "[n]othing could be further from the truth". They argue that utopian constructs are intimately bound to the social milieu in which they are formulated, hence reflecting current practice by either radically reacting against it or by extrapolating from it (Grey & Garsten 2002:10). Utopia is thus socially embedded in a tangible way, inseparable from the lived realities that give rise to it. Reflecting this perspective, Mumford (1968:11, 24) notes that "the cities ... that people dream of are those in which they finally live", and that "Nowhere may be an imaginary country, but News from Nowhere is real news".

Utopia does, however, have an undeniable conjectural element, and it can be argued that it is precisely utopia's abstract quality – its existence as "a mental exercise in lateral possibilities" – that enables it to challenge entrenched sociopolitical frameworks (Ruyer 1950:9). Utopia, in this sense, is purposefully "not concerned with the historically likely at all", which is precisely what renders it a valuable, socially overhauling mechanism (Shklar 1973:104). Jameson (2008:398-399) similarly points out the productive potential of utopia when understood as "an object of meditation analogous to ... riddles or *koan* ... or the aporias of classical philosophy, whose function is to provoke a fruitful bewilderment". Utopia

²² Oddly enough, Manuel then does not hesitate to classify seventeenth-century feminist utopian writer Margaret Cavendish as 'schizophrenic' on account of the fact that her utopia is too 'personal,' which precludes the possibility of it becoming a socially shared vision. Manuel (1973b:69) observes that: "There are utopias which become so exclusively personal that they border on schizophrenia – *The Description of a New World, called the Blazing World*, by Margaret Cavendish ... published in 1666, has much in common with the delusions of Dr. Schreber which Sigmund Freud analyzed in a famous paper". John Carey (1999:78) criticises Cavendish's utopia for its "tyranny, aristocratic privilege, opulence, and self-aggrandisement" whilst remaining silent on such blemishes in any number of other (male) utopias. For further critique of the reception of feminist utopias, and Cavendish's in particular, see Carol Thomas-Neely (1997).

can thus be seen to be both 'real', when critically assessing it as an historical driver, *and* as productively 'unreal': as that which stimulates thought around alternative dispensations. What turns out to be 'unreal', is the dismissal of utopia as inconsequential or trivial.

Some utopian theorists concede that there are those utopias that are less socially constructive and closer to distracting fantasy. Ernst Bloch (1986) argues that such utopias are passive, and he refers to them as 'compensatory' utopias of escape or abstract utopias. These utopias have, according to Bloch (1986:12), engendered the use of the term 'utopian' "in the justifiably pejorative sense". On the other hand, there are for Bloch those utopias concerned with actual change in the world. These are utopias of anticipation, or concrete utopias, which are a "*methodological organ for the New, an objective aggregate state of what is coming*" (Bloch 1986:157; original emphasis). A concrete utopia is "turned towards the world", and set on "overtaking the natural course of events" (Bloch 1986:12). These two types of utopia are, however, ideal extremes, in reality usually intertwined with each other, so that most utopias have both concrete and abstract elements. The key to making utopia 'work' is to expunge its abstract, escapist tendencies, and so bring about its concrete, transformative aspects. Marx's socialist ideal is for Bloch (1986:5) such a potentially concretely reforming utopia. Despite being critical of the abstract utopia, Bloch, however, concedes that even the most transcendent utopia is better than pessimism or bourgeois complacency, as it nevertheless performs the function of envisioning a better life, which might lead to concrete utopias. Mumford (1968:15), too, concedes that besides sociopolitically irrelevant utopias of escape which make no contribution to the common good, there *are* "utopias of reconstruction" that materially and positively impact on society and history.

German sociologist Karl Mannheim (1936:173), by contrast, defines utopia expressly as that which can "pass over into conduct ... to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time". According to Mannheim (1936:175, 179), it is political *ideology* that cannot succeed in the realisation of projected goals, whereas utopia per definition fulfils its vision and dialectical role *vis-à-vis* ideology by breaking up existing ideologies. Similarly, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1976:13) argues that utopias constructively drive history. They fulfil this role in several ways: utopias relativise the present, as well as the future, by undermining the sense of the inevitability and immutability of the current situation and by providing a number of 'competing' projects. Most importantly, according to Bauman

(1976:13-16), these theoretical and exploratory exercises influence action. According to Frederick L Polak (1973:282), the "conceptualization and visualization of change (a colossal change in itself) is the precondition of actualized social change". Anarchist Patrick Reedy (2002:174) and grassroots movement activist Valerie Fournier (2002:209) similarly posit utopia as a powerful tool against hegemony and as a valuable form of praxis as opposed to a middle class dream or a mode of escapism.

Utopia can thus be categorised as unreal in both a derogatory and in a positive sense, as well as most real in the sociohistorical sense. This study positions itself with the view that utopia need not be literal nor concrete, and that its primary function and virtue is that it offers a discursive plateau for social critique. This aspect of utopia – as destabilising critique that does not propose (nor necessarily oppose) literal manifestation, but which enables the sociopolitically new – is theoretically engaged in the next chapters.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified two intersecting frameworks by means of which utopia as a social phenomenon can be analysed, namely the categorisation of utopia in terms of its form, content or function (a framework devised by Levitas), or the identification of utopia as representative of either the same, when it reinforces existing sociopolitical entitlement and privilege, or of the other, when it serves the purpose of redressing sociopolitical inequity. The development of utopian thought was furthermore addressed in an overview that highlights the close relationship between utopian constructs and historical development or periodic changes in sociopolitical structures. A brief synopsis of utopias in the west over the last five centuries shows that such notions as ecological awareness and feminist concerns have only appeared to any noticeable extent within the last fifty years, whilst deliberation on cultural diversity in utopia is still virtually absent, or neglected by commentators. Other concerns seem to have been more or less constant throughout this period (the time since More's *Utopia*), namely the theme of communal societies in which private property has been eliminated. The vast majority of utopias up to the late-twentieth century are uncritically patriarchal. Utopias based on ideas of communalism and socialism have diverged from the predominantly capitalist and individualist social realities prevalent during the last five hundred years in the west, whereas, for the most part, utopias have adhered closely to the

sociopolitical reality of systemic *patriarchy* in this period. The establishment of utopian communities was popular during the nineteenth century, a century of socialist fervour, yet these societies cannot be demonstrated to have had a drastic or lasting influence on the subsequent historical course of events in the west. From this point of view, the concrete impact of utopia on society can be regarded as negligible. On the other hand, European colonisation, the French Revolution, the Third Reich, Communism and capitalism have their foundation in utopia, which makes it possible to argue that utopia has created the present world, globally.

The primary critique against utopia, namely that utopia is naïve, misguided, and unrealistic, gives rise to the opposite argument that it is precisely utopia's departure from reality that is argued to make it potentially socially useful.²³ In the late-twentieth century, utopia has been recast as a discursive and critical tool, and is seldom championed as any form of ultimate solution. The late modern manifestation of utopia can be argued to be its decentred version, or heterotopia (see 3.2), conceived as the alterity of 'other spaces' or as the embodiment of diverse sites of resistance. Utopia as ontologically other (as the inassimilable opposition to both 'what is' and to the 'same'), informs the overarching theme of this study, namely utopia as difference and dissidence, or dystopia.

This chapter lastly addressed the nature of the relationship between utopia and dystopia. On the one hand, dystopia is argued to offer a dark counter-version of utopia based on a sense of dread. In this sense dystopia is posited as the opposite of utopia. On the other hand, dystopia is argued to be a sub-category of utopic endeavour itself, and, like utopia, is seen to critique the system from which it originates, though not with the same hope for change that utopia displays. The current study does not regard dystopia as the indivisible opposite of utopia, but as embedded in utopia in the sense that it springs from a similar critique of the world. Dystopia may as such encourage thoughtfulness about possible change, but could also prevent change by prompting despair.

²³ Jameson makes a similar observation of the reception of Science Fiction, a genre closely related to utopia. He (2005:xiv) notes: "The conventional high-cultural repudiation of SF ... is probably not a matter of personal taste ... We must here identify a kind of generic revulsion, in which this form ... [is] the target of a kind of literary 'reality principle'".

In the following two chapters, difference and dissidence as utopia are discussed in relation to discourses around space, that is, of the utopia of 'other spaces' (Michel Foucault); the utopia of dissent in nomadic, smooth space (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari); utopia as an ontologically unassimilable 'region' (Louis Marin); utopia as minority spatial tactics (Michel de Certeau); utopian space as productive of (and through) difference (Doreen Massey); utopia as hybrid third space (Homi Bhabha); and utopia as a space of hope indispensable to the birth of the new in opposition, specifically, to neoliberal capitalism (David Harvey).

CHAPTER THREE

UTOPIA: SPACE AND SPATIAL WORK

This chapter discusses selected themes of spatial discourses with specific reference to the post-World War II period when theorists in the social sciences and humanities increasingly began to interrogate cultural pluralism and globalisation.¹ The aim is to articulate specific strands of thought relevant to the formulation of dystopia in Chapter Five. The theorists discussed can be seen to grapple with the sociopolitical dynamics of lived space, and their work exemplifies aspects of the so-called spatial turn. The following section attempts to correlate this turn with similar shifts in utopian discourse.

3.1 The late modern spatial turn

Broadly, utopian thought in the twentieth century has evolved from a modernist concern with 'final solutions' to a late modern caution of sweeping measures. The destruction of the wall dividing East- from West Berlin in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 seemed to signal the permanent downfall of utopia. This was welcomed by critics of totalitarianism, but also, negatively, seen to indicate the failure of effective, radical alternatives to capitalist democracy (Kumar 1993:64). Utopia was particularly reviled by refugees who had managed to survive fascist and communist regimes. For instance, Jacob Talmon in *The origins of totalitarian democracy* (1952) positions utopian thought as totalitarian *per se*.² Austrian Karl Popper's *The open society and its enemies* (1945) is an indictment of utopia written in response to the Nazi invasion of Austria, and he rejects utopia for its propensity to attempt the restructuring of society "as a whole" (Kumar 1993:66).

¹ In this study, the term 'late modern' is used interchangeably with the term 'postmodern' to refer to the post-World War II period. The former is preferred, however, because the project(s) of modernity (which include the conception of and measures to implement the grand narratives of development and progress, linear history, the triumph of democracy and capitalism, cultural and political imperialism and consumerism etc.), are seen to endure and in some cases escalate, making modernism and late modernism part of a continuous sociocultural unfolding rather than predominantly opposing paradigms. The prefix 'post' is thus generally avoided in order to evade implications of a deep structural turn in western cultural and socioeconomic practices. Where the term postmodern *is* used, it is in conjunction with specific theoretical constructions and frameworks commonly designated as such (as postmodern).

² Talmon had narrowly escaped the central European holocaust (Kumar 1993:67).

Utopia does not end, however, but transforms to reflect a growing wariness of regime-backed social remodelling. Utopias of wholeness and completeness, other than the totalising narrative of capitalist globalisation, are generally superseded by utopias of variety and plurality, with an emphasis on their constitutive parts (Siebers 1997:5-6). In general terms, utopias also increasingly focus on the sociopolitical aspects of lived space, and on the agency of those who dwell in – or rather, produce – space. This spatialisation of utopia is symptomatic of the broader discursive and ideological rejection of the temporal framing of sociohistorical phenomena, an inversion referred to as the spatial turn in late modern philosophy, cultural studies, and social sciences. Essentially, this discursive spatial re-framing over the course of the twentieth century spurns the centrality of the temporal and historical models used to explain and predict the outcome of social phenomena during the preceding two centuries, reflecting (more or less) the development of thought from Hegel to Marx (Casey 1998:x).

Edward Casey (1998:xi) traces the gradual re-emergence of engagement with space in the discipline of philosophy (specifically), to the work of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They 'returned' to space and / or place through consideration of the *body* in space, countering the predominance of the mind over the materiality of the body (Casey 1998:202-203), in a stream of philosophy dominant since Descartes, but which can be traced back to Plato.

Late modern theorists, most notably Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, Fredric Jameson, and Henri Lefebvre address space / place within various contexts. Whilst their concerns vary extensively, what their work has in common is the politicisation and non-essentialisation of space, whereby neither space nor place are defined according to universalist frameworks (Casey 1998:286), but conceived in terms of performativity and subjective engagement. They read space in terms of several sociocultural frameworks: Foucault explores the politics and power relations that inhere in space, and the political is also paramount to Lefebvre, Benjamin, and Arendt. Notions of dissent and agency are foregrounded in Deleuze and Guattari, sexual difference in Irigaray and architecture in Derrida. In the majority of these theorists, though not all, spatial theory seems to focus on evanescence and mobility, as well as on transformation (Casey 1998:297).

Theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Paul Virilio are critical of the ways in which late modern spaces have evolved, whilst Foucault, de Certeau, and Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, emphasise space as the potential site of politicised agency and resistance (Genocchio 1996:35-36). In this study, the work of Louis Marin is also seen to interpret space positively, as discussed below. Yet for both camps, *space* is foregrounded on account of its social, political and cultural significance. The following section discusses heterotopia as defined by Michel Foucault, and links it to a utopian reconceptualisation of space as the matrix of subversive praxis, or distopia.

3.2 Heterotopia

Etymologically the term heterotopia means 'another place', and can be traced to early-twentieth-century medical usage designating tissue occurring in a place in the body not normally associated with it (Sohn 2008:41). The term was introduced to architectural and critical theory in 1967 by Foucault in a lecture to the Circle of Architectural Studies (Dehaene & de Caeter 2008:3-4). The lecture, *Of other spaces*, did not appear in print (in French) until 1984 and was published in English in 1986, causing a "stir [in] the spatial disciplines on a global scale ... [and] producing all kinds of contradictory and even incompatible interpretations of the nature, the meaning, the potentials and the qualities of heterotopias" (Sohn 2008:44). By the 1980s, the term had broadly come to embody "heterogeneity, difference, otherness and alterity" (Sohn 2008:44). Foucault (2008:17) uses the term within the context of space, specifically, proposing heterotopology as a field of study comprising the systematic analysis of heterotopic spaces. The lecture *On other spaces* is then Foucault's attempt at heterotopology.

Foucault (2008:14) contrasts the nineteenth-century preoccupation with historicism (or time), ascribed by Jameson (2008:395) to the emergence in that century of "the new bourgeois sense of historical change and evolution", to the present (1967) preoccupation with space, a dichotomy that plays itself out in mid-twentieth-century ideological battles between "the pious descendants of time and the fierce inhabitants of space" (Foucault 2008:14). Foucault (2008:14-15), however, refutes the notion that preoccupation with space characterises the late modern period, particularly, and attempts to demonstrate that the framing of space has evolved from the Medieval concept of localisation (with phenomena

occurring in specific, stable and hierarchised places), to a universalising spatial conception after Galileo's fifteenth-century exploration of the solar system. Foucault (2008:15) describes this broader apprehension of space in terms of "extension" or linearity, as reflected in spatially appropriating colonial praxis. Space is presently (1967) conceptualised, according to Foucault (2008:15), in terms of 'emplacement', which is defined as "relations of proximity between points or elements", a framework that manifests in the form of series, trees, or grids. The 'history of space' can accordingly be imagined as a development from awareness of space as a point, to awareness of space as a line, to experience of space as a grid. The grid implies the dissolution of a singular history of the expansion of (colonial) space, and foregrounds relationships between plural spaces.

Foucault (2008:16-17) accordingly elaborates on the notion of places as networks of relations, such as for instance "the closed or semi-closed emplacements of rest that make up the house, the bedroom, the bed", and further notes: "[W]hat interests me, among all these sites, are the ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend ... or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them". Such sites, that "are linked with all the others, [but] that nevertheless contradict all the other emplacements" (Foucault 2008:17), fall within one of two categories, the first being utopias, or "emplacements with no real place", a conception of perfected society occupying "fundamentally unreal spaces". In this, Foucault designates utopia as specifically 'unreal' or 'un-situated'. The second category (of the places that reflect yet contradict all other spaces), is described by Foucault (2008:17; emphasis added) as

real places, effective places ... sort of effectively realized utopias in which ... all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted ... places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable ... I call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.

Foucault thus positions heterotopia as a kind of utopia, but stripped of its unreal elements and characterised by its constitution as part of everyday lived experience. Such a designation of utopia is closer to a dystopia, and Roy Stager Jacques (2002:29) observes that heterotopia retains the cynicism (towards mainstream utopia) of dystopia, but without giving in to despair. In this sense, dystopia too can be read as a kind of heterotopia.

Foucault (2008:18) designates heterotopia as probably universal and lists and describes various heterotopias. Among these are heterotopias of 'crisis': "sacred, or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are ... in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly". Such heterotopias of crisis resemble ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's (1960 [1909]) conception of liminal space as a zone of transition between one social state (such as childhood) and another (such as adulthood).³ The spaces in which rites of passage take place are thus, in van Gennep's terms, liminal spaces and in Foucault's terms heterotopias. These heterotopias of crisis are, according to Foucault (2008:18), becoming less prevalent, and are in the process of being replaced by heterotopias of 'deviation': spaces designated for 'social deviants', namely psychiatric hospitals, prisons, and retirement homes. (The 'deviation' in question is conceived in terms of conformity with current social and psychiatric norms and in terms of leisure, that is, exteriority to the world of productive work).

Heterotopia is also characterised by its "power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 2008:19). An example of such heterotopic juxtaposition is the cinema (where three-dimensional space is projected onto a two-dimensional screen), a theatre stage, or a garden.⁴ Heterotopias can also represent "an absolute break with traditional time", as is the case in libraries and museums, which constitute places "of all times" yet are themselves "outside of time" (Foucault 2008:20). In contrast to these heterotopias of accumulated time and timelessness are heterotopias of transience, or 'chronic' heterotopias, such as fairgrounds and vacation villages characterised by seasonal transformation and festivity (Foucault 2008:20).⁵

According to Foucault (2008:18), heterotopia has a specific *function* in society which can change according to social requirements. Heterotopia, for instance, creates a "space of illusion that exposes all real space ... as even more illusory ... [o]r else, on the contrary,

³ The concept of liminality as cultural and ritual enactment of transition was further developed by anthropologist Victor Turner (1969).

⁴ Foucault (2008:19-20) explains the concept of the garden as heterotopia as follows: "The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together ... the four parts of the world, with at its centre ... an umbilicus ... the water basin and fountain ... [a] sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens. The garden is a rug where the whole world comes to accomplish its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that is mobile across space. The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world".

⁵ It is necessary to note that although space is measured in terms of time in these instances, the emphasis remains on space.

[creates] another space, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy" (Foucault 2008:21). These heterotopias are spaces of illusion and compensation respectively, as embodied in seventeenth-century religious colonies and puritan societies (Foucault 2008:21). The communal and religious settlements described in Chapter Two of this study can, in this sense, be framed as examples of heterotopias, created in order to escape economic exclusion and religious persecution, but contradictorily transposing these sociocultural problematics to the 'new' world. From this description of heterotopia, its *utopian* aspects are discernible, with the condition that they (heterotopias) are for Foucault in all cases actual spaces, and not theoretical constructs. Heterotopias, as formulated by Foucault, can thus be described as actual spaces that embody social critique of and dissent towards mainstream culture, or as spaces of compensation in reaction to such culture.

In the current analysis, heterotopia is regarded as a variant of utopia, despite Foucault's dismissal of utopia as 'unreal'. The rejection of utopia on the basis of its 'unreality' is critiqued in Chapter Two, and the principles of heterotopia outlined by Foucault, such as its probable ubiquity, its social function, its complex spatiality, its masked lack of access, and the way in which heterotopia manifests particular modes of time, are all equally applicable to utopia, given its vast range of permutations. For Foucault, then, the crucial difference between heterotopia and utopia is that heterotopias are experienced in 'real' space, to which it can be countered that utopias are, or can be, too.

From Foucault's original explication of the term and subsequent usage in late modern and poststructural discourse, two specific aspects are relevant here. The first aspect relates to the notion of the *spatiality* of heterotopia, which links it to 'actual' (or in the mind of heterotopists at least *conceivably* real) urban appropriations of space. This aspect of heterotopia was central to post-World War II artistic and architectural practices and is explored in Chapter Seven, when analysing the utopia of Constant Nieuwenhuys. The second aspect relating to the notion of heterotopia as foregrounded by Foucault, and as emphasised here, relates to the subversive and *critical* core of heterotopias. Heterotopia as critique, according to Foucault (in Boyer 2008:70), "should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal". Heidi Sohn (2008:47) describes heterotopia in terms of its ability to open up "pathways for the deconstruction of sameness and its subversion,

becoming the antidote against erasure of difference implicit in the progression of the cultural logic of late capitalism". This aspect of utopia (utopia as dissent) is prevalent in distopia, and in the utopia of Jonas Staal and Moussa Ag Assarid.

Not all commentators are convinced of heterotopia's central role in contemporary counterculture, or of its ability to contest existing skewed power relations on the ground. Critical of heterotopia's positioning as a space of agency and resistance, Hilde Heynen (2008:321-322) reflects that "Foucault's heterotopias – and [their] many derivatives ... might harbour liberating practices, but one should question whether the liberation applies to everyone who is involved ... what is transgression for one actor means oppression and domination for another". This important point is a primary reason for the formulation of distopia as a utopia of the other, an agentic utopia / heterotopia meant to avoid the dynamic by which the expanding liberty of the same comes at the cost of the exploitation of the other. Heterotopias, such as distopia, are furthermore not positioned to definitively alleviate sociocultural problematics. They are necessarily complex, fraught, and even paradoxical, as they would otherwise become utopias of control, operating as instruments of the same. Heterotopias are hence *potentially* reformatory, as opposed to necessarily effective.

Foucault's reconceptualisation of space and contribution to twentieth-century sociopolitical discourse has influenced a number of late modern theorists, several of whom consider space in relation to late modern utopia in terms applicable to the formulation of distopia. In the following sections, the relations between utopia, agency, dissidence and newness as traceable in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Marin, and de Certeau, respectively, are unpacked.

3.3 Nomad space

In keeping with the aims of the so-called spatial turn, namely to dismantle a historicist approach to social phenomena, Deleuze and Guattari (1993) focus on spatial 'work', or the sociopolitical relations that inhere in and shape space. Gilles Deleuze (in Deleuze & Guattari 1993:517) notes: "What I detested more than everything else was Hegelianism and the Dialectic". They propose, in contrast, an "antigenealogy ... antimemory ... an aparallel evolution of ... the world" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:21, 11). For Deleuze and Guattari

(1993:23), history invariably reflects the interests of sedentary populations and that of a unitary State apparatus, "even when the topic is nomads". What for them is lacking is a nomadology, the opposite of history (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:23). The proposed discourse of nomadology closely mirrors Foucault's conception of a heterotopology.

In *A thousand plateaus* (1993), Deleuze and Guattari use several terms to refer to the specific conception of agentic space (interpreted here as a utopia), that they envisage, including but not limited to nomadic space, smooth space, and the plane of consistency. In geographic terms it is described as a margin, constituting a "backcountry, a mountain side, or the vague expanse around the city"; and as a steppe, desert, or sea (Deleuze & Guattari 1993: 380, 379). This shifty region is indexed by exteriority (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:9), which, politically, indicates exclusion. However, a sociopolitically exterior position is also the platform from which to mobilise resistance to the given.

Several aspects pertaining to the dynamic of nomad space are briefly clarified here. These include heterogeneity, multiplicity, becoming, newness, and movement. The plane of consistency is, firstly, characterised by heterogeneity, in opposition to the universalising and standardising machinations of the projects of modernity. Its heterogeneity constitutes a "fuzzy aggregate" rather than a regularly composed ensemble, and Deleuze and Guattari (1993:380, 477, 370) emphasise that the 'smooth' aspect of smooth space is not indicative of affinity, compliance or sameness. The motley clustering that constitutes the plane of consistency is hence also described as a multiplicity: that is, a profusion of relations that exist on / in / as the plane (Deleuze & Guattari 1993: 484, 251). Its consistency is what 'holds together' disparate elements (Deleuze & Guattari 1993: xiv, 8-9), and makes them productive, but in an unpredictable way. The plane of consistency acts as a unifier of multiplicities, without thereby providing a deep structure according to which they may aggregate: both groundless and futureless (stripped of pretensions to 'history' as progression), it resists quantification and harnessing toward a systemic end (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:254).

The space envisaged by Deleuze and Guattari (1993:252,158) is also characterised by its concrete prevalence. This aspect is significant, as the space envisaged is not an idealised zone, but "always primary and always immanent" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:70). As such, it is indivisibly connected to lived experience, and, in fact, constituted through and as lived

experience: as the sphere of agency, nomad space is not merely encountered, but created, "constructed by local operations", or by countless, successive additions, like patchwork (Deleuze & Guattari 1993: 157, 478, 476). This dynamic renders it a site of becoming, described as the purview of the sociopolitical other: to become is to be other (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:106). As a site of dynamic becoming, nomad space cannot be 'developed' (a territorialising dynamic associated with striated space), but emerges as a concretion which is subject to shifts and reformations (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:486). It acts as a sphere conducive of continual newness because becoming cannot itself be transformed or appropriated as a model or a system (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:361). Becomings never end in a culmination but only "draw one another into zones of proximity" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:507), leaving the future open.

As a zone of becoming, smooth space is also synonymous with movement: the plane of consistency does not pre-exist the movements which occur upon it, but is *constituted of* relations of speed and slowness (movement), "the becomings that compose it" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:270). Significantly, the movement of the nomad does not necessarily involve physical displacement (moving from point to point), but indicates a mode of being in space: a nomad can move "in place", undertake a "motionless voyage" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:159). Movement in this sense is not "a question of taking off for the South Seas", Deleuze and Guattari (1993:482; original emphasis) elaborate, noting that there are "strange voyages ... in place ... We can say of the nomads [that] *they do not move*. They are nomads by dint of ... holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave ... To think is to voyage". The nomad's voyage in place constitutes praxis: word-making by means of thinking and by encountering striated space in a mode of evasion (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:482). Such 'smooth voyaging' is described as a difficult and uncertain becoming (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:482).

The movement of / on the plane of consistency is, lastly, a fundamental aspect of the 'flight' component of 'lines of flight'. Lines of flight are (self-evidently) manifestations of movement, and also designate the deterritorialisation (deconstruction) of the dominant construct (social, political, semiotic, linguistic, cultural, economic, discursive, etcetera). The line of flight is what makes renewal possible. It can take any form, relative to the situation / phenomenon it is destabilising. Lines of flight are not removed from the dominant reality, but perpetually present, embedded in the social field (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:205). (It is

worth noting that the sociopolitical agent – the nomad as personification of the line of flight – is simultaneously inside and outside the system, a productive hybrid position that Bhabha elaborates upon. See 4.2). For Deleuze and Guattari (1993:216, 202) "a society is defined by its lines of flight ... There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations ... things that are attributed to a 'change in values,' the youth, women, the mad, etc. ... demonstrators chased by the police ... a prisoner breaking out". Lines of flight thus indicate aberrations to the norm (the majority), and the perennially present destabilising potential of a minority.

The term minority as used by Deleuze and Guattari needs clarification as it is linked to the notion of the other. They emphasise that a minority is a category not by virtue of its inferior quantity *vis-à-vis* a majority (Deleuze and Guattari 1993:105). A majority does not imply greater numbers, but "a constant ... a standard measure by which to evaluate ... [embodied as] the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:105). In terms of this description, "'man' holds the majority, even if he is less numerous than mosquitoes, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc." and attains to a sociopolitical position of power whereby he represents the norm (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:105, 291). A minority, by the same measure, is an index of difference, irrespective of numbers, and the nomad is minoritarian and deterritorialised / deterritorialising "par excellence" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:105, 381). The conception of the minority as the sociopolitically abject is used throughout this study, and the term majority, as used here, likewise does not refer to numerosness, but to sociopolitical ascendancy. As is argued later, distopia is envisaged as a minority utopia, the space of the agentic other.

To summarise, nomadic space is also referred to as smooth space; the plane of consistency; a plateau; as exteriority; as immanence; as the margin; as the site of becoming and of lines of flight; as the zone of minority agency; and as the space of the other. It is argued here to be similar to Foucault's heterotopia. Both smooth space and its inhabitant, the nomad, are characterised by becoming and process.

Three (of several) oppositional constructs serve to further frame the space in question. Firstly, nomad space is conceived in opposition to sedentary space, which is "striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth" (Deleuze

& Guattari 1993: 474, 381). The nomadic aspects of smooth space are compared with *felt* (a nomadic invention): a supple solid constituted by an "entanglement of fibres" that are nevertheless diverse – open, unlimited, with no top or bottom (no 'right' and 'wrong' side), and no centre, an "anti-fabric" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:475-476). (This constituted matter, felt, also calls to mind the description of the plane of consistency as a fuzzy aggregate). Woven cloth, on the other hand, is likened to striated space, and described as "necessarily delimited, closed on at least one side ... [potentially] infinite in length but not in width ... a closed space [with] a top and a bottom" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:475). These comparisons clarify the difference between the ordered and restrictive nature of striated (sedentary) space, and the open, heterogeneous and potentially infinite dispersal of smooth (nomad) space.

Secondly, the plane of consistency is contrasted with the *plan/e of organisation* which is built up of strata and comprises striated, organised space. The plan/e of organisation is a zone of transcendence, always concluded from effects, inferred (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:265-266). This plan/e is the setting for advancement and expansion, as played out in modernity's various narratives around progress envisaged as a coherent history, whereas the plane of consistency is dynamic anti-history. Significantly, the dynamism of the plane of consistency, its anarchic aspect, is not a pre-given or a constant. It needs positive catalytic action to prevent it from stratifying, becoming ordered: "[T]he plane of consistency ... constitutes itself ... piece by piece, or turns into a plan(e) of organization and domination" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:423; original emphasis).

Lastly, smooth space in its form as the rhizosphere, is contrasted to an arboreal system, with the image of a tree and its root structure. Arborescent systems are composed of centred tiers (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:16), and work to nullify agency. Deleuze and Guattari (1993:15) state categorically: "We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots and radicles. They've made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes".

The rhizome is a significant image by means of which to understand both the structure (as anti-structure) of smooth space, and its sociopolitical dynamic. The rhizomatic root signifies interconnected, non-hierarchical, decentred space because it can reduplicate itself from any

section, and even from a severed segment. It thus constitutes an infinite 'middle' (like felt, that 'supple solid' created by nomads), with no centre, as it consists entirely of a middle, from which it grows (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:21). It is strongly correlated with counterculture and subcultures, with "beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:19). The rhizome is like a weed, or grass: an invasive other destabilising cultivated tracts of land and constituting a *terrain vague* by its mere presence. Lastly, the rhizome is a nomad, a bearer of agency, and, for Deleuze and Guattari (1993:118; original emphasis) the most notable representative of a "*countersignifying* semiotic". Actively constituting smooth space by dwelling in it (as described above), the nomad is invested in subversive tactics and micropolitics on a grassroots level, called rhizomatics (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:43). The rhizome thus simultaneously signifies a space (nomad space), an agent (the nomad, or other), and a praxis (nomadism as spatial and political work).

Specific dynamics of smooth space discussed above, are particularly relevant to distopia, as they address the main critique against utopia – that it is unreal and / or abstract. Firstly, smooth space is not an intangible zone for Deleuze and Guattari, and they contrast its immanence (its palpable presence and phenomenological reality) with a generally western conception of space as a universal matrix removed from activity and experience, a neutral 'area' to be 'filled up'. They note that "becoming does not occur in the imagination ... Becomings ... are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:238). Nomad space is therefore not a space of escape 'from reality' but *constitutes* a particular reality. Nor is nomad space an apolitical refuge from conflict, but, conversely, a sphere of hazardous praxis, as is evident from the extensive list of verbs generated through encounters with smooth space: become, occupy, move, voyage, flow, deterritorialise, destratify, construct, connect, intersect, attack, smooth, flee, experiment, assemble, create, begin over, "make a world" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:280).

Secondly, a productive mode of conceptualising is indispensable to the nomad. A productive concept does not analyse and order, but "sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:xiii). It synthesises without destroying pluralism, in the same way that the plane of consistency aggregates heterogeneity, and to conceptualise in this way, is to act (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:xiii). To think, therefore, is to make the desert grow, and "wherever [thinkers] dwell, it is the steppe

or the desert" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:417, 376). Foregrounding thinking as a form of praxis is essential in nullifying the theory / praxis binary regarded here as unhelpful and misleading. Lastly, nomad space is the specific product of sociopolitical *agency* which renders it a sphere of action, "filled with events" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:479). It is not merely encountered, but must be produced in diverse ways, as "each person takes and makes what she or he can ... according to a politics or strategy" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:157). This tactical form of production is also the focus of de Certeau's work, discussed below.

In conclusion, this section has outlined the formulation of a particular kind of agentic space actively produced by the other. This space is designated nomad space, smooth space, the plane of consistency, the rhizosphere, a plateau, the margin and the exterior or *terrain vague*. Nomad space is indexed by existentiality, that is, it is constituted through lived experience, and is not a metaphysical construct. Nomad space is named for the agent who constitutes it through occupying it, and through thinking it. In its form as the plane of consistency, it is distinguished by its heterogeneity – a capriciously organised kind of cohesive disparity. Nomad space is a zone of movement and becoming, which is, in turn, a process of renewal that cannot be appropriated by the majority. This plateau / steppe / desert is, lastly, characterised by lines of flight that destabilise the given in ways that concretely impact on the sociopolitical sphere.

Although the destabilising lines of flight can never be expunged by the system, Deleuze and Guattari warn against complacency, or taking the regenerative powers of smooth space for granted. They advise that "smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory ... Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us ... But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:500).

The following section explores the notion of space conceived in terms of utopian praxis, as envisaged by theorist Louis Marin. Aspects pertinent to the formulation of distopia are clarified.

3.4 Neutral space and the new

Louis Marin (1993:8) notes that a "strange frontier exists between the terms 'frontier' and 'Utopia'", and he proposes this region as a suitable subject for study, or a 'utopics'. In *Utopics: The semiological play of textual spaces*, described by Fredric Jameson (2008:388) as "the most extended structural analysis of the Utopian impulse – the gesture itself as well as the genre – yet worked out", utopics, in turn, is described as "an ideological critique of the dominant ideology" (Marin 1990:xiv). As space indexed by criticality, it mirrors the sociopolitical function and spatial complexity that Foucault ascribes to heterotopia: it manifests "a plurality of spaces" within a single project (Marin 1990:12). Marin's positioning of utopia also significantly converges with the conception of space formulated by Deleuze and Guattari, namely that a certain mode of spatial engagement can challenge the given. With the description of utopia as a frontier within a frontier, Marin's particular framing of utopia emerges, and, as with heterotopia and smooth space, it is this 'shifting' and contradictory aspect of utopia that is adopted for the formulation of distopia. The seemingly self-negating terms and definitions that Marin employs to flesh out his idea of utopia, particularly in *Utopics* (1990), where the notion of utopia as the *neutral* is emphasised, are clarified briefly here.

Marin labours to differentiate between the neutral as productive dynamic, and the neutral as sham impartiality claimed by, for instance, defenders of the liberal institution (such as the university). He notes that the neutral as paradox "is not the neutral of *neutrality*, the ideological trick played by institutions propped up by class rule ... the utopic figure that seems to be freed from society ... but all the while constructing its perfect representation" (Marin 1990:7; emphasis added). Examples of such liberal misapprehension firmly embedded within sanctified 'neutrality' include the framing of speaking out against racism as an act of racism, or dismissing the work of critiquing the same as *a form of othering*. Such an imperious brushing off of critique falsely conceives of the *structural* difference between the other (who is the bearer of a *specific level* of sociopolitical exteriority in relation to the structural norm), and the same, as mere *mutual*, equal, 'otherness'. Nor is Marin's neutral meant to signify "the stasis of logical incoherency ... the inertia of principles of noncontradiction", or act as a harmonising arbiter, judge, or paternal authority (Marin 1990:16-18), which operates to justify systemic violence as it simultaneously denies the existence of such violence. Having defined what the neutral is not, Marin proceeds to

unpack its productive contradictory mechanism and that which the neutral 'produces', namely the new.

Marin's (1990:xix) conception of utopia as 'the neutral' frames it (in one sense), as "the *threshold* limiting the inner and the outer". The term 'neutral' here thus indicates a border that delimits two opposites. However, the neutral (or utopia) does not merely indicate a simple demarcation between opposing constructs, and Marin labours to explain how utopia is necessarily contradictory, and self-contradictory, making it "the name for all limits ... contradiction itself" (Marin 1990:xix). Accordingly, besides positioning the neutral as a frontier in the ordinary sense, "the limit which separates two states from each other", Marin (1993:8-9) also describes the neutral as a territory, or a "way" or gap. The neutral can even represent these differing permutations simultaneously, that is, it can be a border *and* a region: an "island in between two kingdoms, two States, two halves of the world, the interval of frontiers and limits ... that closes a site and opens up a space" (Marin 1993:10).

Semiotically dissecting the no place / good place dichotomy inherent in the name utopia, Marin (1993:11) notes that utopia "negates with its name the very place that it is naming", and designates it (utopia) as "the 'other' of any place". In *Utopics*, Marin (1990:13) similarly describes the neutral as "the 'other' of place (nonplace, utopia)". This positioning of utopia could be interpreted to indicate a space *of* the other (a heterotopia), but can also be read to indicate utopia as *exterior* to the space of the other – alien to the other as much as to the same. The neutral as the other of *any* place thus becomes an indefinable zone between the other and the same, an interstitial site that echoes Deleuze and Guattari's description of the ways in which the lines of flight inhere within the strata they destabilise. Marin (1990:15) describes the position and function of the axle-centre of a wheel as an example of such an "organising principle ... of the structure ... the rule for its coherence", which is nonetheless simultaneously outside the structure. The neutral, in this role, 'joins' contraries, whilst escaping the relation it convenes among them: it is simultaneously absent and indispensable, outside the system, and central to it. In addition, its presiding role is fulfilled by splitting the very series / construct / system it operates on, and is part of: it endures as a still movement that perpetuates difference "by breaking up continuities and separating the terms all peacefully tied to the whole" (Marin 1990:16). Thus the neutral is characterised by its ability to convene, though not necessarily resolve, opposing stances. In this sense, it is comparable to the plane of consistency. Marin (1993:12) notes: "On the one hand it offers

the synthetic unity of the same and the other, of past and future, of this world and the beyond ... On the other hand, it offers the active tracing of differences, the indefinite fight between opposite forces". The neutral / utopia is thus defined by its ability to host difference, without reducing it thereby to homeostasis, and without ensuring cooperation, compliance, or efficiency. In this, the disparity between systemic space / corporate space / capitalist space / national space / institutional space (any of which could be framed as utopias of the same), and the neutral, which can be positioned as a utopia of the other, or distopia, emerges. Marin's shifting positioning of utopia (as simultaneously a gap, and a border, and as concurrently present and exterior, a centre of convergence as well as of dissipation), mirrors Duncombe's initial framing of utopia as both earnest critique and absurd exaggeration (see 2.4), thus as *necessarily* paradoxical.

There is for Marin a direct link between utopia as paradox, and newness, as it is utopia's ambivalent alterity that capacitates it to act as a "parousia of ... a future that has no previous example" (Marin 1990:xxiii). The unfathomable space of utopia becomes the clearing for the unprecedented, the unexpected and unthinkable (Marin 1990:xxiv, 7). Utopia as the neutral becomes the site of "the disjunction that founds knowledge", the "signal for exiting the series and for entering into a modifiable destiny" (Marin 1990:xviii, xix). The neutral as such becomes "the condition of possibility ... giving birth to *the other side of the royal position of mastery and domination*, the other side of the violence contained in the structure's central administration" (Marin 1990:15; original emphasis). Significantly, this production of newness is achieved by evading a *merely* oppositional stance, and, furthermore, the 'other side' of structural violence does not signify the absence of violence. The neutral has the capacity to engender productive violence, which, in the framework of distopia formulated as a utopia of the other, can be positioned as violence that breaks up the normalising system of the same in the furtherance of *manifesting* the human rights of the other as lived experience (that is, not simply as legislation).

The neutral as ambiguous opposition indicates a dynamic that can never be 'normalised' or recuperated to comply with a dominant system. Nor is it implicated in, or incapable of escaping, structural replication. It is precisely utopia's evasiveness which constitutes its ability to elude codification, as utopia in this sense does not merely congeal as the opposite of the given. This dynamic also mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on an oblique, slippery kind of subversion that *nullifies* claims to authority rather than merely opposing

them. The renewing mechanism of the neutral, capable of "an unlimited movement and infinite production of differences", abides: forever "shifting and impossible to mobilize in one single figure ... it upholds its productive power" as an *infinite polemics* (Marin 1990:18, 7). On the other hand, when utopia becomes anchored and solidifies into an ideology, it ceases to act as the neutral. Such a solidified utopia takes the form of a representation, "is always ... a reconciling synthesis ... stands as a perfect idea above any limit ... gains a universal validity by making all details explicit ... The utopian representation [solidified utopia] always takes the figure, the form of a map" (Marin 1993:13).⁶ Such a synthesis would totalise opposites "into an affirmation more advanced than the yes or no" it would deny or affirm (Marin 1990:8), thereby taking up its position in the series, replacing the power of the same in an amplified form. Marin (1993:11) emphasises the importance of this aspect of utopia (as the neutral repellent of ideology), in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, an event that marked the collapse of communism, and the 'end of history'.⁷ He views the conception of the culmination of history in the victory of capitalist democracy with suspicion, as such a scenario results in "the universal mode of high-tech, democratic hyperliberalism", spawning "nationalistic, racial or religious exclusions" (Marin 1993:11).

The mechanism by which newness is established in the no-place of utopia is a glitch in historical temporality, described by Marin (1990: xxv, xxii, xxiv) as a mode of non-temporality, an instant, or the fracture of an "absolutely surprising event". "Lightninglike, before coming to a hard and fixed image", the other of history appears (Marin 1990:7). The break in sequential time signified by the singular event, "the *now* that is *here*" (in the non-place of utopia as non-time), is what actualises an unlikely future, hauling it into the present (Marin 1990:xxiv; original emphasis). Marin (1990:xxv; emphasis added), noting that "[t]his time is not one of duration, but rather a sprinkling of instants whereby each time *all* of time is uncovered", is invoking now-time as described by Ernst Bloch – a specific mode of time indispensable to the subversive potential of dystopia, clarified in greater detail in Chapter Five. In this ahistorical mode, renewal occurs as a "liberating explosion ... an extratemporal moment of overthrow", that impinges on any foreseeable future, and Marin (1990:3) cites

⁶ Marin's correlation of the map with ideology can be related to the ideological project of colonialism, and to the striation (ordering) of space, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, although Deleuze and Guattari (1993:12-25) themselves do not hold a negative view of the map – they link it to rhizomatic agency.

⁷ The equation of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism with a closure of political possibilities is captured in Francis Fukuyama's *The end of history and the last man* (1992).

May 1968 as an example, one which he experienced directly, and the aftermath of which led to the writing of *Utopics*.

In summary, Marin describes utopia as performing the function of sociopolitical critique; as a neutral zone; a bi-location; as evasive paradox; and as an interstitial in-between resistant to appropriation and conducive to newness. What is pertinent to the formulation of distopia in this study, is Marin's conception of utopia as a double location (both interior and exterior) *and* as a zone of irremediable exteriority: utopia is not where it can be found. It is this paradoxical position that allows utopia (and distopia) to confound the given and usher in newness by enduringly deferring assimilation into the status quo. One could argue that utopias of resistance, alterity and dissent that avoid becoming what they seek to displace, are necessarily predicated on paradox, which prevents them from becoming systemic and coercive, or 'neutral' in the institutional sense of the word. Marin's utopia as the neutral is furthermore interpreted as a zone *productive* of the new and of agency, and not indicative of liminality as permanent limbo. Nor is the neutral as utopia a sign of seamless confluence or sociopolitical harmony, but indexes definitive difference.

Marin's emphasis on newness is lastly linked to the notion of utopia (and distopia) as an open project, or as becoming (also foregrounded by Deleuze and Guattari), and is a principle measure of the prevalence (or lack) of agency in the three artistic utopias analysed here: a key determinant of the dynamic of utopia is whether it can be conceived in terms of finality, or as necessarily emergent, as Marin does (along with Deleuze and Guattari and Bhabha), and as emphasised in distopia.

An observation that can be made of Marin's conception of the neutral, notwithstanding its destabilising and productive potential, is that it is not clear how subjective agency manifests in and through it, a problematic omission given the emphasis placed on agency in the current study. The following section hence explores the thought of Michel de Certeau in order to relate his focus on agency (which manifests as tactical manoeuvres by the other) and difference to utopia. De Certeau's thematisation of the other in terms of cultural and class (and hence also racial) specifics, is additionally also more applicable to the conceptualisation of utopias of the other that seek to foreground cultural difference, as distopia does.

3.5 Tactical space

In *Culture in the plural* (1997), first published in French in 1974, and *Heterologies: discourse on the other* (1986), which comprises essays from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, Michel de Certeau brings discourses on cultural pluralism, space and utopia together in a way relevant to this study. De Certeau argues for the practice of heterology which can be related to Foucault's heterotopology, Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology, and Marin's envisaged 'utopics'. Heterology is conceived as the opposite of the entrenched discipline of historiography and the skewed power relations it perpetuates as writings by the same on the other. Historiography represents for de Certeau discourse which constitutes itself by categorising an other and explicitly distancing itself from it, whilst claiming epistemological mastery over it. This externalised other constitutes abject aspects of western culture itself, exorcised (albeit incompletely and unsuccessfully, necessitating continual labour on the part of discourse), by finding a home for it in the other, which can then be dealt with. One of numerous identified others to historiography alone is classified as 'fiction' or 'literature', regarded as scientifically illegitimate (de Certeau 1986:219). Historiography represents a space that is "divided and hierarchical", a space which has "an own' ... (the present of this historiography) and an 'other' (the 'past' under study)" (de Certeau 1986:4). It is the discourse employed and generated by culture in the singular (the same) which seeks to nullify the threat of the other. The spatialisation associated with historiography thus closely mirrors the dynamic of exclusionary striated space.

In contrast to this, de Certeau (1986:93) conceptualises heterology, which he defines as the product of a specific demeanour with regard to phenomena observed, "a ... science of the things of the other life". De Certeau's departure from the grand Hegelian project, "which paves the way for the Spirit's conquest of the world", lies in his interest in the unremarkable activities of daily life and of the conception of the other "as the organizer and sense-maker of lived experience" (Godzich 1986:viii). Pertinent to the centrality of cultural pluralism (referred to as difference) to the current articulation of distopia, heterology is conceived as co-created minority discourse.⁸ To *practice* heterology, as opposed to producing historiography, the practitioner applies herself "to the task of listening to what [s]he can see

⁸ De Certeau (1986:165; emphasis added) contrasts heterology with theology which he describes as "a discourse of the male, the unique, of *the same*, a henology".

or read", enabling her to discover before her "interlocutors, who, even if they are not specialists, are themselves subject-producers of histories and partners in a shared discourse. From the subject-object relationship, we pass to a plurality of authors" (de Certeau 1986:217).

De Certeau thus addresses the (often hidden) agency of the other, an entity that the west has endeavoured to contain and neutralise. The other, consisting of countless intersecting minorities who fall outside of the category of the same on account of their race, class, sexuality, age and gender, is "thematized ... as a threat to be reduced, as a potential same-to-be, a yet-not-same" (Godzich 1986:xiii), which correlates with Doreen Massey's description of a certain conception of globalisation that views it as the west's gracious quest to bring 'other' regions and cultures 'up to speed' with what it perceives to be its own cultural progressiveness (see 4.1). The heterogeneous is a threat *per se*, because its strangeness and inconceivability foregrounds the fragilities of the same and threatens its coherence (de Certeau 1986:176). Heteronomy is "what is inadmissible ... a wound in rationalism" (de Certeau 1986:177). In de Certeau, the other is represented as, amongst other categorisations, praxis (specifically described as 'tactics'), the past when it is objectified, consumers, women, youth, and 'non-western' cultures and societies, specifically Islamic culture. Godzich (1986:xiii) iterates that for the west it is "ideologically inconceivable that there should exist an otherness of the same ontological status as the same ... Politically, the West may have had to grudgingly accept the existence of the Islamic otherness, but in the realm of knowledge it acknowledged no such possibility". Thus political defeat (the failure of the Crusades), has been ameliorated for the west by the disavowal of any cultural or epistemological merit with regard to Islam.

This global cultural other can also be compared to the figure of the nomad in *A thousand plateaus*. De Certeau takes as an example of the figure of the other the Scythian as described in book IV of Herodotus's *Histories* (fourth century BCE). Herodotus compares the Scythian nomad to the Athenian city dweller, and the otherness of the former is represented by her ability to disappear from the locations where the Persian army attempts to ambush her (de Certeau 1986:68, 70). De Certeau (1986:70; original emphasis) observes: "They are not to be found where they are sought. They are never *there*. Nomadism is not an attribute of the Scythian ... it is their very definition. What is foreign is what escapes from a place". This same nomadic disposition is observed in the act of

reading, which de Certeau (1988:174) contrasts with the activity of writing, stating of writers that they are the "founders of their own place, heirs of the peasants ... diggers of wells and builders of houses [whereas] readers are travellers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write". The walker, that urban nomad who is the subject of de Certeau's (1988) hauntingly beautiful chapter, *Walking in the city*, carries out a significant kind of spatial praxis that for de Certeau undermines the spatial and systemic rigidity of striated space. He notes:

The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be ... It creates shadows and ambiguities within them ... is itself the effect of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it ... [these actions] are moving 'trees of gestures' ... [that] are in movement everywhere. Their forests walk through the streets. They transform the scene ... make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order (de Certeau 1988:101-102).

Along with readers and walkers, consumers are for de Certeau also nomads in the capitalist system and in *The practice of everyday life* (1988), he foregrounds the agency of a minority he identifies as the consumer. He wishes to nullify the misconception of the consumer as a sheep or mere receiver of what the market distributes, a passive cog in the wheel of capitalism (de Certeau 1988:xi-xii). Consumers exercise agency in a kind of secondary production, through the use they make of consumables, but they have, however, "begun to wander everywhere in a space which is becoming at once more homogeneous and more extensive. Consumers are transformed into immigrants. The system in which they move about is too vast to be able to fix them in one place" (de Certeau 1988:xii, 40).

Besides representing evasive movement and minority agency, the nomad, or other, is also the figurehead of plurality, and de Certeau (1997:67) foregrounds the cultural fecundity of pluralism as against the stultification, the *cul-de-sac*, of homogeneity. He finds himself "before ... a plurality of cultures ... of systems of references and meanings that are heterogeneous in relation to each other" and asks, "is it possible to ... maintain that, in the last resort, the meaning of existence is identical to the many shapes that the risk of being human really requires?" (de Certeau 1997:67-68). Because plurality cannot be dismissed without simultaneously crushing any hope of a broadly equitable social structure, "[a] resistance needs to be directed against the expansion of a force that unifies by colonising,

and that denies ... its own limits" (de Certeau 1997:139). Culture in the singular, the hegemonic aspect of western culture, "always imposes the law of power", necessitating a concomitantly endless struggle against it by culture in the plural (de Certeau 1997:139).

Culture in the plural, and the way in which it is produced and received (or, co-created) is the antithesis of closure, and embraces and makes possible cultural 'openings' (de Certeau 1997:125). This "obscure genesis" is, however, increasingly repressed by "financial and technocratic powers" (de Certeau 1997:73), or neoliberal driven globalisation. Given the voraciously cannibalising machinations of the dominant culture (de Certeau 1997:77), newness is not to be achieved without continuous effort (a point made by Deleuze and Guattari as well). The struggle for plurality is a process that, because it inaugurates the new, typically falls outside of contemporary frameworks of comprehension, and is characterised by its periodic incomprehensibility. De Certeau (1997:130) notes: "The strangeness of our future does not have its essential source within, in the deployment of rational investigations ... The future comes to us, sometimes unbeknownst to us, with formations, perhaps 'anarchic and confused,' of new and different worlds. Its principle resides in this confrontation". The "aberrant" is thus "the first signal of another world" (de Certeau 1986:177), and portends crucial change. The productive conceptualisation of pluralism would entail situating the same "in relation to other continents" (de Certeau 1997:130), as well in relation to the internal western othered, "in order to discern a future whose strangeness appears along with theirs".

This alterity is not calmly welcomed by the producers of established discourse. De Certeau (1986:207) singles out historiographical and didactic discourses and the media as respected platforms from which the other is effectively demonised (although this dynamic can be extrapolated to include a critical mass of western discourses and institutions), and notes that this "normative and militantly nationalist" narrative is effective:

In pretending to recount the real, it manufactures it ... It renders believable what it says, and it generates appropriate action ... The news of the day declares: 'Anarchists are in your streets; crime is at your door! ... Reliable indicators show that the criminals are illegal aliens.' The public searches out the guilty ones, denounces certain people, and calls for their execution and exile. The media historian's narration devalues certain practices and assigns privilege to others; it blows conflicts out of proportion; it inflames nationalism and racism ... it manages to produce what it says is happening ... [The narrative] exercise[s]

an immense power, but a power that eludes control because it presents itself as the only representation of what is happening or of what happened in the past.

There are counter-stories to this othering narrative, however, that "respond ... 'from aside' with irreverence and impertinence ... [who] provide the possible with a site that is impregnable, because it is a nowhere, a utopia" (de Certeau 1988:17). This consolidation of evasion, alterity, newness, impudence, agency and utopia is adopted for the delineation of distopia, which is accordingly conceived of as potentially infinitely resilient.

For de Certeau (1988:197), the actualisation of alterity is achieved through minority praxis which he terms 'tactics', or "a poetics of alteration and dispossession". It is for this reason that de Certeau sets out to uncover what is commonly an obscure, though ubiquitous, phenomenon – the agentic and subversive elements of ordinary activities. For de Certeau (1988:39-40), examination of this "fleeting and permanent reality" is akin to exploring "the night-side of societies ... a dark sea ... on which socioeconomic and political structures appear as ephemeral islands". To this end, he studies consumerism, in reality a type of 'making', or "*poiēsis* – but a hidden one" (1988:xii); popular and quotidian procedures, or 'everyday creativity' (1988:xiv); "reading, talking, walking, dwelling, cooking" (1988:xvii); "ruses, displacements, ellipses" (1988:24); potlatch and reciprocity, "the mark of another type of economy" which undermines the market economy (1988:27); graffiti, or the making of "textual objects that signify an art and solidarities" (1988:28); wit and legerdemain (1988:37); "moving about, speaking ... shopping ... manoeuvrable polymorph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries" (1988:40); "the everyday acts ... in which ancient revolutions slumber" (1988:108); casual time which "appears only as the darkness that causes an 'accident' and a lacuna in production" (1988:202); speech (1988:97), and, in total, any actions which remain possible for the 'weak' (1988:34).

These collective acts have an agentic craftiness that adapts the given (the system and its products) to the needs of the 'consumer'. The consumer is therefore not simply being formed by her environment, an assumption that denies her appropriating *savoir faire* (de Certeau 1988:34). However, besides being crafty, everyday acts have a political dimension: they can harbour "something like the flipside of history ... contesting all of culture and placing all of its divisions in question" (de Certeau 1986:136). De Certeau refers to these wily gestures as *tactics*, and contrasts them to the *strategies* of the domineering system.

Tactics comprise "infinitesimal procedures which have not been 'privileged' by history but are nevertheless active in innumerable ways in the openings of established ... networks" (de Certeau 1988:49). Tactics can be "playful, protesting, [and] fugitive" (de Certeau 1988:175), in contrast with the system which is burdened with administration. The system methodically employs strategies in order to produce an "own space" which makes possible the repression of the other, who would compromise it (de Certeau 1988:94). Strategies become possible when "a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution ... [assumes] a place that can be circumscribed as proper ... a 'tactic,' on the other hand ... cannot count on a 'proper' ... The place of the tactic belongs to the other" (de Certeau 1988:xix). Tactics are minoritarian and derive from an absence of overt power, whereas strategies operate from a position of authority (de Certeau 1988:38), which labours in order to maintain this position. De Certeau thus identifies tactics with the other, and with a specific mode of spatial practice.

For de Certeau, the dynamics of tactics and strategies shape space in specific ways, which can be related to the correlations made by Foucault as well as by Deleuze and Guattari between minority praxis and spatial production. Foucault identifies plurality and decentralised power with a designated type of space, namely heterotopia, and Deleuze and Guattari identify smooth space as the arena of subversive destratification in opposition to striated space which is the space of the State apparatus. De Certeau similarly identifies distinct kinds of spatial praxis that pertain to minority agents and systemic machinations respectively, and he emphasises the fact that these various operations do not merely occur 'in' predetermined spaces, but that they in fact produce the spaces upon which they work. They establish the milieu. The space of the system, striated space, is designated as 'place' by de Certeau (1988:117; original emphasis), who clarifies the differences between place and space as follows:

A place (*lieu*) is the order ... in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*). The law of the 'proper' rules in the place ... elements ... are beside one another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines. A place ... implies an indication of stability. [On the other hand] space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is ... actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations [tactics] that orient it,

situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs ... Space is like the word when it is spoken ... caught in the ambiguity of an actualization ... In short, *space is a practiced place*.

Space is thus constituted of and by plurality and is performative, which also implies the centrality of time – tactics are improvised in the here and now by necessity – whereas place, and the power base it attempts to maintain, is singular, homogeneous, and seeks to eradicate time. This can be related to the 'timelessness' of oppressive utopias and utopias of stability: because social 'perfection' is regarded to have been achieved (in, for instance More's eponymous island *Utopia* or William Morris's *Nowhere*), change is undesirable and time and history cease to unfold. The repression of time can thus be read as a systemic attempt to control agency, because agency and performativity take place in time, in the present. De Certeau (1988:118; original emphasis) describes the inertness of place rather starkly: "[T]he *being-there* of something dead ... from the pebble to the cadaver ... always seems, in the West, to found a place and give it the appearance of a tomb" whereas "movement always seems to condition the production of a space".

De Certeau's differentiation between place and space thus coincides with what has been described in this study as utopias of authoritarian control versus utopias of disruption and subversion, or, utopias of the same and of the other. Place as described by him can be interpreted as an authoritarian utopia, a "Concept-city", or as "productive reason ... written on the nowhere of ... a proper space ... the fundamental and generalized utopia of the modern West ... capitalist and conquering" (de Certeau 1988:95, 135). In contrast with this form of utopia, there are "new, unofficial sites of cultural development" inhabited by "formations of women, youth, or consumers, local groups ... [who evade] traditional categories" (de Certeau 1997:114), that is: by the other. These sites are not described as utopian by de Certeau as such, but are interpreted here as spaces convivial to, productive of, and produced by plurality and alterity. They are the sites that threaten the system, which nurture the stirring that de Certeau perceives as he studies the everyday operations of the generally invisible other (de Certeau 1988:86). This stirring is, significantly, not described in terms of a coherent scheme, but constitutes contingencies and experiments: ordinary skirmishes with the given that aim at transformation but fall short of proposing definitive solutions (de Certeau 1988:113-114). It is this conception of a particular kind of space, constituted through unremarkable yet important actions, that is interpreted as a possible

utopia characterised by otherness, plurality (both harmonious and disharmonious), dissent and agency, and as a cultural engine: distopia.⁹

Maps, particularly from the fifteenth century on, are for de Certeau the graphic representation of striated space and also linked to discourse-disseminating writing: maps 'write' a place. Gradually erasing the *narrative* itineraries of the travels and movements that make the map possible, the map "eliminates little by little ... the practices that produce it. Transformed ... by ... geometry [the map becomes] a totalizing stage ... the tableau of a 'state' or geographical knowledge" (de Certeau 1988:121).¹⁰ Similarly, place (or striated space) is totalised by the "system, all the way from science to the mass media, unleash[ing] a monstrous proliferation of intermediary places, a neutral, standardized zone in which is endlessly repeated the form of an abstract universal" (de Certeau 1997:34). Yet, along the edges of this space (as well as in its interstices, as newness cannot be wholly marginalised), proliferates "a multiplication of flight or of rebellion" (de Certeau 1997:34), the lines of flight from the strata. Much as striated space seeks to establish for itself a defensible, sanitised arena, smooth space (as 'space') co-exists within it, because tactics, by nature ubiquitous, insinuate themselves into "the other's place, [but] fragmentarily without taking it over" (de Certeau 1988:xix). A tactic forms a field of operations, it "alters a place (it disturbs), but it does not establish a place" (de Certeau 1988:79, 155).

The city is a central geographical site in which both totalising and deconstructing spatial practices take place. Possibly because the grid of striated space is more tightly administered in the city, and because the city also tends to host more heterogeneous communities, tactics of destratification and newness take on overtly political forms in the city, and are also more culturally / politically productive. The city can be said to facilitate sociocultural incubation, the production of newness. This generative capacity can furthermore be ascribed to the phenomenological constitution of the city not as a physical site (or not only as a physical site), but rather as a nexus of sociocultural *relations* (de Certeau 1997:116). In the city the "abstract homogeneity" of place (striated space) is negated by the proliferation of agentic tactics: ways of dwelling that sometimes challenge

⁹ The similarity of this utopia to third space as described by Homi Bhabha is discussed in Chapter Four. Conley (1997:173) refers to this 'region' de Certeau describes as a "Fourth World [or] the zones in which new classes of pariahs live in all the other worlds".

¹⁰ De Certeau's positioning of the map as the signifier of colonising strategy correlates with Marin's conception of the map as the representation of ideology.

the system directly, and sometimes manifest as subtle forms of evasion, adaptation, and subversion (de Certeau 1997:116). The tactics of minorities produce "another spatiality' ... a poetic and mythic experience of space", a "migrational, or metaphorical, city [which] slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city" (de Certeau 1988:93). In this way, a city is produced inside a city and becomes a bi-location, a "double belonging that makes one place 'work' on another" (de Certeau 1997:146-147). It becomes apparent that the various intersections of minorities in the city make it a sphere of alterity and newness in which space can be layered and doubled, according to need.

So far, plurality has been related to otherness, minority status, and the agency of the excluded. The other's mode of operation is described as the deployment of tactics. Tactically constituted space is defined by de Certeau as space, as opposed to place, and can be related to the smooth space of the rhizosphere or the plane of consistency, as well as to heterotopia, defined by Foucault (2008:19) as a site that has the "power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible". The unhomeliness of space (as opposed to place), as conceived by de Certeau (1986:70), can also be correlated with the complex paradoxical spatiality (a centre that is exterior), of Louis Marin's utopia. In short, de Certeau's heterology considers the intersection of cultural pluralism, agency, and the space it creates in a way that is useful for distopia.

A final permutation of space mentioned here is described in the figures of the bridge and the frontier. De Certeau (1988:126) describes the frontier as that which delimits a legitimate space from its "(alien) exteriority" (thus an excluding border), but also as a "region where programs and actions interact ... the space created by an interaction ... a combinative system of spaces". The frontier is thus characterised by paradox, consistent with the heterogeneity of the plane of consistency and of the neutral as defined by Marin. The frontier "has a mediating role ... creates communication as well as separation ... is a sort of void, [that] functions as a third element. It is an 'in-between'" also comparable to a bridge that opens a terrain to its other (de Certeau 1988: 127, 129).

To summarise, this section has traced the intersections between space, cultural pluralism, alterity and agency as conceived by de Certeau that he explores by means of a heterology, or co-created minority discourse. He identifies the figure of the other in nomads, walkers,

consumers, readers, workers, foreigners, people of colour, women, youth – agents who disturb the stratification of space without in turn establishing a place.

The space thus constituted through agentic tactics is indexed for de Certeau by resistance to closure. The notion of place as already always 'infected' by the destabilising space of the other is also crucial to the framing of distopia as a kind of bi-location (a 'city within a city'), or the location of multiple sites – the zone of heterogeneity (Foucault's heterotopia; Deleuze and Guattari's plane of consistency, or rhizosphere; liminal neutral space as conceived by Marin). The evasive bi-location of utopia / distopia is what renders it resistant to eradication and makes it sociopolitically effective.

Space is, lastly, a zone of performativity for de Certeau. This concept of space invokes a temporality which, however, is not to be confused with the temporality of history as events in linear progression. The temporality of agentic space foregrounds the current moment and the singular event (calling forth Marin's description of explosive time), and does not attempt to establish a hierarchical position *vis-à-vis* a past. The ways in which differing intersections of space and time affect the dynamic of utopia are explored in greater detail in Chapter Four, and applied to an analysis of the three utopias discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed discourses on the nature, production and reception of space as seen in the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Marin, and de Certeau. They emphasise spatiality and / or the agency of producing space (spatial work) in the present, which they contrast to the spatial dynamics of sociopolitical coercion and the historical unfolding of time, thus to regulation and progress: the programmes of western expansionism. Their spatial discourses furthermore inform the notion of distopia with specific reference to particular kinds of space that are liminal, elusive, consisting of multiple sites, and characterised by subversion, alterity, newness and openness rather than completion. The following chapter explores spatiality in terms of cultural pluralism in the work of Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha and David Harvey.

CHAPTER FOUR

UTOPIA: SPACE AND DIFFERENCE

Having looked at agentic, dissident and inassimilable space as utopia in the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Marin and de Certeau in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the interface between space, utopia and sociocultural pluralism, or difference, from a more explicitly subaltern and Marxist perspective. This is done with reference to Doreen Massey's text *For space* (2008), Homi K Bhabha's *The location of culture* (1994), and David Harvey's *Spaces of hope* (2000) in order to further develop the links between cultural pluralism / difference and utopia (and distopia). All three theorists also interrogate the ways in which the relationships between time and space affect, and are affected by, political agency. The following section discusses cultural difference and utopia as spatial praxis in the work of social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey.

4.1 Productive space

Writing on space within a late modern, globalised context, Doreen Massey (2008:4-5) rejects a dominant late modern trope which construes neoliberal-capitalist-driven globalisation as inevitable, and which posits it as the only possible trajectory for the 'development' of the globe.¹ Such a narrative has spatial implications, as reflected in the nomenclature by which global regions are classified as either 'developed' or 'developing', relegating the latter in tangible ways to geopolitical zones available to be 'worked on' ('civilised'), or merely exploited, without recourse to pretensions of a civilising mission. This single narrative positions 'developing' nations and regions as part of a globally unfolding scene in which they are 'behind' developed regions, and denies them narrative trajectories of their own. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of global history in terms of temporal *sequence* (an ordered chronology embedded within an over-arching global narrative), suppresses the political potential of space (Massey 2008:61). The resulting universalising plot amounts, according to Massey, to 'anti-spatial' historicism, which echoes the approach of Deleuze and Guattari, Marin and de Certeau.

¹ Massey uses the term space without contrasting it with the term place.

In response, Massey's central tenet in *For space* (2008) is that it is possible to circumvent the negative geographical consequences of subscribing to a single (linear) narrative, by focussing on tangible spatial praxis specifically within the context of cultural pluralism. The negation of such hegemonic conceptions – of 'other' regions not 'up to speed', or, of Africa being 'like' Europe but behind – lies in "rework[ing] modernity away from being the unfolding, internal story of Europe alone" (Massey 2008:68). Such a tactic would "decentre Europe", and entails the spatialisation of the narrative of neocolonialism / late modernity in order to depart from the developmental framework that continues to privilege temporality (Massey 2008:63).² Massey argues that this dynamic, which normalises identifiable ideologies as 'history', turns space into a pre-ordered, given matrix, making it sociopolitically unproductive.

Massey (2008:7) refers to the un-dynamic space of temporal inevitability as tamed space, which can be correlated with striated space (Deleuze & Guattari 1993), with 'place' as conceived of by de Certeau (1988:117) for whom it "implies an indication of stability", and with the term 'site' as used by Marin (1993:10). Rejecting the sociocultural ramifications of tamed space, Massey (2008:9) proposes the recognition of space "as the product of interrelations ... as the sphere of ... contemporaneous plurality [and] coexisting heterogeneity". With this conception of space, Massey facilitates making a valuable link between utopia as a specific mode of spatial praxis, and the cultural pluralism that such praxis can be seen to foster. It is on this specific construct, that is, utopian praxis as conducive to productive cultural difference, that dystopia is predicated. According to Massey, dynamic (un-tamed) space is seen to be conducive to productive cultural difference, but cultural difference and plurality are also seen to *produce* space: "Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space" (Massey 2008:9). Cultural difference, then, plays out *in space*, and the space proposed for a specific kind of culturally productive praxis is designated the utopia of difference in this study.

Massey thus firstly points out what she identifies as a temporal narrative that is linear because according to it, world history can only play out in sequence, denying co-existing

² In contrast to the negation of a single narrative, postmodern theorist Frederic Jameson proposes, according to Massey (2008:78), the replacement of a "depthless world" with "one where depth takes the form of a single history, which organises spatial difference". Massey (2008:78) argues that for Jameson "multiplicity can provoke terror", causing him to attempt to "understand the world in terms of some cultural dominant".

trajectories that diverge from it. Secondly, Massey argues for the spatialisation of globalisation discourse and links such spatialisation to cultural pluralism and, significantly, to sociocultural agency.

Because space is not a given but continuously under construction, it is political (Massey 2008:10). Always in the process of being made, it can, furthermore, not be essentialised (Massey 2008:10). What this means is that no single policy or sociopolitical solution to claims on space can be formulated in accordance with a universal norm. To illustrate how the sociopolitical validity of any claim to space or territory can differ drastically according to context, Massey compares various claims to land from different parts of the world. She refers to the plight of the Deni minority population in the Brazilian Amazon, whose land was bought, without their knowledge, by a Malaysian logging company. The Deni resorted to agitating for 'self-demarcation' in order to secure their rights to the land, rather than wait for the Brazilian government to confer demarked status, a hazardously protracted process (Massey 2008:164). Massey (2008:167) compares this resistance to the commercial appropriation of socially and culturally significant place with the effects of the development of middle-class housing in a working-class suburb of London. Working-class residents who had lived there for generations, were forced to relocate as they could no longer afford housing in the area. This process of property development, generally referred to as gentrification, disregards the needs of the working-class and lower middle-class and aggravates the plight of the poor. It is notable that these examples mirror the capitalist imperative to secure resources for production on the one hand (in the case of the Deni), and to facilitate maximum consumption (in the gentrified areas), on the other.

In contrast to these situations, Massey critiques the revanchism unleashed in Eastern Europe during the fall of Communism. The resultant upheavals saw the resurgence of nationalism and "territorial parochialisms characterised by claims to exclusivity ... rooted authenticity ... and by a hostility to ... designated others" (Massey 2008:6).³ The "romances of coherent nationhood" and "attempts at the purification of space" are, Massey (2008:12) contends, infelicitous means by which to cope with heterogeneity perceived as threatening.

³ A series of civil revolutions that occurred in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989 contributed to the fall of communism in the region and in the former Soviet Union in 1991. Several nation states disaggregated. Yugoslavia split into five states, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The revanchism Massey refers to denotes the ethnic cleansing of Bosnians and Croats by Serbian armies during the ensuing Bosnian war (1992-1995).

Massey concedes that it is not easy to distinguish the validity of one claim to place from another, and that it remains vital to assess each case on its own merits. It might be added that it is also important to distinguish *perceptions* of victimisation, born from normalised privilege and a resultant sense of entitlement, from actual (lived) sociocultural exclusion and disenfranchisement. In order to facilitate an accurate assessment of each claim, the underlying power relations inherent in such disputes and clashing assertions should be brought to the fore. (This is another way of maintaining that awareness of the structural sociopolitical vulnerability of the other in relation to the same, is useful: seemingly indistinguishable claims to space, liberty, or human rights have radically different political ramifications when made by the same as opposed to when made by the other). The point Massey seeks to make is that no standard rule can be used to address spatial discord arising from multiplicity. The examples she cites also foregrounds the agonistic dynamic that plays out in political space.

According to Massey (2008:11), the way in which space is politicised as it is contested, whether on a macro- or on a micro-scale, confers on it and on the future a "genuine openness". This concept echoes Marin's notion of the neutral, which, as a territory outside of opposing extremes, can produce the definitively new. Political contestation thus opens up sociocultural and political possibilities and Massey (2008:13) proclaims: "What I am interested in is how we might imagine spaces for these times; how we might pursue an alternative imagination", and, thereby, a political landscape conducive to productive cultural multiplicity.

Significantly, the multiplicity that Massey has in mind is not represented as necessarily harmonious, although it can be. The politicised, culturally plural space that she argues for necessitates interrelations that lead to both connections *and* disconnections (Massey 2008:67). Difference necessitates negotiation (which can take various forms, ranging from the violent to the non-violent), and Massey (2008:154; emphasis added) defines negotiation as "the range of means through which accommodation, anyway always provisional, may be reached *or not*". Massey's framework coincides with strands of late modern utopian discourse which read utopia in terms of its capacity for resistance and daily engagement with sociopolitical realities. Because all space has the potential to be reconceptualised in dynamic terms, thereby activating productive political contestation, all space has at least an element of the heterotopic (Massey 2008:116).

In summary, Massey argues for a spatialisation of late modern globalisation theory and practice, because such spatialisation acknowledges the political dimension of space and recognises the alternative trajectories of differing regions of the globe, or zones of the city, as coeval. Only by recognising such openness of trajectories can globalisation be conceived not as "a single all-embracing movement ... spread[ing] from the West and other centres of economic power across a passive surface of 'space'", but as the "making of space(s)" and multiple story lines (Massey 2008:83).

Massey emphasises the way in which sociocultural relations play out *in space*, acknowledging the political nature of space, particularly in culturally plural arenas. She thus underscores the notion that pluralist discourses cannot be separated from the spatial. Cultural pluralism, then, needs space within which to unfurl. This construct comprised the primary contribution to the early stages of conceptualising the links between pluralism and utopia in this study, and led to the investigation of further links between space, utopia and cultural pluralism. In this regard, Massey's work is seminal to the development of this study.

Having provided an outline of several productive links between space, utopia and cultural pluralism above, the following section attempts to investigate the intersection between space as the product of agency, difference and dissent, and the cultural pluralism that characterises a critical mass of societies currently affected by advanced globalisation. Homi K Bhabha's third space is argued to be representative of this multiple intersection. Its main tenets, found in *The location of culture* (1994), are clarified below and in fashioning the specific utopia referred to here as distopia.

4.2 Third space

In this section, the notion of third space as conceived by Bhabha is clarified and subsequently related to the intersections of space, difference and utopia. Bhabha's work is referenced in order to facilitate a specifically postcolonial, subaltern perspective in utopian studies. Bhabha envisages productive cultural pluralism, or difference, as prevalent in a specific environment described as third space. He elaborates on the hybrid nature of third space as well as its agentic aspect, and foregrounds an agonistic dynamic that characterises the contestation of identity and culture in this space. The spatial dimension of

third space is intertwined with a specific subversive temporality that enables third space to be productive of newness – Bhabha's term. Before unpacking the space-time dynamic of third space, what Bhabha connotes with the term multiculturalism, a problematic concept with contradictory applications, needs clarification.

In *The location of culture*, Bhabha (1994) juxtaposes contrary definitions of the term multiculturalism that reflect opposing perceptions / receptions of the phenomenon. Bhabha (1994:32) prefers the term pluralism, and also distinguishes between cultural *difference* (which for him constitutes concrete, culturally plural interactions), and *diversity*, a euphemistic term that implies an unproblematic celebration of diverse cultures and also obviates political agency and productive cultural agonism. This agonism – that is, the arduous and conflictual aspect of identity contestation and cultural work – is central to the dynamics of third space, and is elaborated upon below. Bhabha (1994:34; original emphasis) compares cultural diversity and cultural difference as follows:

Cultural diversity is an epistemological object – culture as an object of empirical knowledge – whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as 'knowledgeable', authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. If cultural diversity is a category [of] compar[ison] ... cultural difference is a process of signification ... Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs [which] ... gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity ... [It presupposes] the separation of totalised cultures that ... [each represent] a unique collective identity.

The term cultural diversity thus reflects, rather than refutes, existing tropes of the cultural supremacy of the west, including its liberal 'tolerance' of 'other' cultures, and also essentialises cultures in order to uphold existing (western) perceptions of cultural hierarchy.⁴ The term cultural diversity implies a "facile adoption of the notion of a homogenized Other", whereas the notion of cultural *difference* points toward a constructive "oppositional politics of the margins or minorities" (Bhabha 1994:52). These minorities resist essentialised categorisations and are consequently the custodians of potentially radical sociocultural regeneration. They represent an "'excess', a disturbing alterity" (Bhabha

⁴ This Eurocentric cultural hierarchy is reflected in Roger Scruton's *The West and the rest: globalisation and the terrorist threat* (2002). In it, Scruton opposes two cultural blocs, namely the liberal, secular, and developed west, and the 'rest'. The 'rest', for Scruton, primarily amounts to what he identifies as the inherent reactionism of Islamic societies, which he sees as a threat to western civilisation.

1994:245). Cultural difference, not just 'between' cultures but within cultures and groups, disturbs epistemological mastery and forces recognition and political engagement which may or may not be non-conflictual.⁵

The concept of cultural diversity furthermore fosters delusions of "spurious egalitarianism – different cultures in the same time – ... or cultural relativism – different cultural temporalities in the same 'universal' space" (Bhabha 1994:245). Bhabha thus equates the term cultural diversity with a false perception of sociocultural dynamics in plural societies, based on the belief that divergent cultural groups are 'different' yet *actually* politically 'equal'. (This misconception is closely related to the notion that the same becomes an other by merely being opposed by the other). He furthermore assigns this construct a particular kind of time related to the notion of progress and historicism, embodied as the unfolding of western civilisation. Lastly, 'diverse' cultures, essentialised and juxtaposed, conform to a perception of cultural homogeneity, whether of the other or of the same, and manifest in what Bhabha (1994:154) refers to as national (and nationalistic) "horizontal space", which implies social collectivity and cohesiveness. It is precisely in order to deconstruct this triad (cultural diversity, historical time and horizontal space) that Bhabha (1994:238) fleshes out a contrasting dynamic, "a vision of social contradiction and cultural difference", for which he also elaborates a particular kind of liminal space characterised by non-linear time.

The spatial setting for *The location of culture* is established by commencing the first chapter with Martin Heidegger's description of a particular type of region – a boundary. Heidegger (in Bhabha 1994:1; original emphasis) describes the boundary as "not that at which something stops but ... that from which *something begins its presencing*". The boundary is therefore not imagined in terms of containment or obstruction, but as an in-between region from which 'something' that had not existed before, emerges. This process is not congruent with the Hegelian dialectic which subsumes the thesis and antithesis into a synthesis, but is conceived by both Heidegger and Bhabha as specifically *productive*, as opposed to merely assimilative.⁶ The boundary as region is also described, again invoking Heidegger, as a bridge that "gathers" as it "crosses" (Bhabha 1994:5), to indicate its presence not simply 'in

⁵ In this regard, Massey (2008:154) echoes Bhabha's view that the notion of 'diversity' as celebratory, optimistic multiculturalism is a fiction of 'happy togetherness'.

⁶ Heidegger's notion of a particular kind of dwelling in the world, as discussed in *Building, dwelling, thinking*, a 1951 essay published in *Poetry, language, thought* (1971) is closely related to the state of being he refers to as *Dasein*, which Heidegger had developed at length in *Being and time* (1962 [1927]).

space' but as space. This conception also relates to Marin's description of a 'neutral territory', 'strange frontier', a 'way' or 'gap', and de Certeau's description of the bridge that ushers in a region's other.

This zone (of the bridge or boundary), is conceptualised by Bhabha as third space, specifically within the context of cultural difference. Third space is determined as productive of culture: it *is* the location of culture. As an in-between space, between, for instance "the Southern Hemisphere of slavery and the Northern Hemisphere of diaspora and migration" (Bhabha 1994:55), "it provide[s] the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (Bhabha 1994:1-2). Third space serves as a kind of cultural "connective tissue" that facilitates movement (of culture and identity), and "prevents identities ... from settling into primordial polarities ... [it] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1994:4). The creation of hybridity is central to cultural repositionings, as hybridity serves to nullify essentialism, and Bhabha emphasises the value of its subversive fecundity.

Hybridity interrupts the grand narratives of coherent community, modernity and progress, and constitutes, for this reason, a "geopolitical space" within which cultural transactions and identity negotiation and enunciation take place (Bhabha 1994:6). This space functions as a liminal arena within which it becomes possible to interrogate and challenge that which is spoken 'from the centre' (Bhabha 1994:14). As the agentic *location* of culture, third space is ontologically interstitial. Bhabha (1994:3) describes its dynamic as follows: "Political empowerment ... come[s] from posing questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective. Social differences ... are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision and a construction". According to Bhabha (1994:38), "Third Space [is] the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference ... creating that occult instability which presages powerful cultural changes". It is an "alien territory [that facilitates] conceptualizing an *intemational* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (Bhabha 1994:38; original emphasis). Third space, in this capacity, "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (Bhabha 1994:38).

Bhabha emphasises the importance of recognising that hybridity is not 'outside' of western culture, nor extrinsic to the coloniser's own colonial as well as pre-modern history. The product of colonisation is hybridity (Bhabha 1994:112), but western culture is itself also a product of hybridity. Hybridity is consequently reviled not because it is equated with the culture of an other, but because it is recognisable, because it is possible for practitioners of a dominant culture to identify aspects of hybrid culture in their 'own' culture. Hybridity allows the "shadow of the other" to fall upon the "self", and serves as a "constant reminder to the post imperial West, of the hybridity of its [own] mother tongue, and the heterogeneity of its national space" (Bhabha 1994:60).⁷ Hybridity

disrupts the signification of the people as homogeneous. The problem is not simply the 'selfhood' of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The ... Nation ... becomes a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities (Bhabha 1994:148; original emphasis).

Hybridity therefore reveals the colonial, and neocolonial, presence as "something other than what its rules of recognition assert" (that is, its conception of itself as having a unique origin and common destiny), which results in an ambivalence of authority (Bhabha 1994:112). From this perspective, hybridity does not merely entail the fusion, synthesis or 'happy mixing' of cultures, but poses a structural threat to perceived cultural authority. Its 'uncontainable threat' is that it "breaks down the symmetry and duality of self / other, inside / outside", and that it "survives" as it "subverts" cultural generalisations (Bhabha 1994:116, 128). Hybridity is cultural heresy (Bhabha 1994:225).

The hybrid inhabitants of third space are the "colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities – wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse ... people who speak [an] encrypted discourse ... those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement", "women, the colonised, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities" (Bhabha 1994:164, 172, 5). The figure of the hybrid wanderer belonging to a minority group echoes

⁷ Bhabha's explication of the menacing aspect of hybridity mirrors de Certeau's (1986:177) description of the heterogeneous as necessarily threatening because it is "a wound in rationalism".

the nomad of *A thousand plateaus*, and the walker, worker and foreigner described by de Certeau, who also refers to the nomad (see Chapter Three).⁸ Significantly, the hybrid nomad does not passively dwell in or across third space, but *makes* third space through agentic, queering praxis.⁹ Bhabha (1994:2) emphasises that the "[t]erms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively ... The social articulation of difference ... is a complex, on-going negotiation".

According to Bhabha, artists, in their capacity to create images (pictorial or literary), are in a position to articulate such contestations socially, and he refers to examples of visual art and literature throughout *The location of culture*. The cultural work undertaken by artists who 'give form' to the in-between zone of hybridity, is akin to "writing the world" (Bhabha 1994:12) and amounts to a kind of "'art magic' ... [a] way of 'seeing inwardness from the outside'" (Levinas in Bhabha 1994:16). Writing is described as "a productive matrix which defines the 'social' and makes it available as an objective of and for, action" (Bhabha 1994:23). Yet for all its performativity and revolutionary potential, disturbing the dominant discourse is a subtle praxis. Bhabha (1994:155) states: "The minority does not simply confront the ... powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negative referent. It interrogates its object by ... [i]nsinuating itself into the terms of reference of the dominant discourse ... antagonizes [its] power to generalize". The agentic resident of third space practices a "dialectic of cultural negation-as-negotiation" (Bhabha 1994:228).

Bhabha (1994:228) posits this dialectic endeavour as specifically agonistic, indicating that third space is not a frictionless zone of unproblematised cultural assimilation, and that hybridity is not a neutral by-product of such assimilation. Hybrid agency in third space entails confronting that which is inassimilable and, more importantly, hostile. Thus, what Bhabha (1994:167, 231) refers to as "an agonistic minority position" constitutes agency by virtue of specifically incommensurable, as opposed to *merely multiple*, positions. Even within minority groups, shared histories of deprivation and exclusion do not necessarily add up to similar priorities and collaboration (Bhabha 1994:2). Bhabha (1994:27) cites the

⁸ The notion of the nomad is used here as denoting agency and political dissent (alterity). The notion of nomadism *per se* is however not unproblematic. In *The global body in sites: stasis and flow* (Kruger 2012), I address the problematic aspect of homeless populations who are forced to move without recourse to safe spaces in metropolitan areas. They are 'nomads' because of a deficiency of agency.

⁹ The term queering is used here in its subversive sense, that any hegemonic construct can be queered by deconstructing or dismantling its assertions.

example of women who were involved in the 1984-5 miners' strike in Britain, and who subsequently questioned and refuted their domestic and social roles and identities. What had affected them was the way in which solidarity among the male strikers had both included them (as workers) and excluded them (as women, who were deemed to play only a supportive role). Bhabha (1994:29) asks: "What does a working woman put first? Which of her identities is the one that determines her political choices?" Such political ambivalence generates a hybrid state that cannot be positioned as a "third term that resolves the tension between two cultures", or identities (Bhabha 1994:113). Yet, the adversarial dynamic does not imply a deadlock of incommensurable positions either. This kind of structural impasse would negate the fecundity of the third space position. Bhabha (1994:162; emphasis added) argues that "[t]he very *possibility* of cultural contestation ... shift[s] the ground of knowledges ... marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification", thereby dislodging imposed categorisations of class, race, gender, sexuality, and any 'other' apparently quantifiable group.

To summarise, third space is the negation of 'national' horizontal space, where an imagined culturally homogeneous community with a shared origin resides. Third space also contradicts the narrative of the co-existence of 'diverse' but 'equal' communities in a postcolonial arena by foregrounding actually existing inequality and the impossibility of essentialising minority experience. Bhabha's third space is an in-between territory, interstitial and necessarily hybrid. It is liminal in that it is extrinsic to identity singularities, binaries *and* polarities. Significantly, third space, as the margin, is not merely 'outside' the space of the dominant culture, but also manifests within its space, which is what gives it its subversive, destabilising edge. Lastly, third space is an afflictive region within which cultural contestations forge hybrid transformations. Spatially, then, third space is *abseits*, "uncanilly beside" (Bhabha 1994:243), but it also manifests a particular *temporal* framework without which generative processes would not be possible.

The time of third space is not measured as a linear progression towards the new, not a "leaving behind of the past", but as "the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (Bhabha 1994:1). In / as third space, time thus ceases to be sequential and works as a matrix in which explosive revolutionary contestations can erupt. Bhabha draws on Walter Benjamin's conception of explosive *jetztzeit*, or 'now-time', which

Benjamin opposes to history as the relentless flow of homogeneous, empty time.¹⁰ The subversion of historical time means that the present is envisaged as neither a break nor a bond with the past or present, as these separate modes into which time is customarily divided, dissolve. In third space, "the dead hand of history that tells the beads of sequential time like a rosary", is nullified by the "blasting of a monadic moment from the homogenous course of history" (Bhabha 1994:4). The *kairos* moment of *jetztzeit* breaches the flow of history, and enables the birth of the unprecedented and unfathomable.

In third space, an "intervening space", "revisionary time ... return[s] to the present ... to touch the future on its hither side" (Bhabha 1994:7), enabling a kind of "borderline work". This 'folding of time', or tenses (past, present, future), described by Bhabha (1994:195) as an "abyssal overlapping", creates an agentic / existential space which is closely related to Heidegger's conception of time in *Being and time* (1927), as an existential-ontological framework, a liminal *mise-en-scène* which is the precondition for the possibility of *Dasein*, or authentic 'being-there'.¹¹ Yet, whereas Heidegger (1962:19) is concerned with the nature of *being* as it relates to this notion of time, Bhabha focuses on its agentic, politically transformative potential, on its ability to produce newness. *Jetztzeit* "interrupts" the present, but also "renews the past" by explosively activating hitherto unrealised possibilities: *jetztzeit* is the "time of liberation" (Bhabha 1994:7, 35). In summary, third space-time is the *abseits* zone of agentic cultural and political irruption. The temporalities of the neutral (Marin) and of third space can be seen to converge.

Benjamin's plea (in Bhabha 1994:41) that "[w]e must attain to a concept of history that is in keeping with [the] insight [that] the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule", finds a foothold in third space. Bhabha (1994:41; original emphasis) correlates the state of emergency with the cultural productiveness of third space when he asserts that the state of emergency is "also always the state of *emergence*". This revolutionary concept of emergence / emergency applies to late modern political struggles in a concrete way, as Bhabha (1994:41) clarifies: "The struggle against colonial oppression ... changes the direction of Western history [as it] challenges the historicist idea of time as a progressive,

¹⁰ This conception of time is described in Benjamin's essay *Theses on the philosophy of history* (1940), published in *Illuminations* (1979 [1955]).

¹¹ Authentic 'being-there' is enabled by a 'being-towards-death', which unflinchingly, in the mode of acknowledged dread, accommodates the dissolution of being (that is, personal death, as opposed to the abstract notion of the death of an other), *within* being (Heidegger 1962:401).

ordered whole". Explosive time and renewing political struggle are thus inextricably interwoven.

Bhabha, citing Benjamin, thus conceives of an agentic time that has implications for cultural activism, as do Deleuze and Guattari, de Certeau, and Marin. For all six theorists (including Benjamin), time and space are politicised, specifically in terms of minority politics. In rhizomatic space, history is cited as a becoming, and nomadology (the antithesis of the Hegelian dialectic), emphasises the performativity of now-time (Deleuze & Guattari). De Certeau similarly values space as *practiced* place: a zone that is existentially altered in the present. For Marin (1990:xxiv), time in the mode of an "absolutely surprising event" has the power to alter historical unfoldings. Bhabha (1994:177, 179) emphasises that "disjunctive temporality is of the utmost importance for the politics of cultural difference ... The contingent and the liminal become the times and the spaces for the historical representation of the subjects of cultural difference". Now-time signifies the presence and practice of cultural work, "provide[s] a process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience" (Bhabha 1994:178).

If third space is the site of cultural renewal, *jetztzeit* is its temporal precondition. Third space-time subverts notions of historical teleology and the illusion of cultural holism so that the work of cultural renewal may commence. Third space is lastly not posited as an abstract idea, but as the site from which something specific emerges, namely a contemporary time "otherwise than modernity" (Bhabha 1994:6). Significantly, newness cannot be institutionalised for the specific reason that it is constituted by continuous action in the present: the 'differential history' co-created in third space "will not return to the power of the same" (Bhabha 1994:237). What emerges is "a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, [that] properly alienates our political expectations", a "politics of the future-as-open-question", or of a "new world (b)order" (Bhabha 1994:25, 219).

This section has traced Bhabha's description of third space as it relates to late modern, transnational cultural contestation and minority identity politics, specifically within a postcolonial context. The terms 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural diversity' are problematised by Bhabha because they mirror, rather than contradict, existing sociopolitical paradigms. Bhabha uses the terms cultural difference and pluralism to refer to heterogeneity between (and within) cultures, but the term hybridity is foregrounded as the most relevant way in

which to conceive of anti-essentialist inter- and intra-cultural dynamics. Bhabha conceives of a particular cultural space within which sociopolitical 'negation as negotiation' is shaped, which he refers to as third space. Third space is characterised by hybridity and agency, and is also likened to a border, a bridge and an in-between, terms which emphasise its unhomely, liminal aspect. An important constitutive element in the subversive liminality of third space is an anti-historical, explosive time that actualises hitherto subsumed political possibilities: a kind of vicinity rather than a linear projection. It becomes apparent that the same agentic aspect of time is regarded as politically essential by Deleuze and Guattari (1993), de Certeau (1988), and Marin (1990). What is produced in third space / now-time is culture: third space and now-time are the respective location and temporality of culture. From this perspective, the cultural is that which is by definition new, and it is, by necessity, always in the process of being produced: there can be no endpoint with regard to cultural contestation.

Bhabha, writing from a subaltern perspective, foregrounds postcolonial cultural tropes (such as cultural difference) to a greater degree than the other theorists cited here, in a way that is pertinent to the specific juncture of cultural pluralism, space and utopia visualised for dystopia. The following section clarifies how neoliberal capitalism, the socioeconomic framework within which late modern cultural pluralism is shaped, can be related to this junction (cultural pluralism / space / utopia), with reference to the work of Marxist theorist David Harvey. This is done in order to vividly concretise the processes of capitalism, and thereby, also, Marxist thought and praxis, in reaction to the dismissal of anti-capitalism as unfeasible. Harvey addresses the causes of the erosion of human rights (specifically with regard to cultural pluralism), and proposes a particular kind of utopian counter space to those shaped by the dynamics of capitalism. Thus Harvey's work is included in this study in order to clarify Marxist economic theory (never directly explicated by the theorists discussed so far), *that simultaneously addresses difference and newness*. Harvey's elucidation of the ways in which capitalist processes curtail democratic praxis and human rights is also directly applicable to the analysis, in Chapter Eight of this study, of the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid, who take this erosion of human rights as their immediate theme.

4.3 Spaces of hope

Marxist geographer David Harvey (2000) is critical of the spaces created during the course of the global unfolding of capitalism and the attendant formation of unequal quality of life for humans across these spaces. Harvey utilises a Marxist framework in order to interrogate potential alternatives to what seems to be an unassailable system. Capitalism is described as a utopian construct, and, more specifically, as the dominant utopia of modernity (Harvey 2000:175). Based on this observation, Harvey's premise is that utopia should not be dismissed in total, but reconceived in an alternative form in order to challenge the excesses of capitalism. According to Harvey, the wherewithal to imagine an alternative dispensation is the first step towards ushering any form of newness into the world, which links his thought to that of Bhabha's, as discussed above. Harvey's proposed alternative utopia is conceived in terms of late modern cultural pluralism, which has been negatively affected by capitalism. In order to prepare the ground for imagined alternatives, Harvey scrutinises the effect that late modern capitalism has had on geography and pluralism from an urban to a global scale.

Marx and Engels observe in the *Communist manifesto* (1848) (in Harvey 2000:26), that "[t]he bourgeoisie ... compels all nations on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image". The *Manifesto* therefore reflects on the geographical repercussions of capitalism, although it leaves these implications under-developed, according to Harvey. Harvey (2000:24) notes that whilst Marx and Engels do address "questions of urbanisation, geographical transformation, and 'globalisation'", their focus nonetheless remains on historical frameworks to the detriment of a rigorous exploration of the spatial dynamics of capitalism. His assessment in this regard is identical to that of Massey. Temporal / historical frameworks have also subsumed spatial and geographical aspects of capitalism in subsequent Marxist studies. However, given that the persistence and success of capitalism is, in large part, owing to the ability of the bourgeoisie to monopolise the production of *space* (Harvey 2000:31), such a privileging of the temporal aspects of the unfolding of capitalism and its socialist shadow, is, according to Harvey, problematic. He attempts to come to a "*politically useful* understanding" of how spatial strategies as deployed by the privileged classes "have played and continue to play a fundamental role in the perpetuation

of bourgeois power" (Harvey 2000:31; emphasis added). That capitalism has been staggeringly successful in transforming the social, economic, and geographic landscapes of modernity seems evident. It has excelled by producing space in specific, pre-meditated ways, which Harvey (2000:192) describes as follows:

Consider ... how [the] free-market ... was put into place globally (geopolitically as a spatial form) after World War II. In this the United States ... was the epicenter from which a geopolitical strategy of global domination via freedom of the market was mobilized [by means of] the shaping of the proper mediating international institutions ... and the opening of international trade ... [The US's professed] self-image was as a beacon of freedom, individual rights, and democracy in a troubled world ... [against] the dark forces of ignorance, superstition, and irrationality. A secularized and more open spatiotemporality had to be imposed upon the world at a variety of scales (urban and regional as well as international), within which capital investments could more easily flow ... Nation and local states had to be built up as facilitators for freely functioning capital markets ... This meant an attempt ... to impose (with a good deal of militarism and violence on the international stage) a particular conception of 'political democracy' ... as a universal principle (as if there were no other possible ways of being free and democratic). The world's spaces were forced open through often violent struggles and then re-shaped by the power of US policies.¹²

The spatial repercussions of capitalism are, thus, not neutral side-effects of the primary goal of profit enhancement, but embody strategic manoeuvres to effect growth, and to counteract capitalism's systemic internal contradictions. These strategies, which include absorbing accumulated capital in long-term projects such as public works and infrastructure, are known as capitalism's 'spatial fixes', and constitute "geographical reorganisation ... as a partial solution to [capitalism's] crises and impasses" (Harvey 2000:58, 54). Such ploys are not, however, sufficient in themselves to resolve capitalism's internal contradictions, necessitating regular, periodic destruction of infrastructure. This is the process referred to as capitalism's 'creative destruction'.

Capitalism's spatial fixes also manifest in other ways in which the production of space as a (class) strategy is evident. These include the urban relocation of factories to suburbs in order to disperse "concentrated proletarian power", or, on a larger scale, the global relocation of production centres to zones where unionisation and regulation of working

¹² Staal, discussed in Chapter Eight, refers to such militarised violent 'democracy' as "capitalist democracy" or "democratism" (Staal in BAK [sa]).

conditions is weakest, or that facilitate paying the lowest possible wages (Harvey 2000:37). Relocation also takes place when incentivising tax concessions in a specific region lapse, or when corporations seek to avoid their responsibilities towards a specific community or environment. Harvey (2000:63-64) emphasises the destructive effects of such premeditated geographical shifts on the livelihoods and quality of life in affected communities. Besides destroying environments and relegating entire communities to unemployment and destitution, such spatial manoeuvres simultaneously ensure the reserve army of labour without which the worst excesses of capitalist exploitation could not be perpetrated. One of the most profoundly disruptive restructurings of labour under advanced capitalism includes the dismantling of the manufacturing sector in America from the late 1960s onwards. This sector, which was at its strongest during the post-World War II financial boom, was annihilated when the internal processes of capitalism called for its 'creative destruction'. The collapse in the motor-vehicle manufacturing industry in cities such as Detroit perhaps most dramatically reflects the inevitable boom-bust dynamic of capitalism.¹³

In Detroit and similar American cities, such as Baltimore, severe deindustrialisation has resulted in structural unemployment, which occurs when an entire sector is rendered permanently unable to re-employ workers (Harvey 2000:122). The remaining workforce, originally predominantly white, male, and unionised, has also changed: the service industries, which include hospitality and tourism, notoriously exploit the least enfranchised workers in a community, such as migrant labourers and casual (un-unionised), female workers of colour (Harvey 2000:122). The feminisation of the informal sector is a general, global trend. International casualisation of labour has given rise to the phenomenon of the 'working poor', that is, workers who are fully employed but still live below the poverty line (Harvey 2000:122).¹⁴

¹³ General Motors and Chrysler were declared bankrupt in 2009 (Bluestone 2013), and Detroit itself was declared bankrupt in December 2014.

¹⁴ Labour conditions in off-shore Nike factories have become exemplary of the structural exploitation that relocation of production facilities enables. Bob Herbert (1997) notes: "Rather than crack down on the abusive conditions in the factories, Nike has resorted to an elaborate international public relations campaign to give the appearance that it cares about the workers. But no amount of public relations will change the fact that a full-time worker who makes \$1.60 a day is likely to spend a fair amount of time hungry if three very simple meals cost \$2.10". Nor have working conditions in far-flung Nike factories improved significantly in two decades since 1997 (see Nike workers 'kicked, slapped... 2011; Nisen 2013).

The link between tangible creation and destruction of the built environment – with mostly negative consequences for the vulnerable and marginalised – and capitalist imperatives for growth is clear, as the capitalist process dictates accumulation by any means necessary.¹⁵ The working class, rather than being afforded fair and equal opportunities with the owner classes, is systemically relegated to a sociopolitical position that maximises its exploitability, and workers constitute the collateral damage of a system that benefits the few, by design. Harvey recounts the cumulative effects on global communities under capitalism in order to link capitalist processes to existing conditions in geographical and built environments. Secondly, and more importantly, Harvey is at pains to emphasise that the capitalist classes have been successful in embracing a particular *spatial praxis*, and that a counter praxis is by inference not only desirable, but also possible.

The geographic unfolding of capitalist processes also affects the demographic composition of urban and regional environments. They result in class- and race-based geographies in modern urban metropolises where the wealthy retreat into what Harvey (2000:148) refers to as "ghettoes of affluence". This segregation along class and racial divides creates a distinctly dystopian negation of urban pluralism that "undermine[s] concepts of citizenship, social belonging, and mutual support" (Harvey 2000:150), and ultimately determine the sheer odds of survival of members of specific communities. Harvey (2000:124) cites the shocking statistic that "the probability that a 15 year old girl in Harlem would survive to the age of 45 [in 1996] was the same as the probability that a typical white girl anywhere in the United States would survive to the age of 65".¹⁶ It is with these geographical and social effects in mind that Harvey (2000:90) describes neoliberal capitalism as "a gross violation of human rights". From this critical perspective, the othering project of modernity can scarcely be distinguished from that of capitalism. The link between market forces and the degradation of human rights in general, and productive diversity in particular, is so clear to Harvey (2000:83) that he posits that "[t]he production of real ... as opposed to commodified cultural divergence ... can just as easily be posed as an aim of anti-capitalist struggle".

¹⁵ The most far-reaching and currently influential spatial fix under capitalism comprises the original opening up of trade routes during the onset of colonisation (Harvey 2000:24), and the continued 'opening up of markets' under neocolonialism.

¹⁶ These statistics were published by Geronimus *et al* (1996).

Of importance for this study is Harvey's description of capitalism as a *utopian* construct, which he does with a view to make conceivable a counter utopia in the interest of broader social justice. Harvey's Marxist analysis of the effects of capitalist policies and processes, as well as his efforts to stimulate a counter vision and alternative utopia, are useful in the current attempt to construct distopia: a utopia envisaged as a specific kind of space established through counter-cultural praxis and dissent and conducive to equity, human rights, and cultural pluralism.

To summarise, from Harvey's reading, capitalism can be seen to be directly implicated in creating exclusionary spaces and also the class and racial inequalities that characterise the late modern metropolis. An alternative utopia to the prevalent utopia of capitalism, would, as Harvey argues, positively affect both space and the cultural exchanges that take place within that space. The most obvious changes include: the fair distribution of resources; an end to the progressive privatisation and commodification of what should ideally be commons, such as the soil people inhabit and the water they need for survival; the elimination of competition among working classes for employment (where the already marginalised – notably immigrant labourers and persons of colour – are further demonised because they are willing to work for the lowest wages); and an end to region-destabilising and deadly resource appropriation by wealthy nations.

Harvey argues that any social reform starts with *conceiving* an alternative to existing social structures, in the face of perceptions about capitalism and globalisation that make counter thought and action seem pointless. Jameson (2005:xii) reiterates Harvey's concern over the lack of imaginable alternatives, noting that "[w]hat is crippling is not the presence of an enemy but rather the universal belief ... that the historic alternatives to capitalism have been proven unviable and impossible, and that no other socioeconomic system is conceivable, let alone practically available". Even the adoption of the term 'globalisation', as opposed to the "more politically charged concepts of imperialism and neocolonialism" is, according to Harvey (2000:13), implicated in the amplification of such paralysis. Harvey (2000:53) asks "what significance attaches to the fact that ... more politically loaded words like 'imperialism,' 'colonialism,' and 'neocolonialism' have increasingly taken a back seat to 'globalisation' as a way to organize thoughts and to chart political possibilities? How has the conception of globalisation been used politically?" Harvey (2000:81, 68) emphasises the importance of remembering that globalisation, contrary to the perception of its neutrality, is

"a specific project pursued and endorsed by particular powers in particular places that have sought and gained incredible benefits ... from freedoms of trade", and he suggests using the term "uneven geographical development" when referring to this project. The combination of these strategies – that is, keeping in mind that globalisation is a project and can therefore be contested, and foregrounding its socially unjust effects by naming it as instrumental in uneven development – is, according to Harvey, a discursive catalyst for the conception, and attainment, of a new dispensation.

In order to counter defeatist globalisation narratives, Harvey negates the primary pro-capitalist argument that 'more' free-market implementation will in some way undo the measurable inequality caused by it, and, subsequently, clarifies an alternative and (according to him) viable dynamic. Firstly, the increasing gap between the rich and poor contradicts, for Harvey, the claims that neoliberal policies and mechanisms (the invisible hand of the market), will eventually right all economic, and social, wrongs.¹⁷ He notes: "This polarization is astounding, rendering hollow the World Bank's extraordinary claim that international integration [into a common market] coupled with free-market liberalism and low levels of government interference is the best way to deliver growth and to raise the living standards of workers" (Harvey 2000:43). Harvey (2000:176, 154) describes the ubiquity of belief in the restorative and democratic powers of the free market, noting that

the rise of neoliberalism as a dominant ideology in the Thatcher-Reagan years (and its export around the world through a mix of persuasion and economic force) [has] swept [any] objections aside. The free-market juggernaut, with its ...

¹⁷ Harvey (2000:42) cites the UN Development Report of 1996 according to which the global share of income belonging to the richest 20% of the world's population rose (between 1960 and 1991) from 70% to 85%. This means that the wealthiest 20%, under conditions of the free market, amassed an additional 15% of global income in just over 3 decades. Furthermore, in 1996, "the net worth of the 358 richest people, the dollar billionaires, [was] equal to the combined income of the poorest 45% of the world population – 2.3 billion people' [and] the net wealth of Bill Gates alone in 1995 was greater than the combined net worth of the poorest 40 percent of Americans (106 million people)" (Harvey 2000:43). More recent figures on income inequality, published by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), show how inequality has subsequently continued to increase. The site reports that as of 2014, "[i]ncome inequality in OECD countries is at its highest level for the past half century. The average income of the richest 10% of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10% across the OECD, up from seven times 25 years ago" (Social and welfare issues 2014). The Gini Coefficient average across the OECD states increased between 1995, when it stood at 0.30, and 2011, when it measured 0.32. The Gini Coefficient reflects the differential in income between the wealthiest and the poorest. It would be 0 if everybody had the same income, and creeps closer to 1 – which would reflect the hypothetical scenario of one person receiving all the income of the group in question – as the income gap increases. It dropped slightly after the 2008 global economic crash (showing that the wealthiest lost some income, thereby decreasing the gap), but rose again thereafter, and was higher in 2011 than before the crash, showing that the wealthy recovered easily, whilst the brunt of the crash is still being shouldered by the financially vulnerable and disenfranchised.

draconian cut-backs in the welfare state and its protections, has rolled on and on. For more than twenty years now we have been battered and cajoled at almost every turn into accepting the utopianism of process of which Smith dreamed as the solution to all our ills. We have also witnessed an all-out assault on those institutions – trade unions and government in particular – that might stand in the way of such a project.

In opposition to such a prospect, Harvey (2000:218) makes his central proposal: that processes put and held in place by humans, can be redirected by humans, and he asserts: "I think it [imperative for us] to construe ourselves as embedded within an on-going flow of living processes that we can individually and collectively affect through our actions".

Harvey refers to his proposed counter construct as dialectical utopianism, arrived at through critical analysis of both utopianisms of process and of space. The value of utopias of spatial form (in opposition to the capitalist utopia of process), lies, according to Harvey, in the way in which they enable critique of an existing system. This correlates with Levitas's (1990) description of the function of utopian thought, that is, as addressing existing sociocultural problems. Utopias of form, for Harvey (2000:238), enable us to imagine wholly "different systems of property rights, living and working arrangements [which] manifest as entirely different spatial forms and temporal rhythms". Such proposals make it possible to radically reconceive critical interpersonal constructs such as social and gender relations and associated "rights, duties, and obligations" (Harvey 2000:238). Harvey, however, critiques aspects of spatial utopias as encountered in, for instance, Foucault and More.

Like utopias of space, generally, the concept of heterotopia, as formulated by Foucault (see 3.2), has, according to Harvey (2000:185), its redeeming elements, such as increasing awareness of the multivalent qualities of space and of those who inhabit it. The concept of heterotopia "encourages the idea of a simultaneity ... choice, diversity, and difference ... enabl[ing] us to look upon the multiple forms of deviant and transgressive behaviours and politics that occur in urban spaces ... as valid and potentially meaningful" (Harvey 2000:184). However, the concept of heterotopia seems, problematically, to imply the possibility of inverting the deep structures of the dominant order by fragmenting and dispersing its systems of knowledge and power into the imagined spaces of difference (Harvey 2000:184-185). Its broad diffusion could, furthermore, debase heterotopia as a merely banal sociospatial framework "within which anything 'different' – however defined –

might go on", or, more sinisterly, harbour the same elements of threatening exclusion that 'ordinary' space does (Harvey 2000:185). Other problematic utopias of space manifest as conceivably oppressive utopias, such as Sir Thomas More's eponymous island. As a spatial form (an island) literally severed from a mainland by man-made moats, More's *Utopia* represents the quintessential 'form' given to utopias of social control, and its sinister social engineering (if interpreted literally), holds little of value when seeking to re-conceive current social constructs in terms of justice and equitability. Harvey seems to reject both the 'under-regulated' space of heterotopia and the over-regulated space of traditional utopias of control.

Not every utopia is conceived of in terms of *spatial* social regulation, however, and Harvey (2000:177) specifically points out that capitalism and the ideology of the free market are strongly utopian constructs; they constitute the dominant utopia of late modernity, even if their "assault upon the social order" has broadly escaped the negative epithet of 'utopian'. The ideology of the free market represents a utopianism of process. That it impacts spatially, in vastly damaging ways, as discussed above, does not make it a spatial utopia, but one which (in its ideological form), excludes space as much as strongly spatial utopias seek to exclude time. Even Marx, with his emphasis on the teleological (and utopian) process of proletarian emancipation, does not escape Harvey's criticism on this point (Harvey 2000:174).

Considering, then, the undesirable effects of both utopias of space and those of process, yet unwilling to forego the redeeming potential of utopianism as such, Harvey (drawing specifically on Marx's dialectic methodology), proposes a revised utopian construct which takes into consideration both time and space. Harvey (2000:196) asks: "How, then, can a stronger utopianism be constructed that integrates social process and spatial form?" The dialectical utopia, or "historical-geographical materialism", that Harvey (2000:55, 196) has in mind represents for him "an alternative, not in terms of some static spatial form or ... of some perfected emancipatory process ... [but] a spatiotemporal utopianism ... rooted in our present possibilities at the same time as it points towards different trajectories" for human development. Harvey integrates aspects of space and process within the context of sociocultural praxis, in ways analogous to Bhabha's conception of third *space* as constituted of temporal *events*. Bhabha's time-space (which is the third space in which culture is generated) and Harvey's dialectical utopia – a spatiotemporal construct aimed at addressing

the impasse of 'no apparent alternatives' – can be correlated. Both utopias also foreground the critical importance of newness and agency. If time and space are social constructs, Harvey (2000:182) argues that the sociocultural and economic *production* of time and space can be addressed meaningfully only in a dialectical utopia.

Harvey's (2000:234) conception of dialectical utopia is vastly multifaceted, comprising processes meant to cut across various spatial scales (from the personal 'habitat' of the body, to the neighbourhood, to the broader urban environment and on to the regional, national and transnational scales that make up the geographies we inhabit or which impact on us), as well as in practices that play out, in temporal terms, "simultaneously or sequentially", as "loosely coordinated shifts in both thinking and action". Such an immensely broad construct can only be addressed, believes Harvey, by means of a specifically dialectical methodology, applied in order to bring conflicting claims and frameworks into productive relation, although not in absolute or permanent terms, nor as a harmonising dynamic. If the process were conceived in terms of permanence or resolved harmony, it would not differ markedly from any of the totalitarian utopias that populate the genre of sociocultural re-imaginings, or, more damagingly, actual historical interventions. Central to this process is the necessity for "careful and respectful negotiation" (Harvey 2000:223), between what could be perceived as merely clashing demands for, for instance, gender equality versus cultural and religious autonomy. Even within current political 'projects', such as struggles around environmental justice, there are, as Harvey (2000:229) describes, "abundant interactions, interdependencies, differences, and not a little contentiousness and conflict", including, occasionally, "violent and internecine struggles". The aim of dialectical utopianism is to come to a dynamic, and thus continually negotiated, workable resolution of conflicts across all sociocultural and geographical issues that might contribute to discourse, and praxis, around a conceivably just and maximally inclusive society.

Typical of the complexity and strategic mobilisation of *existing* structures and processes by means of Harvey's proposed dialectic (and utopia) is its incorporation of aspects of capitalism itself. For instance, Harvey does not envisage a world in which competition ceases to play a role in sociocultural (and economic) relations. He notes that "[f]rom a relational standpoint, competition can just as easily be seen as a form of cooperation", insisting on a difference between cooperative and destructive competition (Harvey 2000:210). Capitalism is therefore incorrectly associated with competitiveness per se, as it

is not competition itself that defines capitalism, "but [a] particular *mode* of competition ... [Capitalist institutions] struggle to ensure that only one sort of competition – that within relatively freely functioning markets respecting property rights and freedom of contract – will prevail" (Harvey 2000:211; original emphasis). Harvey argues that such observations about the capitalist dynamic are crucial in formulating a workable dialectic because, firstly, the seeds to altered forms of social relations cannot be found outside of the capitalist structured globe we inhabit, and, secondly, because it behoves us to learn from capitalism's own dynamic successes. Harvey (2000:211) strategically concludes that "[c]ompetition ... can never be eliminated. But it can be organized differently and with different ends and goals".

The same dialectical approach can be applied to the seemingly mutually exclusive claims to universality versus particularity, which is significant when it comes to negotiating across cultural boundaries. Harvey cautions against the general aversion to notions of universality in late modern discourse, because there are strategically appropriable aspects to universalism as adopted by capitalism that has made it a global force. Thus, a certain mobilisation of the concept of universalism could mitigate its damaging free market manifestation. Furthermore, dialectically speaking, universality is not the reverse of particularity, as "universality always exists *in relation to* particularity: neither can be separated from the other ... The notion of justice, for example, acquires universality through the process of abstraction from particular instances and circumstances, but becomes particular again as it is actualized in the real world through social practices" (Harvey 2000:241-242; original emphasis). Harvey also cites Marx's own insights into the inseparability of universality and particularity in terms of the notion of labour, which is a particular, material engagement that results in a universal (abstract) value, that is, money, which in turn affects individual labourers in a material way.

The dialectic is facilitated through acts of engaged translation. It is up to the practitioners of dialectic utopianism to effect such facilitative acts of translation. They "must be able to translate political aspirations across the incredible variety and heterogeneity of socioecological and political-economic conditions" (Harvey 2000:244). Such engagement entails "confronting unbridgeable discontinuities ... [and] has an ethical as well as

intellectual dimension ... [It] proceeds ... by respect" (White in Harvey 2000:244).¹⁸ The role of translation is central to the point that without it, "collective forms of action become impossible. All potential for an alternative politics disappears" (Harvey 2000:245). One could add that it is, however, crucial to determine *who* is 'translating' sociocultural concerns, and on behalf of whom, as such acts of translation might easily be done from a position of privilege, and with a view to maintaining the status quo while appearing to productively address it.

Lastly, dialectic utopia as conceived by Harvey is characterised by agency and by its open structure. The point of dialectical utopia is never to reach a final, resolved state, distinguishing it from traditional utopias. Similarly to the way in which culture, according to Bhabha, is produced out of the specifically agonistic dynamic of third space, Harvey (2000:93) argues that "it is precisely out of ... unresolvable tensions that new states of human being can be constructed". Dialectical utopia is produced *in situ*, in the midst of "a living process" embedded in existing forms of praxis, but characterised by a kind of formative play in which rules are constructed as required (Harvey 2000:230). For this reason, dialectical utopic praxis is significantly conceived of as an event, as opposed to a final state. During the course of the on-going event that is dialectical utopic praxis, newness is constructed.

Despite its open structure, in typically dialectical fashion, such a utopia as event does not, according to Harvey (2000:183), represent an untenable "romanticism of perpetually unfulfilled longing and desire" that he ascribes critically to both Foucault and Lefebvre, and he insists that concrete decisions, which constitute inescapable temporary closures, need to be made along the way. Harvey (2000:196, 183) argues that "to materialize any one design, no matter how playfully construed, is to foreclose, in some cases temporarily but in other instances relatively permanently, on the possibility of materializing others ... The dialectic is 'either / or' not 'both / and' ... If, therefore, alternatives are to be realized, the problem of closure (and the authority it presupposes) cannot endlessly be evaded". It is for this reason that Harvey (2000:235) maintains that praxis exists in existential moments of choice.

¹⁸ Harvey cites James Boyd White's discussion of the role of translation in achieving social justice in *Justice as translation: an essay in cultural and legal criticism* (1990).

This section has discussed a specific positioning of space – as potentially hopeful and as dialectically constructed out of the existing and the non-existing – in relation to the concept of utopia. Harvey firstly describes the effect of the current dominant utopia of capitalism on existing spaces, and secondly proposes a counter utopia, or dialectical utopia, not as the 'opposite' of capitalism, nor as a final resolution to its effects, but as an on-going, existential praxis of translation across the vast range of sociocultural counter claims that distinguish the current manifestations of globalisation. Harvey's conception of spaces of hope brings the discussion of space as it relates to utopianism within the context of cultural pluralism in this chapter, to a close.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the relationship between space and cultural pluralism as utopia by extrapolating aspects of the work of Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha and David Harvey. Massey and Harvey are critical of the influence of neoliberalism on late modern space, and of the way in which cultural pluralism is negatively affected along the vectors of class and race. Bhabha addresses space and cultural pluralism from a subaltern perspective. Massey and Harvey propose spatialising globalisation discourses which predominantly position globalisation as an inevitable and universal temporal trajectory. Bhabha similarly deconstructs the 'horizontal space' of national narratives, and the linear temporality of the projects of colonisation and modernity (in effect the same project), and develops the concept of third space, characterised by the explosive temporality of the revolutionary event. Third space is what renews culture and politics. Lastly, Bhabha's notion of cultural work as the *contestatory* and hybridising praxis of the agents who produce third space informs the focus and stance of distopia. Harvey's dialectic *methodology* – in which he seeks to combine positive aspects of spatial utopias (such as concreteness and a degree of closure), and utopias of process (such as the dynamism of capitalism) – is adapted for the formulation of distopia, but not necessarily the content of Harvey's dialectical utopia. Distopia is thus similarly dialectically positioned as, for instance, constituted of abstract as well as concrete spatiality, and as the other of both utopia and dystopia. (This dialectic is clarified in the next chapter). Lastly, Harvey's Marxist critique of the effects of capitalism on space and on human rights assists in clarifying the socioeconomic context for the creation of distopia. The following chapter unpacks distopia in terms of its spatiotemporal

characteristics, and its focus on newness, cultural pluralism (difference), agency and dissidence.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISTOPIA: A UTOPIA OF SPATIOTEMPORAL POLITICAL PROCESS

"... the furthest-reaching telescope is necessary to see the real star of the Earth, and the telescope is called concrete utopia" (Bloch 1986:315).

"One day (what will have happened?), a far-seer will abandon his or her segment and start walking across a narrow overpass above the dark abyss, will break his or her telescope and depart on a line of flight to meet a blind Double approaching from the other side" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:202).

Chapter Five creates a conceptual framework for a particular kind of utopia underpinning this research project, referred to as distopia. The name distopia is a neologism meant to denote the terms dissidence and cultural difference, and purposefully plays on a similarity with the term dystopia – generally posited as the opposite of utopia – whilst foregrounding distopia as a utopia. The term distopia is therefore devised in order to indicate an internal paradox that positions it as the other of both utopia and dystopia, whilst sharing attributes of both. These constructs (not only positioned as dichotomous, as clarified in Chapter Two), are thereby placed in a dialectical relation that compliments and magnifies their respective capacities for sociocultural renewal, particularly with regard to cultural pluralism. The conceptual framework pertinent to distopia is devised by correlating the relevant writings on utopia, space and cultural pluralism by eight key theorists, namely Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Louis Marin, Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha, and David Harvey.

The themes addressed by the key theorists can, consequently, be seen to coalesce in the seminal texts on utopia by early-twentieth-century theorist Ernst Bloch, namely *The spirit of utopia* (2000), originally published in 1918, and *The principle of hope* (1986), published in three volumes in 1954, 1955, and 1959 respectively. Bloch fervently addressed the theme of utopia in a dual attempt to ward off the impending ruin of the great wars of the twentieth century, and to create meaning in their respective wakes. Bloch's work thus precedes the other texts by several decades. The order in which the texts are discussed is significant: by correlating the later texts with those of Bloch, which preceded them, 'after the fact', this study is performatively re-enacting the spatiotemporal process central to distopia.

The texts of the eight theorists unpacked in Chapters Three and Four are correlated here in such a way as to condense them in / through Bloch's writing on utopia. This is done in order to produce a kind of utopian precipitate which telescopes the key organising principles of distopia (without thereby encapsulating distopia in full). The current (2016) work, as the formulation of distopia, hence seeks to thematise the theorists discussed through the lens of Bloch's counter-future, in order to locate it in present historical and material conditions, which it might serve to dismantle. Four main conceptual threads that emerge from the preceding chapters include the spatialities of utopia, utopia's temporal dimensions, utopia's renewing potential, and the structural dynamic of utopia. These motifs can be seen to converge in an overarching dynamic, namely an agonistic dialectic which is the agentic and performative reworking of the sociopolitically given by the other. In the following sections, the utopias / spaces described by the selected theorists are linked to distopia according to the four thematic threads identified, which lays the groundwork for the articulation of distopia itself.

5.1 Utopia as spatiotemporal political process

In this section, utopia as a particular, dissident time-space milieu produced through tactical agency, is clarified by iteratively relating Bloch's thoughts on utopia to the constructs clarified by the theorists previously discussed. These frameworks address the following aspects applicable to the conceptualisation of the utopia of dissidence and difference, or distopia, attempted here. They entail: The spatial designations of utopia; the temporal designations of utopia; utopia as newness; and the dialectical dynamic of utopia.

These attributes and aspects, which overlap in various permutations in the work of the key theorists, are superimposed like partial and semi-transparent utopian 'maps', or matrices, in an attempt to forge a sociopolitical and discursive artefact that emerges in the form of distopia. The convergence in Bloch's work of the key aspects of utopia outlined in the previous chapters is regarded as conceptually and structurally crucial to the dynamic of distopia, and my text is an attempt to performatively enact the theoretical construct it elucidates.

In the following section, Bloch's writing serves as a mapping framework in which relevant formulations of utopian *space* coalesce, and are thereby amplified.

5.1.1 Utopia as sociopolitical space

Utopia is, for Bloch (1986:3), quite simply to dream of a "better life that might be possible", a concise definition mirrored by Ruth Levitas (see 2.1). What this 'better life' might entail is linked, according to Bloch, to a *concrete conception of society to be achieved through praxis*. Utopia's time-space matrix as conceived of by Bloch is furthermore inseparable from what is *produced* within its sphere, namely newness: it constitutes the dynamic through which newness might emerge. As such, this matrix of Bloch's utopia needs clarification. The spatial dimension of utopia is clarified first, before proceeding to utopia's crucial temporal structure.

Bloch (1986:300, 316) significantly describes utopia as situated in a double location,¹ and as a "double ground". This double location correlates with Foucault's 'emplacement' of heterotopia as a political and sociospatial counter-site: a space of simultaneity which comprises both the urban street and the explosive time-space of a revolution. Foucault (2008:17; emphasis added) invokes this multi-locational aspect of utopia when he describes heterotopias as "sort of *effectively realized utopias* in which ... all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously *represented, contested and inverted*". The image that emerges is of utopia as a multi-locational space that destabilises the ordinary perception, conception, and production of space, which is what makes utopia potentially sociopolitically disruptive.

Heterotopia critiques existing space and establishes a counter terrain, and it is argued here that Bloch's 'double ground' functions similarly as a disruptive zone. The establishment of a counter terrain is accomplished by deconstructing sameness,² which is the outcome of the homogenising dynamic of organised, sanctioned, mainstream space. Such deconstruction

¹ Bloch (1986:300-302) envisages the double location in question as the mental dimensions of anxiety and astonishment, both necessary, according to him, for the *generative* potential of utopia, which is also central to Bloch's utopia, and to distopia.

² Heterotopia is interpreted as the deconstruction of sameness by Heidi Sohn (2008:47).

is discursive but also takes the form of embodied resistance, for instance a mass protest in the liminal space of an airport, or conversing in a specific language in a group conversation in order to establish a socioculturally hybrid space. Heterotopia is the Foucauldian manifestation of the distopia that is mapped here. Bloch's utopia can thus be triangulated with distopia and with Foucauldian heterotopia: a utopia of multiple, intersecting locations that deconstruct majoritarian space and the political dynamics of majoritarian space.

The conception of utopia as a multi-nodal, spatial matrix also makes it possible to correlate Bloch's utopia with smooth space, or the rhizosphere, as delineated by Deleuze and Guattari. Smooth space, a type of field or plane (the plane of consistency), is described as a "fuzzy aggregate", a heterogeneous multiplicity characterised by the ability to convoke ontologically disparate elements (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:380, 484, xiv). The space of the nomad, or the rhizosphere, by nature multidimensional, at " n dimensions", that is, at infinite dimensions, "is called the Hypersphere", which serves as the nodal intersection of *all* conceivable, and inconceivable, multiplicity (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:252). At the n^{th} dimension the node is not a point, nor a field, but a region. Thus Deleuze and Guattari's spatial conception of smooth / nomadic space dimensionally supersedes the bi-locational or even multi-locational framing of utopia by Bloch and Foucault.

Marin (1993:8) correlates utopia with a frontier, but wishes to distinguish the frontier (as utopia) he has in mind from the designation of the frontier as the outer edge of a region, such as a kingdom, "a 'front' opposed to intruding enemies". Such a conception of a frontier distinguishes it as one half of a binary construct. For Marin, the frontier as utopia needs to negate such a geographical, and colonial, designation in order to become constructive, to be history-*making*. The frontier becomes productive when it is conceived, and experienced, not as a demarcating border, but as a region or a passageway between borders. Marin (1993:9) cites as examples of such regions between regions, rivers that separate nation states, or the causeway on top of the Great Wall that separated China from its 'enemies'. The frontier as utopia eludes the inimical relation of oppositional zones or constructs by constituting a passage way or fecund *terrain vague* between them. Marin designates this utopia as a specifically neutral zone that cannot be signified, because it resists cultural and ideological codification. He also emphasises utopia as paradox, which is what prevents it from being assimilated to the norm. Utopia's neutrality is furthermore what facilitates the dynamic of turning a site (as a geographically or symbolically, ordered region) into a space

(Marin 1993:10), and he distinguishes between the two terms (site, space). The term site as used here correlates with the notion of striated space in Deleuze and Guattari, whereas the space that is 'opened up' through its neutrality, can be likened to smooth space. In a similar way, Massey uses the term 'tamed' space to refer to space de-politicised by its over-determination as given, which she contrasts with the notion of productive space fabricated in the act of contestation (see 4.1).

De Certeau, echoing Marin, distinguishes between a frontier as an absolute delimitation of an area, and the frontier as a zone of destabilising interaction and contradiction: a region that simultaneously delimits and obfuscates spatial and symbolic demarcation. Like Marin (and Deleuze and Guattari), de Certeau furthermore indexes traveling and nomadism as forms of counter practice that destabilise established mastery / ownership of space (see 3.5). The subversive dynamic of the frontier as utopia is significantly not a given characteristic of such space. Rather, utopia as a destabilising zone is rendered such by the tactics of the nomad / agent who traverses it. The performativity of the space of tactics implies the centrality of time, as agency only manifests in lived time.

In summary, Bloch's positioning of utopia as a bi-location is correlated with heterotopia as a multiple site and with utopia as a zone of infinite sociospatial intersections. Utopia's spatial ambiguity is also indicated by its location as a liminal frontier between established regions. The link between utopia as sociopolitically destabilising multi-locationality and distopia, is clarified at greater length below (see 5.2). The significance of a specific conception of *time* in its relation to utopian space, is addressed in the following section.

5.1.2 Utopia as sociopolitical time

The nomadic (smooth, rhizomatic) space of *A thousand plateaus* has a particular temporal orientation, or more precisely, disorientation, linked to the spatial anarchy that is the purview of the nomad. In the same way that striated, regulating space is unsuited to the free passage of the nomad, a linear development of time is antithetical to the temporal framework that facilitates and constitutes nomadic praxis. Deleuze and Guattari (1993:394) observe that "[h]istory has always dismissed the nomads", and the nomad can correspondingly be seen to disregard history. According to Deleuze and Guattari

(1993:142), the potential inherent in nomadic praxis "does not stand outside history, but is instead always 'prior to' history". This involution of temporal linearity, and its political ramifications, is central to the political potency envisaged for distopia. The rhizome, significant for its decentralised, opportunistic growth from any segment, counters striated space, as well as linear time: the rhizome is "anti-genealogy" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:11). Instead of the historical ordering of events, Deleuze and Guattari (1993:43) propose the counter-disciplines of "rhizomatics ... nomadology, micropolitics, pragmatics, the science of multiplicities", which de Certeau (1986:93) describes as heterology: an agentic praxis in which 'history' is co-created, and not explicated after the fact by, and for the benefit of, 'experts'. De Certeau's heterology is thus a micro-political rhizomatics, and the temporal equivalent of Foucault's heterotopology, the study of 'other' places. Marin's (1990:xxii-7) description of the revolutionary moment of pure difference that fractures processual time, is similarly anti-historic: history as object (whether objectifying it backwards or forwards) is institutional, whereas agency manifests in history as an event.

Massey also critiques what can be described as a historicising view of the unfolding of globalisation. Her analysis is based on what she perceives to be the privileging of a temporal framework that is employed in globalisation discourse as expounded from a western perspective, which posits a single narrative for world development in which marginal nations stand in line to 'catch up' with western development.³ The temporality embodied in this framework is linear and singular, discounting the possibility of simultaneous, and differing, narratives in a plurality of geographical regions. For Massey (2008:68), such temporality has "none of the characteristics of event, or of novelty". It cannot produce newness. This temporal framework also has spatial ramifications, as it "obliterates ... the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space" (Massey 2008:5). It is hence possible to argue that Massey is not only 'for space' but also against a specific conceptualisation of time, namely as sequential and linear, and that alternative conceptions of time are as suited to the regeneration of globalisation discourse as the foregrounding of spatiality is.

³ Roy Stager Jacques (2002:26) encapsulates this view as embedded in neoliberal ideology, which asserts that "[t]here are no poor people, only people who have not yet become rich".

Such temporal anti-linearity is critical for Bloch's concept of utopia, and for distopia. In *The principle of hope*, Bloch (1986:297, 295) describes utopian time as Now-time, which, along with Here-space, constitutes the "[d]arkness of the lived moment". This darkness refers to the opaque nature of the present which is created *in situ* as one traverses or occupies it (the present). The present thus conceived is not mechanical or inevitable lived time, but is constituted through and as praxis. Furthermore, Now-time is not merely a fleeting break between the past and the future, but *encompasses* them in a historical amalgamation similar, in temporal terms, to the incorporative spatial matrix of the n^{th} dimension of smooth space. Bloch (2000:200; original emphasis) describes utopia as "a 'spatiality' of ensembles, shapes, categories, spheres ... [a] *true simultaneity*". For Bloch, utopia *is* the involution of linear time. As such, the term 'now' designates more than merely the present. It indexes collapsed time. The historic fecundity of the past is linked to this confluence of temporal zones, as the utopian agent can work on the past and unlock its revolutionary potential in the present, thus fostering the new. It is for this reason that Bloch (1986:227, 303) designates the Now as containing "the enigma of the beginning", making it "the source of everything".

Bloch's concept of utopian temporality is mirrored in a significant way in third space as developed by Bhabha. Bhabha positions third space as the location, characterised by a specific temporality, in which culture is forged. This renewal continually emerges as a hybridisation of essentialised cultures and identities. Third space is thus culturally productive, and its ability to be so is determined by its a-historicism. The agent who dwells in third space is revolutionary, and the substance she works on is time, rendering time volatile and liberatory (Bhabha 1994:35). The time-space confluence that constitutes third space is described in similar terms by de Certeau as space which is temporalised by the activities deployed in it. Marin compares it to a temporal discharge of lightning.

As clarified in Chapter Four, Bhabha borrows the notion of the anti-genealogical nature of third space from Walter Benjamin's description of history as a permanent state of emergency, which for Bhabha is also the permanent state of emergence. Benjamin's deconstruction of linear historicism by means of historical materialism (a Marxist concept),

is explicated in *Theses on the philosophy of history* (1979).⁴ Benjamin rejects the notion of the present as merely a zone of transition, envisioning it instead as a constructive space where the past can be redeemed. He uses the term *jetztzeit* (literally Now-time),⁵ to refer to the agentic present, describing it as is "a Messianic cessation of happening" that opens up "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past" (Benjamin 1979:265). As such, *jetztzeit* "comprises the entire history of mankind in an enormous abridgment", in which linear causality is annulled: *jetztzeit* turns "every second of time [into] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (Benjamin 1979:265-266). The congruence of this conceptualisation of history with Bhabha's position on the temporal aspect of third space, is clear. Also virtually identically, for Bloch (1986:308, 310; original emphasis), "*every moment, when it has not emerged, is in the year zero of the beginning of the world*", for which reason "human being and the whole world still find themselves *rebus sic stantibus*⁶ in prehistory, in exile". Like Benjamin, Bloch deconstructs the received notion of history from a Marxist perspective, and in Bloch it is "the philosophy of history" (Benjamin's historical materialism) that "*utopically overhaul[s]*" time and history, and engenders the new (Bloch 2000:200; emphasis added).

Essentially, in Deleuze and Guattari, Marin, Bloch, Bhabha and Benjamin, time is not a monolithically linear and teleological construct. Deleuze (in Deleuze & Guattari 1993:517) vociferously rejects the inexorability of the Hegelian dialectic.⁷ Bloch (2000:184) similarly eschews what is for him the abstract (and mechanistic) Hegelian dialectic in favour of a Marxist, dialectical materialism "which does not resign itself to contemplation and

⁴ In *Theses*, Benjamin (1979:256) notes "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history", for which reason the past is "citable in all its moments". For Benjamin (1979:263), historicists perceive their object (history) as a steady "progression through a homogeneous, empty time", and he counters this temporal structure, inseparable from the broader modern project of the west, with a Marxist notion of historical materialism, which embeds history in material processes and renders it workable.

⁵ The essay in which Walter Benjamin explicates the notion of *jetztzeit* (*Theses on the philosophy of history*), was written in 1940, and posthumously published in the collection of essays titled *Illuminations* (1955). Bloch's writings on now-time, which first coalesced in *The spirit of utopia*, written during World War I and published in 1918, thus pre-date the notion of *jetztzeit* formulated by Benjamin. Bloch and Benjamin met in Germany in 1917.

⁶ *Rebus sic stantibus* translates as 'things thus standing'.

⁷ Hegelian dialectics are assimilationist: in a world-enveloping process, every phenomenon (or thesis) is seen to reconcile with its antithesis to form a synthesis, which is in turn a newly constituted thesis that will reconcile with its antithesis, and so on. This processional development conceptualises change as the outcome of contradiction, which is compatible with the notion of agency and the agonistic conception of utopian space as space that is constructed from a position of cultural alterity. The Hegelian dialectic as teleological and as guided by an external principle, however, negates agency. It also structures historical development as linear.

interpretation", but acts upon the world, to renew it (Bloch 1986:8).⁸ In Bloch, the radical potential that is latent in history (the past) is furthermore explicitly related to utopia, which he describes in terms of an openness to the future or forward dreaming (Bloch 1986:6, 12, 1365). For Bhabha, the conflation of time constitutes third space, which, because of its potentiating dynamic, becomes the location of the emergence of culture. For all these theorists, this reconfiguration of time is specifically subversive of given sociopolitical paradigms. The utopia of difference and dissidence, or distopia, is conceived in terms of this specific agentic temporal matrix. The utopias of the Dutch artists Piet Mondrian, Constant Nieuwenhuys and Jonas Staal (in collaboration with Moussa Ag Assarid), are analysed in terms of this revolutionary framing of time, or distopian time, in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, respectively.

In summary, the discussion has thus far sought to clarify the ontological nature of utopia as marked by its location – that is, utopia as a bi-location, as multiple locations, or as infinite locations – and by its manifestation through a particular temporality, namely *jetztzeit* (Benjamin), Now-time (Bloch), the revelatory event of the neutral (Marin), or the a-chronological zone of cultural regeneration (Bhabha). The rhizomatic nomad disturbs history (Deleuze and Guattari), and practices a certain form of heterology (de Certeau). In these theorists, this specific framing of *time* co-constitutes the 'location' of utopia. Such a re-conception of historicism is, similarly, posited as facilitative of cultural renewal in distopia.

In the following sub-section, the socioculturally crucial emanation ('product') of utopia is contextualised against this locational and temporal framing. It is necessary to clarify what it is that is 'made' in utopia, by the agents dwelling there.

5.1.3 Utopia as sociopolitical newness

Concerned with the intersection of space (as co-constituted anti-historicist time), and *cultural pluralism*, both Massey and Bhabha argue that agentic spatial praxis gives rise to the unprecedented, to what has not occurred before, enabling sociocultural renewal. Marin

⁸ A Marxist dialectical position builds on the Hegelian "reconciliation of contradiction" (Flew 1984:94), but rejects the notion of this process as ideological (that is, as abstract). For Marxists, the process plays out in the material sphere, and is concrete.

and Harvey also emphasise the concept of cultural renewal, but explicitly equate such regeneration with utopia, a term that Massey and Bhabha do not consider as such. This sub-section relates the thoughts of these theorists with each other, and with Bloch's framework regarding newness and its relevance for the sociopolitical.

Massey (2008:9; emphasis added) describes space that is "constituted through interactions" (or, productive space), as "the sphere of *possibility* [which is] never closed". It is this agentic aspect of productive space that makes it possible to "rework modernity [and] decentre Europe" (Massey 2008:63). As clarified above, it is the negation of globalisation discourse as solely a temporal narrative that renders space productive. Such a deconstruction of the narrative of globalisation spatialises it, and makes it political. What is an enveloping, incontestable 'historical' trajectory, becomes space that can be politically disputed. In this way, foregrounding spatial discourse opens up the future, and for Massey, the new is thus a politically opened up future. Such spatialisation also indicates the presence of cultural pluralism and contestation upon which Bhabha elaborates.

The term newness as utilised in this study is derived from Bhabha's use of it in *The location of culture*, and I adopt the meaning and significance that Bhabha assigns the term. What are in need of renewal for Bhabha, are lingering colonialist tropes that perpetuate the myth of homogeneous culture. This is achieved through hybridisation which negates essentialist constructs and subverts the ideological foundations on which they are premised, and that continuously need to be reproduced. Newness, for Bhabha then, is *hybridity*, which emerges in the act of redefining the social order and negotiating identity. According to Bhabha (1994:219), newness, as cultural hybridity, generates a "politics of the future-as-open-question", mirroring almost exactly Massey's terminology. Thus both Massey and Bhabha address the intersection between newness and cultural pluralism, and outline specific kinds of space where cultural difference leads to renewal: productive space; third space. Marin and Harvey explicitly conceptualise such sociocultural renewal as a *utopian* category.

Marin conceptualises utopia as a neutral region and posits this neutrality as the condition of possibility for the creation of the (sociopolitically) new. It is this ontological condition of being inassimilable by either of the positions it stands 'between', that makes utopian praxis a "free force of unlimited contradiction" (Marin 1990:xxii). A neutral space is one that is

"absolutely different", characterised by "infinite *potentia*", that effects "a future that has no previous example" (Marin 1993:14, 12; 1990:xxiii). This is what constitutes utopia as a positive social phenomenon. Marin thus equates the new directly with utopia. Harvey (2000:199, 81) describes the new as "alternative possible worlds" and "redefine[d] ... fields of political action". The re-configuration of the world (into, specifically, more equitable societies), is made possible through identifying globalisation processes as part of an overt geopolitical project, as opposed to visualising it as an unstoppable, abstract force. Recasting globalisation as a project spatialises it, making it political. Massey and Harvey forward the same argument in this regard.

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, Bloch's views (on utopian space and time, on newness, and on the dynamic that inheres in and constitutes utopia, clarified in the following sub-section), serve as a magnifying glass in which relevant threads of thought from the key theorists are concentrated and intensified. Bloch addresses utopia as a specific spatiotemporal region of agentic social renewal, contextualised as a Marxist deconstruction of given sociopolitical dynamics, and a dialectical repositioning of the given.

Bloch (1986:288), like Marin, equates the new directly with utopia: here utopia *is* the new, a "future composed of what has never been like this". Bloch subverts a historical framing of sociopolitical dynamics in a way that, as argued here, influenced Benjamin's conceptualisation of *jetztzeit*, a construct subsequently referenced productively by Bhabha in his work on third space. Bloch's (1986:12) conception of the new is inseparable from this subversion of time-space, and he describes the relation between utopia and the new as follows: "[T]he Here and Now, what is repeatedly beginning in nearness, is a utopian category, in fact the most central one; even though ... it has not yet even entered time and space". Utopia is indexed by "*qualitative reversibility, changeability itself*", which is what effects "world-changing", constitutes a "feasibly better present" (Bloch 1986:286, 283; original emphasis). Newness, imaginatively cultivated, stands in contrast with complacency and passivity, described by Bloch (1986:580) as "idolatry of the objectively possible". In virtually identical tone, Harvey (2000:155), inveighing against the perception of neoliberalism as broadly beneficial and / or inescapable, asks, "how is it that we are so persuaded that 'there is no alternative'?"

For Deleuze and Guattari, it is deterritorialisation that gives rise to the new, and is inseparable from it. They note that deterritorialisation "can be called the creator of the earth – of a new land, a universe"; it "constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:509, 142). Besides these (and similar) references to the new, what the new entails, as such, is left open, probably in order to circumvent the systematisation (reterritorialisation) of the new through its particularisation. Deleuze and Guattari thus elaborate less on what it is that is created as new than on the dynamic of such a process. The *dynamic* inherent to the utopia of difference and dissidence is discussed in 5.1.4.

To summarise, newness is equated by all the theorists cited here with a greater degree of sociopolitical equality. Massey and Harvey argue that such an equitable renewal of interpersonal and political relationships is contingent upon refuting the dominant framing of globalisation as an inescapable destination myth. Marin equates the new with utopia *per se*, positioning it as the region from which all sociocultural destabilisation emerges, and Bhabha regards this region of renewal as the engine of culture. Fundamental to the revolutionising potential of this location is its transposed temporality, a concept Bhabha adopts from Benjamin, and which Benjamin (argued here) derived from Bloch. In Bloch, a Marxist renewal of the global ecumene can occur only in utopia, conceptualised as now-time. This positioning of utopia (by Bloch and Bhabha) is adopted as the structure for distopia.

The following sub-section explores the social and intellectual *dynamic* that characterises spaces of renewal and dissent conceptualised by the theorists cited.

5.1.4 Utopia as sociopolitical process

In this sub-section, notions pertaining to the dynamic of the spaces described by the theorists in question, and to that of distopia, are clarified. These include utopia as becoming and movement, as liminally in-between, as heterogeneous, perilously unpredictable, tangible and concrete, and as constituted through agency. These concepts appear in varying forms in the work of the theorists discussed, and are progressively correlated with each other, below. An overall kaleidoscopic dynamic emerges, relevant to distopia, which is applied to an analysis of the selected utopias in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Deleuze and Guattari (1993:347, 232-309) emphasise the importance of *becoming* and conceptualise smooth space as the sphere of becoming. If smooth space is socioculturally significant, it is because it is the zone of emergence. Becoming is, moreover, not envisaged as a perfunctory process, but as induced, through praxis. It is crucially salient to the conception of smooth space as principally the milieu of alterity (as is distopia as proposed here), that becoming cannot be appropriated as a fixed form or structure (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:361). The dynamic of becoming thus ontologically indexes smooth space, but it also determines the purview of the nomad, establishes the scope of nomadic praxis. Nomadic praxis is minority praxis, and "only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:291).

Becoming is indicated as the destabilised effect of lines of flight, and the instability of any given territory (locational, cultural, social, political, pertaining to identity, etc.), that is, its workability, is the consequence of the *immanence* of lines of flight within the territory. Deleuze and Guattari (1993:216, 219) note that "a society is defined by its lines of flight ... There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations ... mutant flows ... tending to elude or escape the codes". The lines of flight move, like nomads, and their paths are marked by a reorganisation of the territory. A line of flight assembles a terrain as it dis-assembles it, creates as it destroys. (In this sense the lines of flight act as the neutral, which convenes the structure / series as it disrupts it). Lastly, the lines of flight constitute a counterforce to points, which indicate centring and stable positions; their directionality is necessarily tangential (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:8, 116). The line of flight is, simply, the figure of the other, as movement.

Echoing Marin's positioning of utopia as an in-between, Deleuze and Guattari describe smooth space (a rhizome), as constituted only of a middle, from which it grows. As such, the rhizome is the spatial equivalent of the temporally convergent now, or *jetztzeit*. However, whereas Marin emphasises utopia as that which is inassimilable, *per se*, Deleuze and Guattari envisage smooth space as a region that is subject to normalisation – reterritorialisation – as well as to deterritorialisation. It is worth noting that this dynamic, as the creation of the new, is dialectical as opposed to merely oppositional. Deleuze and Guattari (1993:174) clarify the 'first theorem' of deterritorialisation as follows: "One never deterritorializes alone: there are always at least two terms ... And each of the two terms reterritorializes on the other ... one element ... serves as a new territoriality for another".

Besides describing smooth space in terms of becoming, liminality and movement, Deleuze and Guattari also emphasise its heterogeneity. Disparate elements are brought into convergence on the plane of consistency (on / in smooth space), rendering it a zone of radical proximity. Here proximity is not envisioned as resolved co-existence: smooth space is undecidable space in which relationships must continuously be forged. The "galaxy" of heterogeneous elements convened through the approximating consistency of smooth space is never synthesised (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:250), but remains productively adversarial.

A significant aspect of the dynamism which can be seen to constitute smooth space, and which is echoed in Bhabha's positioning of third space as specifically agonistic, is the hazardous uncertainty that characterises dwelling in / creating smooth space: "Voyaging smoothly is a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:482). The outcome of the de- and reterritoralisations within smooth space is also never a given, as it is impossible to predetermine whether "a given multiplicity will or will not ... form a consistent, or co-functioning, multiplicity susceptible to transformation" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:250). This uncertainty of processes within smooth space is akin to the dynamic of Massey's 'productive' space, which is subject to ongoing negotiation. Deleuze and Guattari posit these dynamic processes they ascribe to smooth space in concrete rather than abstract terms. De- and reterritoralisations impact on the lived environment and on sociopolitical realities in tangible ways, as becomings are "neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:238). Utopia is thus anchored concretely in sociopolitical praxis for Deleuze and Guattari, (as well as for de Certeau, Harvey and Bloch, as clarified below), and is crucially linked to its agentic aspect.

To summarise, smooth space is constituted through and by the movement of lines of flight, dialectical de- and reterritorialisation, heterogeneous disparity, perilous indeterminacy, and agency. None of the dynamic characteristics of smooth space can be separated from the agents who are seen to traverse and thereby constitute smooth space. Smooth space left to its own devices reverts to striated space. It is by conjugating, continuing, overlaying, retaining, extracting, producing, saturating, and so forth, that smooth space is devised. The most important verb, implicated in the other verbs listed here and in *A thousand plateaus*, is to become. To become "is to world ... to make a world ... into a becoming ... To be present

at the dawn of the world" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:280). Worlding is political and strategic, or in the terminology used by de Certeau, tactical.

The tactical, defined as actions devised by the 'weak', which can nevertheless redirect history, also produces space.⁹ Tactics are thus the means by which both historical and spatial frameworks can be subverted. In de Certeau (1988:117) space ('*espace*', equivalent to third space and to smooth space, in comparison with place, '*lieu*', which corresponds with striated space), is indexed not only by its temporality (in that space is created through actions in the present, necessarily contingent), but also by a kind of positional multiplicity: it can accommodate "a polyvalent unity [in] proximit[y]". Space is, lastly, created by movement, "vectors of direction", "velocities", "manoeuvrable polymorph mobilities" (de Certeau 1988:117, 40), and is concrete: fashioned through the actions of those who constitute its unfolding. It also *inheres* in place – representing the space of the other, it is not removed from institutional place ('the terrain of the enemy'), but necessarily produced within it. For de Certeau, the dynamic aspect of space is thus characterised by contingency, radical heterogeneity, agency, movement and concrete immanence.

Marin too conceives of utopia as a *process*, designated by movement, but the central utopic dynamic is, for him, one of contradiction and paradox: it is assimilative of contrasting elements (though not synthesising), and simultaneously inassimilable. Bhabha positions the politically contestatory matrix of third space as, specifically, hybridity. Hybridity, like Marin's neutral, does not resolve conflict, nor can it be re-assimilated into any of the positions it evolved from. Hybridisation is conceived of as a tactical manoeuvre, as it enables infiltration of an opposing political structure, such as a master-discourse. Hybridising (destabilising) discourse does not merely oppose the dominant discourse, but insinuates itself into its terms of reference (Bhabha 1993:155), which is what Bhabha accomplishes in his interrogation of the discourses of the coloniser. The hybrid agent thus enunciates her position "*in medias res*" (Bhabha 1993:227; original emphasis), mirroring the placement of subversive praxis inside the field it is dismantling as described by Deleuze and Guattari, de Certeau, and Marin, although Bhabha enunciates this dynamic from a specifically subaltern perspective, thereby further amplifying the concept.

⁹ See de Certeau (1988:34, 117; 1986:136).

The intersection, in and as third space, of performativity and conflictual sociocultural positionings, renders it dialectical, a zone of contestatory cultural production, 'negation-as-negotiation'. Of all the theorists cited here, Harvey foregrounds the importance of the dialectic as tactical dynamic most explicitly. Harvey (2000:15) describes his critical methodology as historical-geographical materialism, which builds on the Marxist historical materialist framework.

The outcome of historical-geographical materialism is a dialectical utopia, considered as negating both the stasis of spatially closed and timeless utopias, and the endless openness of a utopia of pure process. A dialectical negation of these two extreme positions involves pulling "together a spatiotemporal utopianism ... that is rooted in ... present possibilities at the same time as it points towards different trajectories [than] uneven geographical developments" (Harvey 2000:196). It thus expands on what is (the given built and social environments), while activating the new. Dialectical utopia crucially necessitates making concrete choices, which entails the foreclosure of some possibilities, while opening up others. Making choices is for Harvey an inescapable social responsibility which he designates as an 'either / or' dialectic, as opposed to the synthesising and harmonising, and thus apolitical, 'both / and' Hegelian dialectic.

This sub-section has compared the various permutations of utopia as characterised by several dynamic processes. Broadly, the utopian frameworks referenced here emphasise socioculturally significant space (or utopia) as becoming and as movement. Utopia is furthermore positioned as a region that is both heterogeneous and inassimilable, and as marked by a more or less conflictual negotiation. Utopia, for all its radicalism is, significantly, not perceived as a space removed from everyday engagement, but as a concrete aspect of social life, with tangible effects on lived experience. Utopian praxis is, lastly, posited as agentic and existential, throughout.

As with the sub-sections above, it is again possible to see these dynamic aspects of utopia coalesce in Bloch's conception of utopia. Bloch's description of the utopic can be related to the destabilising dynamic of the lines of flight, and to smooth space as becoming space. Bloch (1986:288) notes: "What is not can still become ... There is [an] open dimension in people [and] also in things, on their leading edge, where becoming is still possible ... urging ... can still go, still choose, still depart, still take a new path". In Bloch, this dynamic, and the

remaining categories under which the notion of utopia as a process has been discussed (that is, utopia as becoming and movement, as inassimilable, heterogeneous, agonistic and as immanent), can all be seen to unify under the concept of a particular dialectic which he regards as essential to utopia. These are unpacked below.

Utopia as the inassimilable points toward a dialectic dynamic according to which utopia can never be completely realised. To do so would be anti-utopianising reification / reterritorialisation, Marin's rigidified utopia as ideology. Bloch (2000:194, 197) notes: "[W]hat has just been said must be crossed out each time, so that nothing can solidify", and insists that he is putting forth the notion of utopia as a question. Such a question (or, the questioning demeanour that constitutes utopian endeavour), can furthermore not be construed in terms of "any readily available answer, or be referred to any material already settled anywhere in the available world" (Bloch 1986:289). It is for this reason that utopia is defined in terms of an irresolvable "incognito" in relation to its "unfixable content" and can induce uncertainty and confusion (Bloch 2000: 300, 303, 198).

Bloch's concept of the dialectic in relation to utopia can be compared with Harvey's formulation of a dialectical utopia (Harvey's specific term). Harvey posits the dialectic as a strategic combination of apparently mutually exclusive constructs, such as spatial and temporal utopias, and applies a Marxian dialectic to the formulation of a plausible utopia capable of renewing global socioeconomic processes in the interest of human rights. In this sense the de- and reterritorialisation of the strata (Deleuze and Guattari), can also be categorised as a dialectic dynamic, described in Bloch's (1986:311) terms as "productive ... negation of the negation". Like Harvey, Bloch cites proceeding dialectically as pertinent to utopianising praxis. Bloch (1986:4, 267) notes that "real venturing beyond ... grasps the New as something that is mediated in what exists", and for him it is "[Marx's] dialectical-historical materialism ... [that] posits the transformation of the world from within itself".

Marx's dialectic is (dialectically) evolved from the Hegelian dialectic, and Bloch lauds the former while criticising the latter. Simply, the Hegelian dialectic, envisaged as an integrative world process, is rejected on account of the cancellation thereby of human agency and uncertainty. It leads, according to Bloch (2000:179, 183-184), to a certain stultification and even amorality, and he states: "Hegel ... closed off everything that remains open in Kant, in favour of a certain accessible [and] explicitly concluded system ... the adversity of life

becomes a harmless ceremony ... One can ... imagine no more innocuous reduction of every danger and every kind of fruitfulness". It is, according to Bloch (1986:1361, 570, 1368), Marx, with his emphasis on action in the world, who 'corrected' the Hegelian dialectic by concretising it, and Marxist dialectic (as interpreted by Bloch) furthermore manages to evade the binary structure upon which Hegelian dialectics is premised.

Utopia, as a dialectical process, is contingent and unpredictable, as emphasised by Deleuze and Guattari, de Certeau, Marin, Massey, Bhabha and Harvey. This dynamic renders utopianising praxis perilous. Bloch (1986:296, 264) describes utopia as "detrimental space" which must be subjectively navigated, and he refers to the humanising process by means of which utopia is approached, as a trying procedure. This is redolent of Bhabha's conception of third space, where identities and cultures are *laboriously* forged by subjects, and utopianising praxis is similarly framed by Harvey (2000:196, 235) as "a bitter struggle".

Linked to the notion of utopia as partly constituted from what exists, is its perceived immanent nature, that is, its constitution as a concrete part of the world rather than as an abstract escape from the world. This is so for Bloch as well as for Deleuze and Guattari, Marin, de Certeau, Massey, Bhabha and Harvey. Bloch (2000:237) emphasises this aspect of utopia noting that "[t]o be practical ... to help ... to be political-social ... is a revolutionary mission absolutely inscribed in utopia". The terms Bloch (1986:99, 214, 95, 5, 199; original emphasis) uses to refer to utopia also indicate its concrete aspect: he describes utopian praxis as day-time fantasy, the depiction (by artists) of "the Real Possible", as "the waking dream of world-improvement" which is induced through the cultivation of "concrete hope" or "*militant optimism*". It is precisely, for Bloch (1986:3, 310), Marx's 'militant optimism' that made it possible for Marx to look "in the world itself for what can help the world", and it is in the world as it is and in the present that the task of utopianising must be taken up.

Lastly, agency is central to the conceptualisation of utopian or sociopolitically constructive space in the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, de Certeau, Massey, Bhabha and Harvey, and is also inseparable from utopianising praxis as Bloch conceives of it. Bloch (1986:196, 248) succinctly summarises the agentic aspect of utopia when he states that "[t]he Real is process", and that, crucially, "man [is the] realizing element". Within this context, human agency confronted by radical uncertainty, is recast as that which is utopian, *par excellence*: it is as agents that "we proceed slowly forward, darkly, atomistically,

individually, subjectively ... as the unresolved utopian tension constantly undermining everything shaped" (Bloch 2000:228). Utopia, then, is a process, and its matrix of becoming is human agency.

This section has read Bloch's writing on the nature and purpose of utopia as an intensified convergence of several theories pertaining to space and utopia cited in the study. The following section is an explication of the nature and purpose of distopia, specifically, as distilled from this correlation of theories. Distopia might be envisioned as a rhizomatic mosaic (a kind of swarm), which is more than the sum of its carefully selected parts. In addition, it has been formulated to address contemporary problematics, such as, specifically, the broad and possibly escalating human rights violations of the other in an increasingly controlling and militarised global sphere.

5.2 Distopia

"We're looking for allies. We need allies. And we think these allies are already out there, that they've gone ahead without us, that there are lots of people who've had enough and are thinking, feeling, and working in similar directions: it's not a question of fashion but of a deeper 'spirit of the age' informing converging projects in a wide range of fields. In ethnology, for instance. In psychiatry. Or what Foucault's doing: our method's not the same, but we seem to meet him on all sorts of points that seem basic, on paths he's already mapped out. And then it's true we've read a lot" (Deleuze 1995:22).

The central aim of this chapter is to interrogate what a utopia of sociopolitical alterity and cultural pluralism, referred to here as distopia, might resemble. This task is undertaken by creating a conceptual framework comprising relevant themes addressed by eight identified key theorists. The themes are structured around four aspects that can be seen to determine the nature and function of distopia, which are: the spatial and temporal frameworks found in the various utopian and spatial discourses cited above; the concept of newness as explicated in these discourses; and the agentic dialectic that is seen to nurture newness. As divergent as the cited discourses are, every theme (but one) that is crucial to the nature and function of distopia merge, retroactively in this study, through an exploration of Bloch's writings on utopia. The aspect not addressed by Bloch in relation to utopia is cultural pluralism. Were it not for this omission, addressed below, Bloch's utopia might be

considered indistinguishable from dystopia. Amplifying Bloch's eloquent and urgent utopian writing "against the War",¹⁰ the cogency of the collective writing of the subsequent theorists makes it clear that Bloch's particular concept of utopia has not become redundant. However, over the course of a century since World War I, the ramifications of globalising processes for cultural pluralism and sociopolitical equity have been significant. Bloch's writing does not address cultural pluralism, whereas it is central to dystopian 'forward dreaming'.

If the function of utopia is to ameliorate social turmoil,¹¹ and if the uneven distribution of sociopolitical equity, which affects both quality of life and life expectancy, is read as the primary global humanitarian crisis at the time of writing (2016), it follows that a utopia that addresses the perceived causes of the turmoil is required. Dystopia is positioned as a relevant response, predicated on specific aspects of utopia, to globalisation as it is playing out, particularly with reference to discernible effects on human rights, broadly.

Utopias occupy space, which is what prompted the exploration of spatial discourses in this study. The space of utopia, enigmatic and ambivalent from the outset of the naming of *Utopia* as such by More, has adapted to the function it has been positioned to fulfil. Traditional utopian space has been intangible, generally, with utopia for instance positioned on an unreachable island, or in settings resembling those in science fiction narratives: the centre of the earth, beneath the sea, outer space. The spatial 'turn' impacted on several discourses (such as philosophy, urban studies, critical theory, etc.), particularly from the mid-twentieth century onwards (although threads of such spatialisation discourse predate this period). The spatial turn in social studies also influenced utopia, and it is recast as more tangible and political, the 'product' of political activity. However, even abstract theoretical constructs, such as smooth space, third space and historical materialist utopia (Deleuze and Guattari; Bhabha; Bloch), are argued by their respective theorists to relate concretely to sociopolitical realities. It is similarly argued here that such 'abstract' frameworks can impact as much on the social imaginary than more empirically grounded visions can, thereby

¹⁰ Bloch (2000:279) is referring to World War I.

¹¹ The function of utopia as reacting to menacing social phenomena is broadly agreed upon (Shklar 1965:370; Bloch 1986:94; Levitas 1990:7, 181, 191; Fournier 2002:192; Grey & Garsten 2002:10; Stager Jacques 2002:29). See 2.1.

nullifying the notion that theory (or imagination) has little concrete impact. Harvey significantly makes this particular point.

Theorists such as Marin, de Certeau, Harvey and Massey address concrete spatial praxis more directly: the sociopolitical and geographical effects of heightened nationalisms; the appropriation of space through its use by ordinary city dwellers; the socioeconomic and urban exclusion of designated othered communities. Around the notion of the social embeddedness of utopia (that is, of utopia as sociopolitically real), Foucault foregrounds the tangibility of heterotopias – for him they are *realised* utopias. De Certeau similarly addresses tangible spaces tactically inhabited by the other, such as the city. Massey, Bhabha and Harvey are concerned with real geographical space, on a scale ranging from the personal to the global, as affected by current dominant political and economic frameworks. In contrast, smooth space and third space are not concrete places, but are not therefore unreal: space is also what is convened by a community, culturally, sub-culturally, affectively, digitally – in other words, there are cultural spaces that do not mirror communities as mapped 'on the ground', but are no less valid or extant than the latter. The same is true of Bloch's utopia, which is a region half abstract, and half concrete, but completely real – for Bloch, the most real.

Distopia is similarly positioned as occupying *tangible* space that corresponds with the lived experience of the multifarious politically marginalised sections of society, on a range of scales, from the household to the geographical region. Distopia is by necessity multi-locational, both literally and figuratively. It is literally multi-locational as it is instituted wherever minority agency asserts itself: the informal settlement, the low-cost housing estate, the gender-othering boardroom, the intolerant nation state, the destabilised region, under a bridge in the vagrant-repelling urban centre. Distopia is also multi-locational in a figurative sense, in the same way that smooth space is constituted by the actions of the evasive, yet troublesome, nomad, wherever she finds herself. Its multiform manifestation is furthermore conceptualised as simultaneously a non-geographical (abstract) zone emanating from the imagination (and, imagining is regarded here as a form of agentic praxis), and as concrete: spaces inhabited by bodies. Distopia is thus predicated on a dialectical concept of space: neither wholly concrete, nor wholly abstract, as neither of these two extremes can credibly be argued to exist, *per se*. In this way, distopia

encompasses several aspects of existential actuality, and is posited, like Bloch's utopia, as 'most real'.

The spatially tangible aspect of dystopia is indicated as the outcome of the seemingly obscure temporality of utopia. Here, utopia's space is read as co-constituted by a specific (subversive) conception of time. Several of the notions addressed in this study, such as now-time, explosive time, and newness, may seem superlatively abstract. However, explosive time and newness, in themselves, have a tangible, embodied impact when they are realised as agentic praxis, through mass resistance and protest, for instance. The figure of a galvanising political activist – in every era – distils the power of human imagination to conceive of a better world and activates it in a particular moment. Thus, in a sense, there is only one Asmaa Mahfouz, and she sets the scene for every uprising. Her actions are working in a definitively concrete mode. In this way utopias (or more accurately utopians), *make the new*, and dystopia is positioned as political and concrete for this reason. It bears repeating that the abstract / concrete binary, hypothesised as if thoughts and theories do not impact upon the world, is refuted here as nonsensical.

The spatial and temporal aspects of dystopia are linked to its function, which is to disrupt sociopolitical othering. Agency is hence inseparable from the current concept of dystopia. It is agency that indexes dystopia as a political space, relevant to contemporary discourses on global human rights, the effects of neoliberal policies and practices on global communities, and the ramifications of globalisation unfolding as it is (that is, primarily as driven by market imperatives), on cultural pluralism. (The links between dystopia and cultural pluralism are clarified below). In the cited theorists, agency appears as the subversive and elusive practice of the nomad (Deleuze and Guattari); the micro-political tactics of the urban and institutional other (de Certeau); the politicalised production, through contestation, of space (Massey, Harvey); as resistance to normalisation (Marin); as the wily insertion of cultural alterity into main-stream discourses and the production of hybridity (Bhabha); and as the radical re-imagining of the social sphere (Harvey, Bloch). Concretely political actions that constitute dystopia include, but are not limited to: switching to a *lingua franca* in a conversation so that everyone in a group can participate; thoughtful consideration of the validity of generally sanctioned habitation and co-habitation options (i.e., where to live, how to live, with whom to live); covert or overt contestation of received cultural tropes; lived resistance to oppression and exploitation of vulnerable communities; self-informing and

conscientising praxis; participation in or validation of protest action and resistance activities; or facilitating a revolution. In each case, agency is linked directly to sociopolitically *subversive* praxis, and is seen to be the preserve of the politically minoritarian.

The framework of agentic praxis addressed here is broadly contextualised against the commonly perceived cause, among the theorists cited, of sociopolitical exclusion, namely neoliberal capitalism as coupled with broadly liberal western interests. The ironic lapse in consistency in liberal ideology (and one that Bhabha addresses), can be detected in its positioning as, simultaneously, enlightened and tolerant, *and* as a justification for institutionalised discrimination, whether overt or covert, against the other. Justification for selective exclusion, discrimination and violence can be seen to abound under liberalism, aggravated by the needs and dynamics of a globalising market (Harvey).¹² In the case of Massey, Harvey and Bhabha, agency is furthermore explicitly linked to cultural pluralism: the spaces they write about directly index the status of the politically marginalised, along the axes of culture and race. Distopia is, similarly, envisaged as the contemplation and implementation of acts that address sociopolitical exclusion and cultural pluralism specifically, because exclusion as related to globalisation processes influences varying intersections of culture, class and race, rather than, for instance, gender or sexuality, although class discrimination, arguably, has negative effects on gender equality. Marginalisation is channelled downward, in discriminatory and exploitative actions levelled at whatever group happens to be the bearer of the least amount of agency in a given dynamic (children, women, immigrants, workers, gays and lesbians, etc.). However, gender and sexual identity can also be classified as constitutive of 'a culture', making the term cultural pluralism applicable to a cross section of heterogeneous subject positions.

Distopia is furthermore specifically a post-Marxist response to the market dynamic seen to be the chief determining factor regarding the methods, scale and intensity of exclusion along these designated lines (of culture, class, and race). Distopia indexes multiplicity, which extends to co-existing localities, temporal frameworks, and cultural paradigms. The space, temporality, and dynamic of distopia (discussed below) address multiplicity positively.

¹² Saskia Sassen (2011) also writes extensively on the deterioration of human rights under capitalist democracy.

A particular dynamic crucial to distopia is discernible in the cross section of theories cited, and crystallises in Marin's notion of utopia as necessarily neutral, that is, as resistant to assimilation by the majoritarian system. The moment utopia is fixed, in the form of an ideology, system, or incontrovertible solution, it ceases to be utopia, and becomes what it attempted to address: dogma. This fluid aspect of utopia is also prominent in Deleuze and Guattari, and the nomad is the personification of radically *mutable* alterity. For de Certeau, it is the *unpredictable* praxis of minorities that is significant. Similarly, for Massey, the production of space is an *unquantifiable* endeavour: there is no single way to approach or appraise the contestation of space. Bhabha negates the validity of essentialised cultural frameworks. *Becoming* hybrid – the result of cultural work in the mode of resistance – is a utopianising programme that can never be concluded. For Bloch, utopia is the *open* question of full human attainment that is diminished the moment it becomes solidified as final. For him reality is process: only process is real.

The only theorist who rejects the notion of utopia as perpetual openness is Harvey, for reasons he explains. Distopia conforms to the notion of the critical utopia – its function is to deconstruct given sociopolitical tropes and to make alterity conceivable, and achievable. It does not envisage a perfect final state for society (closure), but rather subscribes to the notion that a stance of dissidence is (currently, at least) beneficial, and essential, for human rights and productive cultural pluralism. From this vantage point, Harvey's (2000:223) emphasis on "careful and respectful negotiation" is rejected here on the grounds that such a demeanour is disproportionately beneficial to the bearers of majoritarian authority. For a utopia indexed by agentic, minoritarian praxis (distopia), it is dissidence that is required.

Its fluidity and dynamism are what equate utopia (and distopia) with the new. Finality and newness are irreconcilable. The decisive importance of newness for politics, culture and identity (Massey, Bhabha, Harvey, Bloch), is connected to the dismantling of both traditional historicism (which determines that the past is inaccessible), and the cultivation of belief in the possibility of an improved future. This is an important antidote to dominant globalisation tropes that maintain that the course of globalisation cannot be significantly altered, and which lobbies capitalist democracy as globalisation's positive contribution to world development (Massey, Harvey, Bloch). Distopia is, accordingly, envisaged as inassimilable by the status quo, the scene of necessarily ongoing negation of power, and, therefore, the wellspring of sociopolitical and cultural renewal. Its resistance to codification is what, as is

argued here, prevents it from becoming a sinister and systemic threat (that nevertheless masquerades as liberty and freedom), to human rights and dignity. It is for this reason that distopia is predicated on processes embedded in dissidence, which serves as the only identified matrix through which the new might emerge. Significantly, the new is not unequivocally positioned as the good, as such a classification would cancel the fluid dynamic argued to be central to distopian praxis. Rather, newness cultivation is positioned as a perpetual counter-praxis poised to subvert whatever may happen to be experienced as inimical in the present. Its terms of enactment (that is, what it might entail for whom), need to be constantly negotiated and disputed, which is its strength and value. Acting as the agent of the new is, for all the theorists referred to here, demanding work, and an agonistic endeavour.

This dynamic of resistance to solidification is dialectic, envisioned most clearly as the lines of flight that continuously re- and deterritorialise on the strata and on each other (Deleuze and Guattari). Harvey and Bloch both explicitly reference Marxist dialectics, that is, the concrete application of historical materialist principles to the betterment of society. Harvey refers to such praxis as historical-geographical materialism. Furthermore, both theorists envisage their praxis as produced from what is: Harvey argues that the very dynamic of capitalist processes can be harnessed against it, and for Bloch, newness is not formed in complete alienation to what exists. If it (the new) were wholly alien to the world, and not partially constituted from what is extant, it would cease to be politically useful. Distopia is similarly positioned to address tangible insufficiencies in the current social order, with a view to ameliorating specific assaults on the common good. Distopia is not positioned as an escapist flight from the world. Conceptualising a more equitable world order is, furthermore, not disconnected from envisaging more equitable relations in the home, street, university, or factory, or wherever the distopian might be dwelling.

A dialectical dynamic can also be seen as the central stratagem by which hybridity emerges (Bhabha). In *The location of culture*, it is possible to identify an incommensurability between the dialectical dynamic at work in cultural work (when it produces hybridity), and the explosive revolutionary moment through which cultural renewal can emerge in now-time. Now-time is not dialectical (incremental, evolutionary), but instantaneous. It appears as an event. Bhabha does not resolve this incongruence between process and event. In distopia, a resolution might be posited as the application of whichever of the two strategies is

applicable to the situation at hand, which might require contestatory negotiation, or explosive alterity. Distopian tactics are pliable, the only stipulations being that a distopian mobilises from the subject position of the *other*, and that she does not, to paraphrase Bloch, take sociopolitical and cultural frameworks as they are and as they stand, but as they go and could go better.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has analytically compared the spatial and utopian discourses of eight selected theorists in order to formulate a conceptual framework for an envisioned utopia, namely distopia. Simultaneously, an attempt was made to performatively re-enact the temporal subversion of now-time, by reading these theorists through the texts of Bloch, who preceded them. It seems significant that the work of a theorist from a century ago can be read as re-emerging consistently in the texts of subsequent theorists up to the present – a congruence that can only be pointed out 'after the fact'. Bloch's relevance, and Marx's no less, is deemed significant, and potentially radicalising in the context of current socioeconomic processes.

Distopia is thus, firstly, considered in terms of its function, which positions it as a form of critique. Critique, here, is read not as one half (the passive half) of the theory-praxis binary, but as a form of praxis, based on the conviction that before any social changes can be instituted, a clear (or even vague) idea of possible alternatives needs to be formulated. In this way, sourcing texts by several key theorists active over the course of a century, from Bloch (1918) to Massey (2005), and distilling relevant themes that re-occur over the course of this period, both amplifies the central identifiable tenet in these writings, and enriches (for the current author) understanding thereof. The central tenet that emerges from the selected writings is that the development of global history as driven by commercial interests, has dire consequences for human rights, and that the course of globalisation, as it is currently unfolding, can be changed. The concept of distopia as developed here, however, also insists on the significance of political *dissent* as part of what is required to envisage and materialise an alternative globalisation – *altermondialisme*. Such dissent takes the form of invalidating main-stream and dominant tropes, which can be done in several ways which include: discounting the authority of regulating structures – spatial, social, cultural,

discursive – as, for instance, administered by the State and by sanctioned institutions; focussing attention on the politically astute tactics of the marginalised and dispossessed, and on the revolutions that inhere in everyday life; forging hybrid cultural positions that destabilise essentialist and othering discourses used to justify oppression, exploitation and exclusion; subscribing to the notion of the possibility of sociocultural renewal; and acknowledging cultural pluralism as the engine of broad social change.

Distopia is, thus, about the new: it definitively dreams forward (to use Bloch's description), and is in this sense wholly utopian – it is for a more just present and future (and, in its revolutionary mode, a redeemed past). It finds useful ammunition in the Marxist and more broadly socialist and radical discourses that have been propounded over the course of a century: a century in which Marxism, socialism, and radicalism have been decimated, but, as argued here, not lost for utopian praxis. Rather, the more dormant a discourse becomes, the more potentially incendiary its impact can be at the right time, as determined by the dissenting agent.

The question arises as to why the theory of Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) has not been taken into account in this study, as Lefebvre's Marxist approach to the political production of space can be seen to address the key aspects relevant to distopia. In this sense, Lefebvre's work can be correlated with that of Bloch, in that it condenses crucial aspects of the theories cited. However, Lefebvre's very dominance in spatial discourses leaves little room for explication or exploration, firstly, and secondly, it is important for the temporal aspect of this study to cut through the entirety of the twentieth century, in order to see an (anti)trajectory unfolding with regard to the notions of space, time, newness and agentic dialectical praxis, all within the context of political dissent and cultural pluralism. This (anti)trajectory provides insight into the way in which cultural pluralism, specifically, has been addressed over the course of a century. Lastly, Bloch wrote extensively on the relationship between utopia and *art*, and designates art as a form of world-making utopian praxis. This aspect of utopia is explored in the following chapters by applying the distopian framework formulated here, to a reading of the work of three Dutch visual artists whose practice similarly spans the course of a century – Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005), and Jonas Staal (1981). The variable importance in their work of aspects such as space, time, newness, agency and cultural pluralism can thus be compared.

CHAPTER SIX

NEOPLASTICISM AND DISTOPIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter analyses the utopian concepts apparent in the work of Dutch visual artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), the first of the selected artists discussed in this study. The underlying assumption is that the work of all three artists represents utopianising praxis.

The utopias of the selected artists are discussed in terms of three identifiable constitutive aspects of utopias in general, namely function, form, and dynamic (see 2.1). The characteristics of their respective utopias are analysed and compared (in Chapters Seven and Eight, when exploring the utopias of Nieuwenhuys and Staal and Ag Assarid, respectively), by applying the dystopian framework formulated in Chapter Five, to a reading of their ideas and art. These aspects (namely the function, form and dynamic of utopia), align with the four themes highlighted in the description of distopia, namely space, time, newness, and process, which facilitates a comparative analysis of each of the utopias with each other and with distopia. Of these three aspects, namely the function, form and dynamic of utopia, the latter is analysed in greatest depth, as it provides insight into the political and sociocultural processes at work in the envisioned society (its structural machinations). The categories discussed under the rubric of the dynamic of utopia include but are not limited to: the levels of exclusion that the envisioned utopian construct might entail; its conduciveness to cultural pluralism and difference; whether it is devised as a static, closed system, or as an open system indexed by newness; whether its creator regards it as realisable in the here and now; and, lastly, the role of agency in utopia. The three utopias explored in the following chapters are thus considered through the lens of distopia.

These three artist have been chosen because in their work, the traces of concepts key to the formulation of distopia might be discerned, to varying degrees and in different permutations, over the course of century, thereby making it possible to see distopia concretised in artistic utopian praxis (or not) during this time, and to glean productive historical possibilities that may potentially be actualised in the present. Secondly, the works of these Dutch artists, as they conceive of ideal social schemes, serve as case studies of the manifestation (or, again, not), of the notion of cultural pluralism in the context of a

society that consciously embraces pluralism, but has not managed to escape the problematics of pluralism as they play out in contemporary political and cultural clashes. The work of these artists makes it possible to sound the relationship(s) between the ideological validation of difference, and the actualisation of productive difference. The three artists were also chosen for the reason that their work is seen to engage constructively with apocalyptic events, which is what utopias do (or can do). Mondrian's utopia is read as a reaction to the trauma of World War I, whereas Nieuwenhuys's vision of a better world was created after the destruction wrought by World War II, within the context of growing post-war counter-culture in the west. The work of Jonas Staal and Moussa Ag Assarid is interpreted as a critical engagement with global politics in the twenty-first century, particularly with reference to the growing threat of 'terrorism'. These utopias can thus be juxtaposed with the writings of the theorists discussed in Chapters Three and Four, reflecting in parallel the unfolding of utopian theory and practice over the course of a century. Lastly, all three artists have written copiously and engagingly about their utopian schemes.

It is pertinent to apply the polemical framework of distopia to an analysis of *artworks* that address a utopian reconceptualisation of society. Ernst Bloch positions art as exemplary utopian praxis, and great works of art are, according to Bloch (1986:14, 214), an experimentation "with something that overhauls, something perfect which the world has not yet seen", a depiction of "the Real Possible".¹ In essence, artworks are "like magical mirrors where we glimpse our future" (Bloch 2000:32). For Bhabha (1994:12, 16), artists who give form to the in-between zone of hybridity, are "writing the world", which amounts to a kind of "art magic". As a principal link between what is and what can be, art functions as the vehicle of newness, and utopia (Bloch 2000:192, 13, 94-95).² But artworks also concretely constitute the world. Art praxis comprises world-*making* in a way that simultaneously renders the new thinkable and corporeal (artworks are *in* the world, and co-constitute it). Through their efforts, artists can thus be seen to co-create the very world they are envisaging, and Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys and Staal position themselves as the catalysts of

¹ Bloch's definition of 'great art' is not necessarily unproblematic, and can be seen to exclude a great deal of creative praxis. However, within the context of art as a world-making endeavour, as addressed here, it is apt.

² Bloch (1986:94) notes that, through art, "windows are hewn in deprivation, hardness, rawness, banality, [creating] distant prospects, full of light".

the systems they promulgate. In the following sections, Piet Mondrian's utopia is analysed in terms of its function, form, and dynamic.

6.1 Neoplasticism: the utopia of Piet Mondrian

The painter Piet Mondrian, born in Amersfoort, The Netherlands, in 1872 (d.1944), devised an early total abstraction, creating his signature red, blue and yellow non-representational paintings from 1920 to the mid-1930s.³ Figure 1 shows Mondrian in his studio in 1933, taken on the occasion of the inaugural presentation of his painting *Composition with yellow lines*.

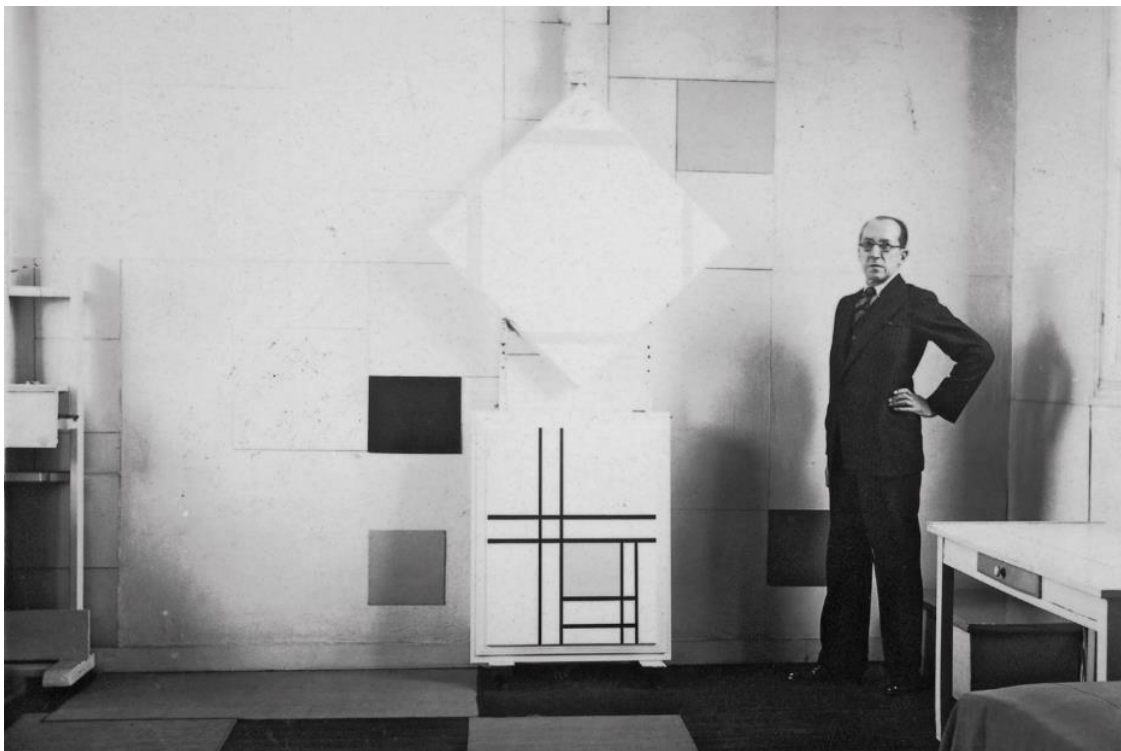


Figure 1: Piet Mondrian in his studio on the rue de Départ, Paris. 1933. Photograph from the collection of the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam. Photograph Charles Karsten. (Janssen & White 2011:241).

After this period, his paintings diverge from the particular mode of abstraction he had initially formulated as Neoplasticism, and become more visually dense. Mondrian's writings,

³ Mondrian's full and original names are Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan.

against the background of a chaotic Europe, link his thoughts regarding what a preferable world would entail directly to his abstract painting. Both his writing and art thus constitute utopianising praxis. The historical confluence of Mondrian's thought and art with the social effects of the Great War, directly indexes the *function* of utopia.

6.1.1 The function of Neoplasticism

George Kateb (2008a:8) notes that utopia's background "is the nightmare of history". If the function of utopia is broadly agreed upon as a reformative response to menacing and chaotic sociopolitical phenomena, as clarified in Chapter Two, Mondrian's deliberations and paintings can succinctly be described as a "rage for order" (Kateb 2008a:8). Mondrian and Bloch's efforts to improve society (and to overcome the material and psychological hardships of the era in which they were active), are chronologically parallel, spanning the period from the First- to the Second World Wars. Bloch's writing on utopia, like Mondrian's praxis, can thus be contextualised against a background of profound social crisis. Bloch (2000:279) describes *The spirit of utopia* (written during 1915 and 1916), as "an attempted initial major work ... a *Sturm und Drang* book entrenched and carried out by night, against the War". *The principle of hope* (comprising three volumes) was again written in reaction to the hostilities of war, between 1938 and 1947 – this time, in exile. Mondrian's own writing on the relationship between art and society similarly stretches from 1914 to 1944, when he passed away in exile.⁴ The artist's mature abstract style, formulated as Neoplasticism (Figure 2), can be interpreted as the depiction of a specific kind of utopia, explored here.

Hilton Kramer (1995) describes Mondrian's abstract visual language as part of a "social and cultural program" devised to renew a Europe that had just experienced conflict on an inconceivable scale, with unprecedented violence and loss in human life.⁵ In Mondrian's works between 1920 and c.1934, the Neoplastic visual language he devised is apparent: straight lines in black which demarcate a small number of rectangular areas of varying proportions and sizes, in one of three primary colours, or white (Figures 3 and 4).

⁴ As far as can be determined, Mondrian first began writing in 1914, and his first published essay appeared in 1917 (Holtzman & James 1986:27).

⁵ Harry Holtzman and Martin S James (1986:23) state that it was during the "war years" (1914-1919) that Mondrian "developed his conception of the New Plastic".

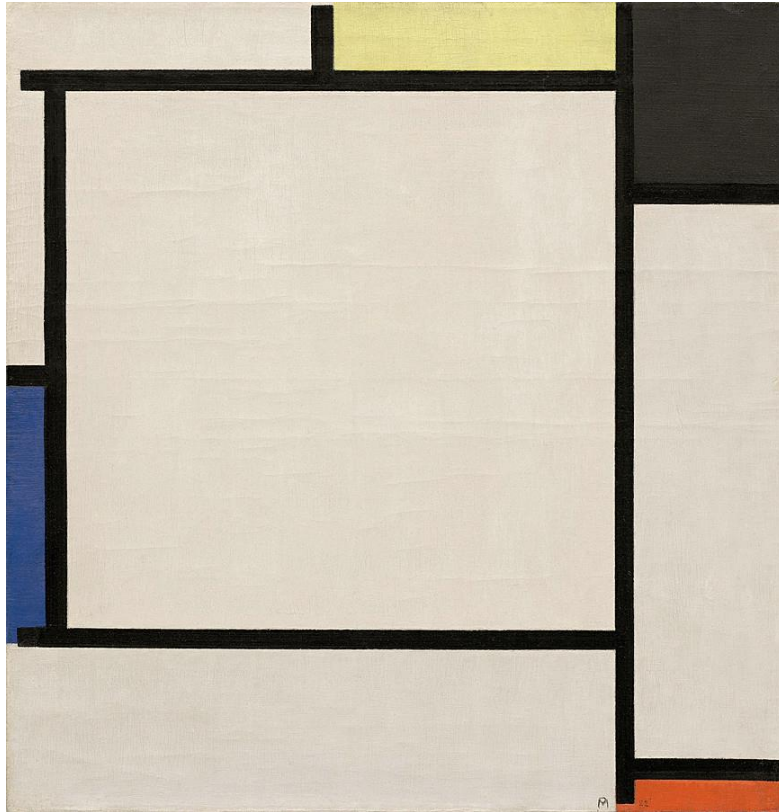


Figure 2: Piet Mondrian, *Tableau II*, 1922.
Oil on canvas, 55.6 x 53.4 cm.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
(Guggenheim [sa]).

Mondrian's ordered and 'impersonal' paintings can be interpreted as the artist's utopian panacea to violence and destruction, brought about (according to Mondrian), by materialism, individualism and subjectivity (Mondrian 1986b:121; 1986h:362; 1986b:92). His praxis embodies a tireless effort to expunge these from art and from life. In Mondrian's utopia, order, universalism, harmony, balance and objectivity are the crucial elements of a rehabilitated world. His recourse to a conception of harmony as formulated by a philosopher of antiquity, such as Plato (discussed below), is significant. Plato's vision of an ordered society, as described in *The Republic*, has influenced the utopian canon since it was first written, but classical visions of an agreeable ecumene become more urgently poignant in times of heightened violence and chaos. Judith Shklar (1965:371) notes that "an anguished recollection of antiquity" is the symptom of a "sad confrontation between a crude and dissolute [present] and the [perceived] virtue and unity of classical antiquity". Plato's Forms are a usefully abstract *leitmotif* for Mondrian in his attempts to process the hardships of a brutalising war, and his abstract compositions represent a world free of material horrors and the afflictions of everyday life. Mondrian also invokes Hegelian thought to make sense of

the world as it is, and as it could be. These philosophical elements give Mondrian's utopia a particular form and dynamic, clarified below.

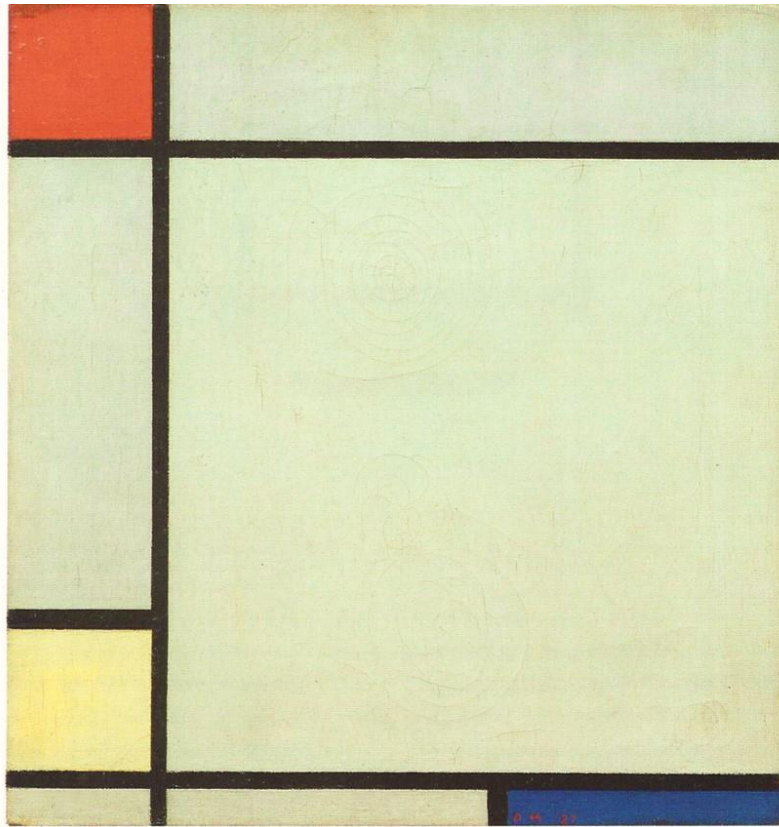


Figure 3: Piet Mondrian, *Composition with red, yellow and blue*, 1927.
Oil on canvas, 36.8 x 39.3 cm.
Current location unknown.
(Milner 1994:180).

6.1.2 Neoplasticism: form and dynamic

It is possible to compare Mondrian's abstract paintings to carefully laid out and tended gardens.⁶ Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2005) likens utopianising praxis to the work and intentions of a gardener. The gardener, or utopian,

assumes that there would be no order in the world at all, were it not for his [*sic*] constant attention and effort ... He works out the desirable arrangement first in his head, and then sees to it that this image is engraved on the plot. He forces his pre-conceived design upon the plot by encouraging the growth of the right type of plants and uprooting and destroying all the others (now re-named

⁶ Refer also to Foucault's (2008:19-20) description of heterotopia as a garden (see 3.2).

'weeds'), whose uninvited and unwanted presence disagrees with the overall harmony of the design (Bauman 2005).

A work such as *Tableau II* (Figure 2) can thus be imagined as the end result of tireless tending, cultivating, removing of 'unnecessary' elements, or weeds. However, given Mondrian's expressed antipathy towards nature⁷ and contrasting enthusiasm for the metropolis, his paintings can more accurately be envisaged as geometric, abstract and ordered cities (Figures 5-7). Mondrian (1986f:207; 1986b:98, 120) contrasts nature with the built environment of the future, and states: "Man and nature are no longer so united. Consider, particularly, the city".

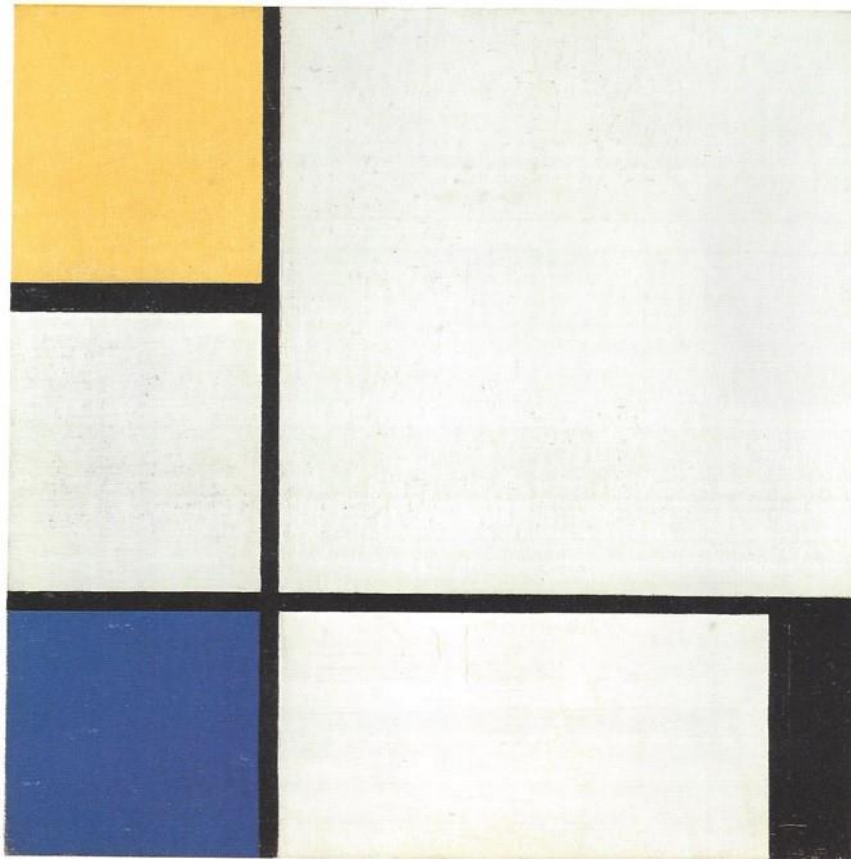


Figure 4: Piet Mondrian, *Composition in a square*, 1929.
Oil on canvas, 52 x 52 cm.
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.
(Milner 1994:184).

⁷ Mondrian (1986b:89, 87) conveys his preference for a more abstract and "immutable expression of beauty" to the disturbing randomness of visible nature. He notes: "We must ... see *through* nature. We must see deeper, see *abstractly* and above all *universally* ... [in order to] create a purer vision of nature" (Mondrian 1986b:88, 92; original emphasis). Mondrian (1986h:369; 1986e:199) furthermore equates departure from nature (literally, in art, and figuratively, through embracing technology), with human and social progress, and envisages nature as a dominating element that needs to be defused. The clearly stated aim of Neoplasticism is "to abolish the natural" (Mondrian 1986c:145).

It is, for Mondrian (1986f:210), the city's rational *geometry* that sets it apart and elevates it from its rural and natural surroundings, and that accords it a greater degree of abstract universalism. Mondrian explicitly equates the abstract principles devised for Neoplastic painting with possibilities for creating Neoplastic cityscapes. He notes: "The plastic means [for art] must be the rectangular plane or prism⁸ in primary colours (red, blue, and yellow) and in noncolor (white, black, and gray). In architecture, empty space can be counted as noncolor, denaturalized material as colour ... *beautiful cities* [are created] *by opposing buildings and empty spaces in an equilibrated way*" (Mondrian 1986f:209, 207; original emphasis). A city in which this equilibration has been achieved, would be an "Eden" (Mondrian 1986f:212), or, utopia.⁹ In essence, the ideal metropolis is for Mondrian (1986h:369; 1986b:102) the apogee of human culture, and Neoplastic painting its realisable manifestation.

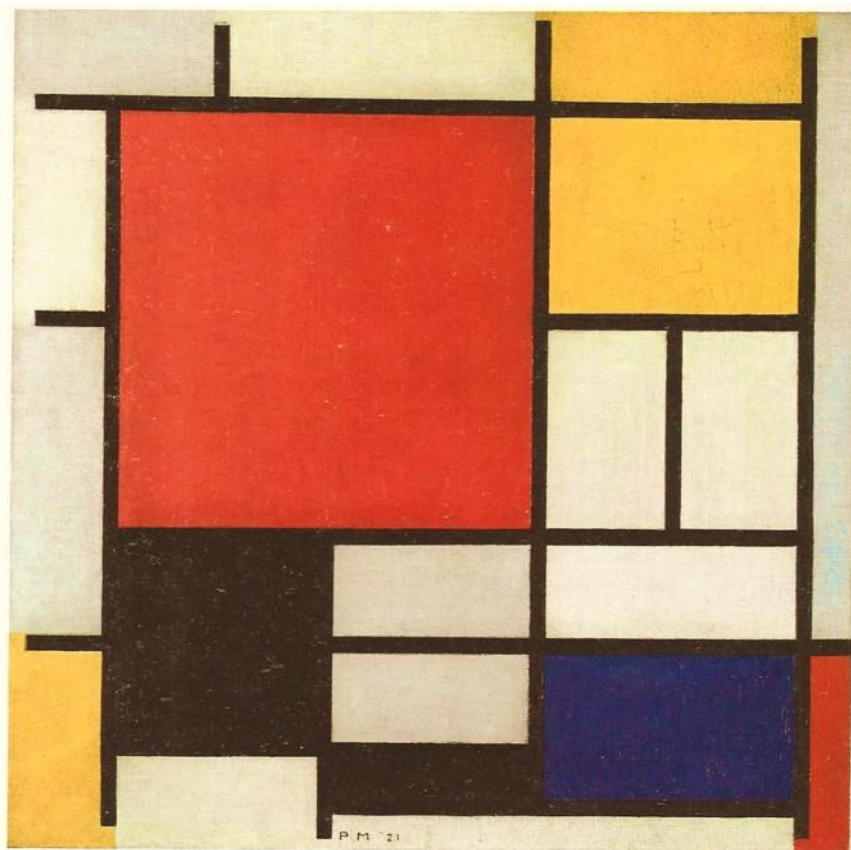


Figure 5: Piet Mondrian, *Composition with red, yellow, blue and black*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 59.5 x 59.5 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. (Milner 1994:160).

⁸ Mondrian's (1986b:101; 1986c:139) use of the term 'prism' does not refer to a triangular shape, but to the three dimensional version of the rectangles employed in his painting, which would be suitable for sculpture and architecture.

⁹ It is notable that Eden, for Mondrian, is a constructed environment.

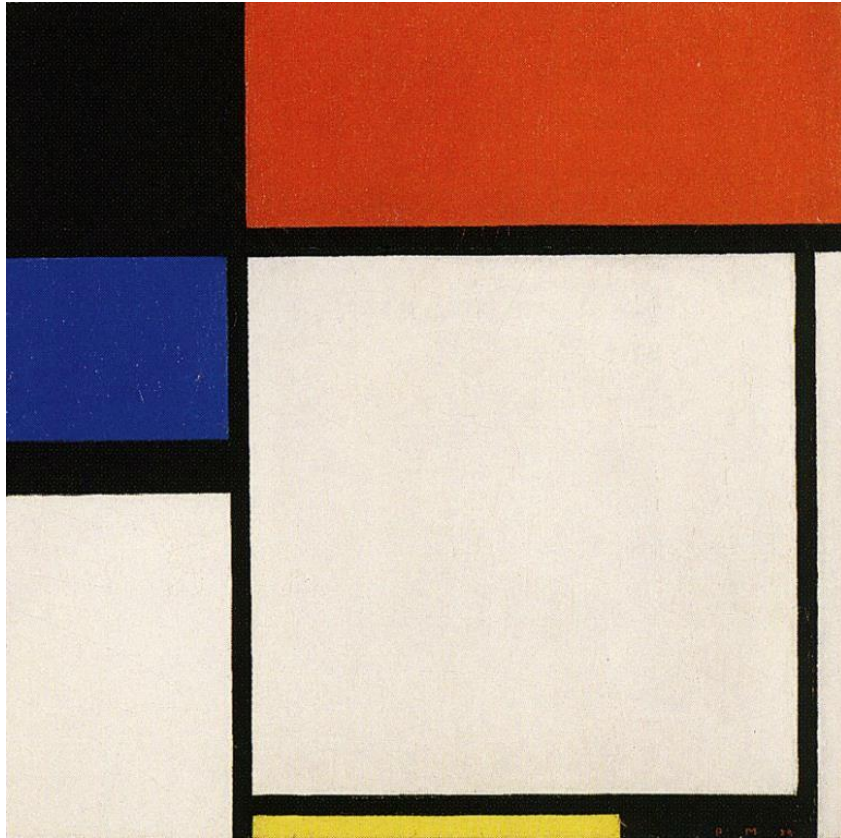


Figure 6: Piet Mondrian, *Foxtrot B*, 1929.
Oil on canvas, 44 x 44 cm.
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.
(Milner 1994:183).

Mondrian is not alone in likening utopia to a city. Northrop Frye (1965:325) observes that "utopia is primarily a vision of the orderly city ... with its abstract pattern of streets and buildings", and Mondrian's conception of art (and society) as abstract and ordered, is mirrored in Frye's (1965:339) description of utopia as "a city [expressing] human ascendancy over nature ... the domination of the environment by abstract and conceptual mental patterns". For this reason, the city is "not just a larger heap of buildings and public ways ... [but] primarily a symbolic representation of the universe itself" (Mumford 1965:282). Lewis Mumford (1965:278, 281) accordingly argues that the first (western) utopia was a city. What the city and utopia have in common, is the attempted abolishment of chaos. The unwavering black lines that separate the rectangles in Mondrian's Neoplastic compositions, can be read as the abstract embodiments of primordial city walls, devised to "hold chaos at bay and ward off inimical spirits" (Mumford 1965:281).¹⁰

¹⁰ In this regard, the utopian city as a mechanism of control can be correlated with the project of modernity as a whole.

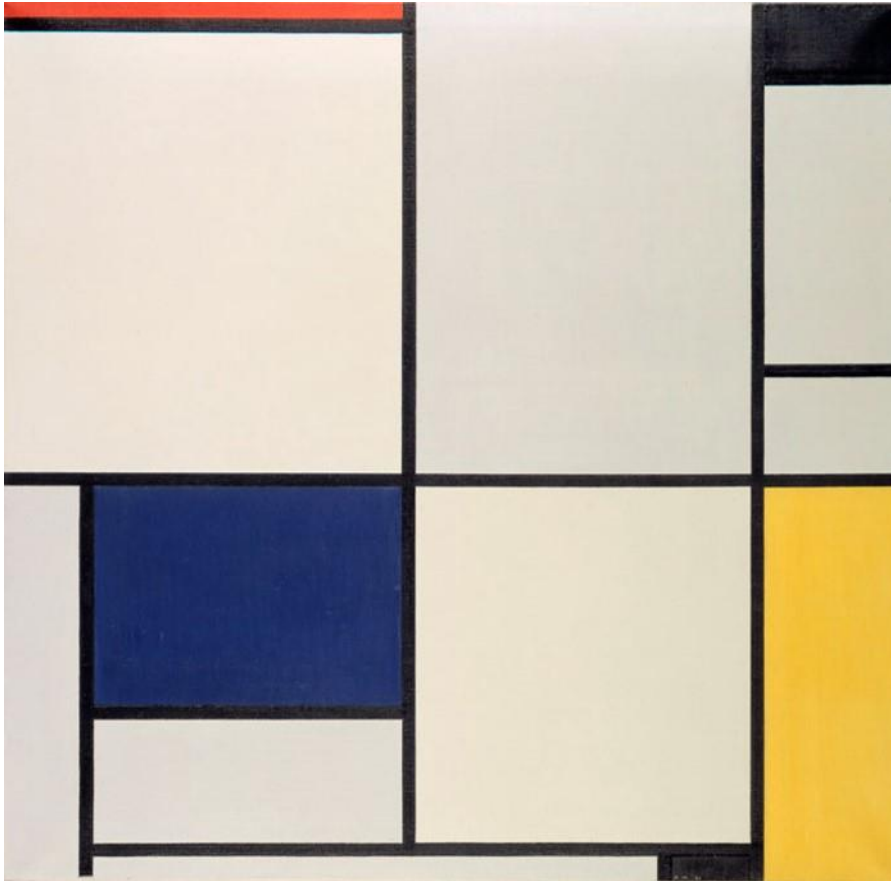


Figure 7: Piet Mondrian, *Tableau I*, 1921.
Oil on canvas, 103 x 100 cm.
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.
(Janssen & White 2011:139).

Linking Mondrian's utopia to the built environment, in the form of a city, enables comparison with the utopias envisaged by Nieuwenhuys and Staal. However, the notion of utopia as a city is also crucial for a specific framing thereof as a locus of sociopolitical control. When Mondrian is explicating Neoplastic principles, he is also describing what amounts to, for him, an ideal sociopolitical system, and the notion of utopia as a built form denoting control is consistent with Neoplasticism as explicitly formulated in terms of abstraction, the Platonic Forms, universality, the whole, unity, the Hegelian dialectic, and harmony. The following section clarifies these facets of Mondrian's framework for an ideal art and society, before exploring the artist's conception of space and time in utopia.

Neoplastic paintings are pre-eminently abstract. For Mondrian, abstraction represents more than a particular style of expression, and becomes a normative imperative. Mondrian (in Holtzman & James 1986:14) explains his position regarding the significance of abstraction:

"I want to approach truth as closely as possible; I therefore abstract everything until I attain the essential [essence] of things". In this, he conforms to a Platonic characterisation of the world. Plato's (1969:16) conception of essence coalesces as the doctrine of Forms, positioned as the intangible *source* of all phenomena. The Forms are singular and universal, but from them emanate the particular forms, in all their profuseness and variety. For this reason, from a Platonic perspective, that which we cannot physically interact with is not less real, but in fact more so. Mondrian (1986g:251) accordingly shuns particular form, as it veils "beauty ... goodness ... the universe ... universal equilibrium", and abstract visual elements, such as devised for Neoplastic art, circumvent for him particular (naturalistic) form as far as is possible. Mondrian (1986b:118) correlates abstraction with truth, and the artist's compositions can thus be seen as approximations of the Platonic Forms. The same hierarchy of 'realism' applies for Mondrian to the concept of universality as it relates to the particular, or tangible. In other words, the universal supersedes the particular in terms of realness and significance in the same way that abstraction denotes a higher reality than corporeal entities do.

Mondrian, like Plato, consequently invalidates the significance of material reality, against the grain of what embodied interaction with the world would suggest, that is, that matter is 'real' and impacts profoundly on lived experience. He notes: "As man matures, he himself becomes more the creator, opposing physical and natural matter", and argues that the senses can only deceive us with regard to the 'real' (Mondrian 1986f:207; 1986h:382). Mondrian's adoption of a Platonic characterisation of the world can be explained by his experience of the world. The advantages of subscribing to the ascendancy of a universal, abstract realm seem to be self-evident when compared to the horrors of everyday life during a time of war. Bloch (2000:168), Mondrian's contemporary, encapsulates the post-war *zeitgeist* when he states: "Matter in this our modern age is burdensome". Similarly, for Mondrian (1986g:252, 254; original emphasis), the material represents only "oppression", "*limitations*".

Mondrian's utopia, as determined from his writing on Neoplasticism, has thus far been discussed in terms of abstraction, universality, and aversion to the material. It can also be seen to embody a longing for wholeness and unity, characterised by harmony. Firstly, Mondrian (1986b:86) subscribes to the notion that all seemingly separate phenomena need to be understood as part of a greater whole, and that nothing can be understood in isolation

from the "complex" it co-constitutes. According to Mondrian (1986b:86, 92; original emphasis) "[w]hen we see things as *particularities*, as *separate entities*, we drift into vagueness and uncertainty ... basically all things are one". Every Neoplastic composition has, for Mondrian, a deep-structural congruence with 'the whole', and he declares: "Every work of plastic art is a world in itself reflecting reality as a whole" (Mondrian 1986h:389). In emphasising the primary reality of the whole, or system, as distinct from the lesser reality of separate phenomena, Mondrian shows his Hegelian sympathies: for Hegel (1977:16, 11), singularities are incomplete and hence lacking, and only the whole represents the replete and the "True". The whole that Mondrian, and Hegel, regard as of principal importance and realness, is thus necessarily indexed by its unity: if the whole is to be constituted as such, that is, as encompassing all phenomena, it follows that nothing can exist outside the whole, and its unity is ontologically inviolable. The whole is in effect a closed system.

Subscribing to the significance of the whole, Mondrian (1986b:86) is hence at pains to clarify how *dualities* relate to the whole and can in fact be comprehended in terms of radical unity. He again draws on Hegel (1977:67-77; original emphasis), who emphasises the structural inseparability of opposites, positing, for instance, individuality and universality to be constitutive of "a *single unity*". In Mondrian's (1986b:95; original emphasis) terminology, "apparent duality can become *pure unity*". The many dualities cited by the artist in his writings include: inward / outward; objective / subjective; universal / individual; immutable / mutable; masculine / feminine; spiritual / material; straight / curved; planar / spherical; adult / child; new / old; active / passive; interior / exterior; mind / matter; and spirit / nature (Mondrian 1986b:96; 1986c:134-144). The only visible image capable of encapsulating all balanced dualities is, for Mondrian (1986b:86), the perpendicular: the ninety degree angle between purely vertical and purely horizontal lines. The primary significance of the perpendicular, as the index of radical unity, explains Mondrian's refusal to diverge from it in his art.

According to Mondrian (1986a:48), opposites can only be seen to form a unity through a particular process, and he refers to the Hegelian dialectic as the means by which radical unity emerges. Hegel (1977:2, 10; original emphasis) refutes the notion of fixed opposition and describes the gradual emergence of 'truth' through the unfolding of the dialectical process, as follows:

The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the ... the whole. [The dialectic] is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this [opposition] ... Only this self-*restoring* sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself – not an *original* or *immediate* unity as such – is the True.

The dialectical process, as conceptualised by Hegel, drives world history through an inexorable dynamic that involves the synthesis of each thesis and its antithesis into a new thesis. This ongoing dynamic, which cancels by progressive degrees all opposites, can be seen to drive towards an encompassing whole. Similarly, for Mondrian (1986a:48), it is the dialectical "reciprocal interaction" between dualities that establishes their mutual cancelation, and that constitutes a more fundamental truth, or "growth toward the abstract". Thus the dualities mentioned do not signify indefinite opposition, or even opposition as *such*. In fact, when perfectly balanced, they signify the complete nullification (or double negation) of opposition, which is how they come to embody radical unity (Mondrian 1986b:95). This diffused (nullified) oppositionality is referred to as *equivalence* by the artist. Equivalent duality is valued as the principal manifestation of harmony, and it is the achievement of harmony that is, for Mondrian (1986b:96), the primary goal of his praxis.

In a painting such as *Composition in a square* (Figure 4), which is simultaneously a representation of a perfected society and an embodiment, in miniature, of the whole, profusion and chaos are thus visually and conceptually nullified, and all oppositionality neutralised and defused. The Hegelian and Platonic aspects of Mondrian's thought and art discussed here, have particular sociopolitical ramifications. Before discussing Mondrian's utopia in terms of its framing of agency and of cultural pluralism, for instance, its spatial and temporal aspects need clarification.

Mondrian's 'city' can be imagined to reside in a particular interpretation of the fourth dimension, insulated from the material world, where Plato's Forms might also lurk. Mondrian (1986b:99; original emphasis) himself describes consciousness of the universal as the manifestation of a "*stronger awareness of the fourth dimension*". In describing the

fourth dimension in terms of a particular kind of consciousness, Mondrian invokes its mystical rather than scientific embodiment (as explored, for instance, by Albert Einstein).¹¹ This framing of what was regarded to be not merely another dimension, but a *higher* dimension, was disseminated, amongst other theorists, by PD Ouspensky (1981 [1912]), who elucidated the link between consciousness and space perception in his *Tertium organum*.

Ouspensky (1981:290), himself disenamoured with materialism and positivism, devised a conceptual framework that recasts time as a higher spatial dimension. Ouspensky (1981:26) argues that the ordinary conception of historical progression as a 'line of time', constitutes the line on which we travel 'through' the bodies of four-dimensional objects on the plane of the fourth dimension. Accordingly, three dimensional phenomena *appear* to commence and end as we travel 'through them'. In 'reality', however, phenomena exist in perpetuity, with or without our perceptual knowledge of them, and whether they are 'behind' us, in the past, or 'ahead' of us, in the future. Ouspensky (1981:95) argues that the fourth dimension, as the plane upon which all phenomena are arranged, is what 'metaphysical philosophy' refers to as Now Time, or, the existence of everything in a single present moment. Mondrian (1986b:108) appeals to this particular logic in relation to consciousness of the universal, arguing that things do not cease to exist because we can no longer see them. Four-dimensional bodies, the intangible 'forms' of the concrete phenomena we encounter, located in a higher dimension, can be recast as the Platonic Forms, which Mondrian sought to represent visually.¹²

It is important to note that, in positioning time as a spatial phenomenon, time itself is obliterated. This nullification of time is also mirrored in Mondrian's conception of utopia as the achievement of perfect equilibrium. Once equilibrium has been attained, no further developments can be seen to affect the constitutive dualities, which have been eliminated in their mutual cancellation. For Mondrian (1986c:136), unbalanced dualities exist only in time and space, making them (time and space) inimical to his utopia. This characteristic of timelessness is also noticeable in traditional utopias, such as More's *Utopia*: in a perfected

¹¹ Linda Henderson (1983:32, 25) discusses Mondrian's abstraction in terms of a mystical conception of the fourth dimension, referring to it as hyperspace philosophy.

¹² Mondrian (1986b:104; original emphasis) explains: "*Deep within the mutable is the immutable, which is of all time and is manifested as ... universal beauty.* The goal of the New Plastic is to bring this out clearly".

society, there is no alternative future to work towards. The ideological differences between traditional utopias and contemporary (late modern) utopias is crucial, and it is therefore necessary to distinguish between these two broad categories. In this study, utopias formulated before the emergence of counter culture in the west in the mid-twentieth century, are referred to as classical or traditional utopias, and later utopias are characterised as late modern utopias. Utopias formulated after the mid-twentieth century can include elements of traditional utopias, such as the prevalence of coercion and control, but can also deviate from traditional utopias, as dystopia does. Rolland Munro (2002:138) notes that the classical utopia "seeks to elide time" in order to "'stay' its wreckage". Classical utopias are exempted from change, are nowhere in geographical terms, and suspended in time (Mumford 1965:275; Dahrendorf 2008:103-104; Shklar 1965:370). Mondrian's utopia can thus be regarded as a classical utopia, where both historical time and geographical (concrete) space have been eradicated.

More ominously, classical utopias are also indexed by exclusion and coercion. There is a fundamental connection between Mondrian's conception of utopia, and utopia as an instrument of sociopolitical othering. Mumford (1965) identifies the structural link between the tyrannical utopia and the originary city as the necessity for enforced order in both. It is, according to Mumford, this ontological confluence (between utopia and the city), that accounts for utopia's inherently authoritarian aspect, of which Plato's *Republic* is exemplary. Mumford (1965:272) describes the *Republic* as "the prototype of the fascist state". Taking into consideration the confluence of the ordered city / utopia and the draconian measures needed to ensure order in both, Mondrian's insistence on essence and abstraction, the universal, the whole, on balance and harmony, takes on a more sinister aspect. A closer reading of Mondrian's thoughts on Neoplasticism foregrounds not so much harmonious order as exclusion and subjugation of the other.

Mondrian clarifies his conception of Neoplasticism by means of innumerable references to intersecting dualities. For instance, he contrasts matter with mind as well as with spirit, and also contrasts spirit and nature (Mondrian 1986b:96; 1986c:135; 143). The conflation of the various dualities is demonstrated in his assertion that the "opposites" expressed in Neoplastic painting can also be seen ... as "outwardness and inwardness, as nature and spirit, as individual and universal ... as *female and male elements*" (Mondrian 1986a:64; original emphasis). Mondrian regards Neoplastic compositions as representative of pure

balance. However, an inconsistency in argument can be identified in that he maintains that the notion that the universal, or the whole, can only be presented by one aspect of the whole (namely, its abstract manifestation), as described above. Such an inconsistency reveals his bias and partiality.

Similar contradictions, as well as an essentialising perspective, reoccur in Mondrian's writing. Mondrian (1986a:65) observes that "the female element must become related to the male element and conversely [vice versa]", suggesting reciprocal interaction between the contrasting elements. However, contradictorily, Mondrian (1986c:137; original emphasis) observes of the female element: "The feminine and the material rule life and society and shackle spiritual expression ... A Futurist manifesto proclaiming hatred of *woman* (the feminine) is entirely justified". Seeking to explain why rectangles of primary colour in his studio evoke beauty on a higher level than colour in nature can, he notes: "Naturalistic flowers are for children and the feminine spirit. Flowers best express the outward, the female. Here [in the studio] the feminine is expressed more *inwardly* ... [it is] interiorized ... pure" (Mondrian 1986b:118; original emphasis). It is clear that for Mondrian, only the 'interiorised' (that is, the masculinised) feminine is acceptable: in an 'equivalent' composition, the feminine other has been negated rather than reciprocally balanced.

Besides elimination of the feminine, advancement toward an ideal society is also envisaged as the progressive mastery of material existence, of nature, of the subjective, the individual and the particular, of youth, as a collation of the artist's statements shows: "*nature misleads us ... makes us forget ... the universal*"; "As man matures, he ... oppos[es] physical and natural matter"; "[W]hen the *complete vision of things as a whole* is finally achieved, the particular no longer matters"; Neoplastic art embodies the "absolute and annihilating opposition of [the] subjective"; "abstract plastic neutralizes the individual ... The new spirit abolishes *the particular*"; "*the New Plastic is for adults*"; "Who is young is unconscious" (Mondrian 1986a:49; 1986f:207; 1986c:142, 134, 139; 1986b:105; 1986h:383; original emphasis). This dismissal of one half of the 'balanced' opposites crystallises into a compulsion to eradication in Mondrian's (1986a:68; original emphasis) insistence that "[b]ecause harmony in ... nature ... is very relative, *man is compelled to bring it to a constant and determinate expression* – in one way or another". Such a reading of Mondrian's stance toward the other thus indicates that his utopia is established not through harmonious balance between two equally valued opposites, but through the obliteration of

the other by the same, that is, by the "the male – or spirit – [which] is pure" (Mondrian 1986a:67).

Based on this critical assessment of Mondrian's utopia of 'harmony', it cannot be regarded as a zone conducive to productive cultural pluralism. When Mondrian (1986h:369) describes the metropolis as the apogee of human culture, he, again dismissing difference, intimates that there is only one human culture. Similarly, Mondrian (1986h:369) asserts that internationalism, rather than nationalism, unifies humanity. Such a stance seems to represent a progressive endorsement of historical development away from parochial, nationalist consciousness and the geographic destabilisation (in the form of war), that such consciousness engenders. Bloch (2000:236) similarly denounces nationalism as "the junk of heraldry ... [the] coarse and backward ... pathos of the autochthonous". However, if the unified humanity Mondrian envisages is to be established through the same dynamic by means of which 'harmony' is instituted, it follows that such a society can only be founded upon perpetration of the grossest acts of coercion. The history of the establishment of Empire and of regionally 'unifying' endeavour (or regional expansion), bears witness to the worst excesses that utopia has, correctly, been accused of. Mondrian's utopia is thus interpreted to be othering and antithetical to sociocultural pluralism. An analysis of the means by which order is established in societies, seems to indicate that sociocultural harmony is indeed structurally indexed by systemic violence.¹³ Such violence is paradoxically *denied*, and simultaneously *justified* as an ends to a means (of establishing harmony, or order). Mondrian can be seen to employ both strategies in his endorsement of harmony.

Mondrian's utopia has thus far been read in terms of: the sociopolitical nature of utopia as a city; Platonic thought relating to the abstract and the universal; the Hegelian whole and the radical unity of opposites; as placeless and timeless; and as othering and coercive. His utopia can furthermore be described in terms of its stasis, again despite his insistence that his utopia is dynamic. Mondrian (1986g:252; original emphasis) asserts that "the equilibrium in new art is not a static state without action, as is generally thought but, on the contrary, a *continuous and mutually annihilating opposition of equivalent but unequal elements*".

¹³ In *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek (2009:8-13) highlights the machinations of systemic violence, which he refers to as objective violence: that is, violence perpetrated by the state but ideologically normalised to the point of invisibility.

However, in the same way that Hegel conceives of the dialectical process as pressing on toward a final, all-encompassing Absolute,¹⁴ Mondrian frames Neoplastic art as representative of a developmental terminus for art and for humanity. Neoplasticism is claimed to have achieved "*complete* expression" of "the *most* profound reality" (Mondrian 1986c:137; emphasis added). Mondrian (1986c:137) furthermore claims: "There was a moment in the past when all varieties of the old were 'new' ... but they were not *the new*".

Neoplasticism, thus, represents the zenith of art, a final phase in which newness has reached an end-state, in congruence, once more, with the changelessness of traditional utopias. Mumford (1965:275) explains this aspect of utopia as follows: "To fulfil its ideal ... [utopia must be] immune to change: once formed, the pattern of order remains static ... From the first, a kind of mechanical rigidity afflicts all utopias ... All ideal models have this same life-arresting, if not life-denying, property". The stasis in Mondrian's utopia could, using Bloch's (2000:20) terminology, be described as "an ultimately hostile geometry [reflecting] the volition to become like stone". Significantly, Deleuze and Guattari (1993:301) describe Mondrian's abstract compositions as "pure, absolutely deterritorialized landscape[s]", interpreted here as negative deterritorialisations. To clarify, Deleuze and Guattari (1993:586) distinguish between three types of deterritorialisation, namely relative deterritorialisation, "a positive absolute deterritorialization ... [and] absolute, but still negative and static" deterritorialisation. Positive deterritorialisation enables newness, whereas negative deterritorialisation turns "the creative line, or line of flight ... into a line of death and abolition" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:190, 285). Such deterritorialisation functions as "compensatory reterritorialization", where "lines ... form borders ... walls to which dichotomies, binarities, and bipolar values cling" and coalesces as "something totalizing that overcodes the earth and then conjugates lines of flight in order to stop them, destroy them" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:508, 190, 510). Mondrian's utopia, the landscape organised as universalised geometry, can then be interpreted as the embodiment of overcoded, striated space.

The last two aspects to be highlighted in relation to Mondrian's utopia are, firstly, the degree to which Mondrian conceived of it as imminently realisable, and, secondly, the role of

¹⁴ Hegel (1977:11; original emphasis) states: "Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is".

agency in his envisioned society. It is clear that Mondrian believed that Neoplasticism signified the dawning of a new, perfected society. However, this society was not imagined to be immediately approaching. Mondrian (1986b:102; original emphasis) asserts that "the New Plastic will *universally* prevail ... but a long time from now". Similarly, he rejects the possibility of "full collectivism for the present", regarding it to be "the dream of the future" (Mondrian 1986f:207). On a more concrete level, Mondrian gave much thought to the expansion of Neoplastic principles to the built environment, although similarly not expecting it to be sufficiently transformed in the near future. He notes: "The New Plastic today expresses in painting what will someday actually become our *surroundings* through architecture and sculpture ... A few houses have already been built that express the New Plastic ... but it will take time before these can grow into a city!" (Mondrian 1986b:102; original emphasis). Mondrian (1986d:169-171) felt frustrated that architects, such as fellow Dutch creative JJP Oud, were theoretically in favour of Neoplastic principles, yet could not be convinced that a Neoplastic conception of architecture was the only reasonable approach to constructing the built environment.¹⁵ Condescendingly, Mondrian (1986d:170) ascribed the failure to implement Neoplasticism in architecture on a broader scale, to fear and ignorance.

Mondrian's only recourse was in conducting visual experiments in his own studios, converting them into approximations of what a Neoplastic environment might entail. His two most famously converted studios were his long-time residence in Paris in the rue de Départ (1919; 1921-1936), and his second New York studio on East 59th Street, where he lived for five months before passing away in 1944, aged 72 (Holtzman & James 1986:5).¹⁶ Figures 8 and 9 depict details of his Paris studio, which he describes at length in his essay *Natural reality and abstract reality: A triologue (while strolling from the country to the city)* (1919-1920). The essay serves as a metaphor for the development of abstraction (and society), and the procession, significantly, ends in the artist's studio.

¹⁵ Neoplastic architecture is described as "a multiplicity of planes", necessarily imbued with colour "in order to reduce the naturalistic aspect of materials" (Mondrian 1986d:171). The 'proper' colours are in accordance with those prescribed for Neoplastic painting.

¹⁶ In this short time, Mondrian created extensive wall compositions with coloured cards in his signature hues of red, yellow, blue, grey and white, and constructed several items of furniture, including a desk, stool, shelves, worktable and small cabinet (Holtzman & James 1986:5).

What Mondrian attempted to achieve in his studio was the same expression of 'equilibrated relationship' that he had formulated Neoplastic compositions in aid of, but in three dimensions. The process he prescribes for the creation of a Neoplastic interior is rigorous and meticulous. In conversation with two visitors to his studio, Mondrian (1986b:111-112) stipulates the way in which the structural elements, such as the doors and windows, the fireplace, the individual panes of the windows, and so forth, should be read as the planes of a three-dimensional composition and brought into heightened relation with each other by means of selected items of furniture, correctly positioned.¹⁷ (Figures 8 and 9).

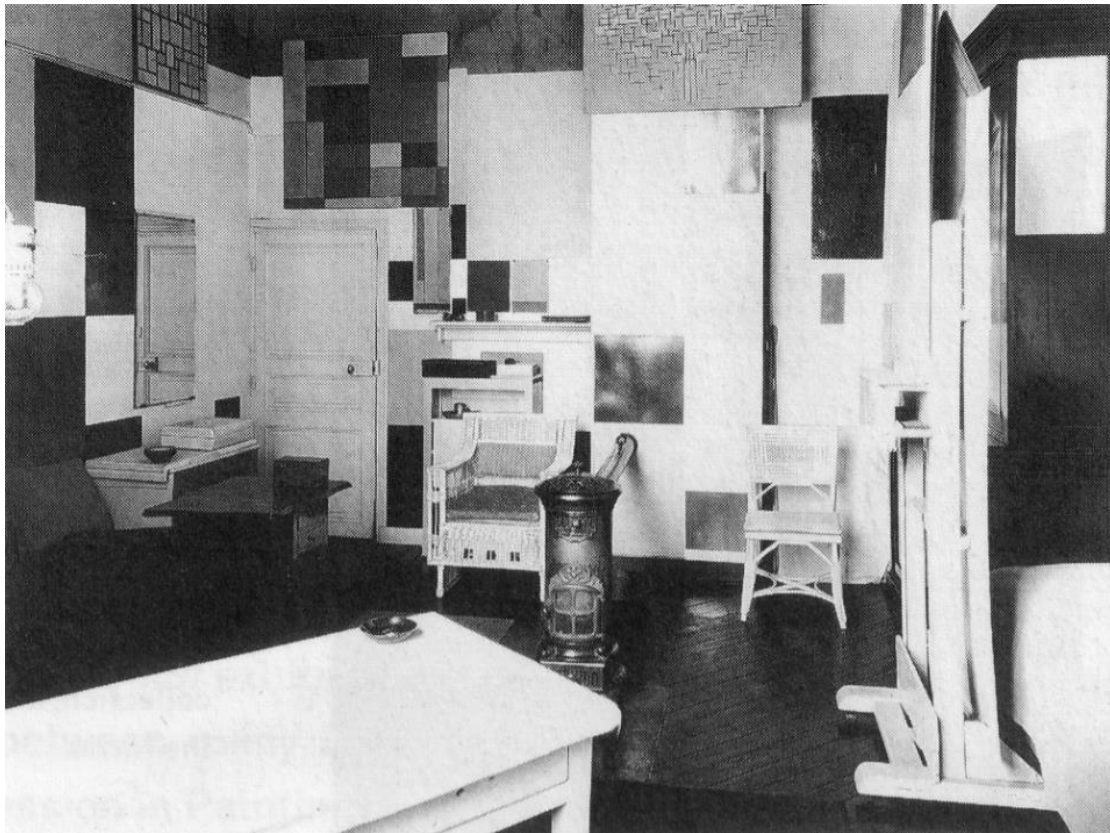


Figure 8: Mondrian's studio at 26 rue de Départ, Paris, 1926.
Photograph Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.
(Milner 1994:157).

¹⁷ The detailed description of Mondrian's Paris studio is as follows: "The loft, the projecting fireplace and cupboard already provide a division of the interior space and its planes. These planes are articulated architecturally by the large skylight in the ceiling, by the studio window in the front wall subdivided into bays, and these again divided into small panes, by the door and the loft on the rear wall, by the fireplace and the window on one side wall, and by the large cupboard on the other wall. Upon this structural division were based the painterly articulation of the walls, the placement of the furniture and equipment, and so forth ... The curtains form a rectangular plane that divides the wall surrounding the window. To continue the division, I added those red, gray, and white planes on the wall" (Mondrian 1986b:111-112). Mondrian (1986b:112) continues to describe smaller objects, such as a vermillion paint chest, an ivory coloured chair, and a "chalk-white jar" on a table, before explaining the importance of considering the effect of each item on each other object in an interior.

The specific hue of each object or plane in the room can furthermore not be predetermined, as it is affected by all other elements in the interior, and by the light, and needs to be adjusted accordingly. Mondrian (1986b:112; original emphasis) notes: "It is not enough to place side by side a red, a blue, a yellow, and a gray ... It has to be the *right* red, blue, yellow, gray, etc.: each right *in itself and right in relation to the others*". It is this sensitivity to colour, light, placement, etcetera, that is key to the aesthetic pleasure that can be derived from the subtleties of Mondrian's paintings.

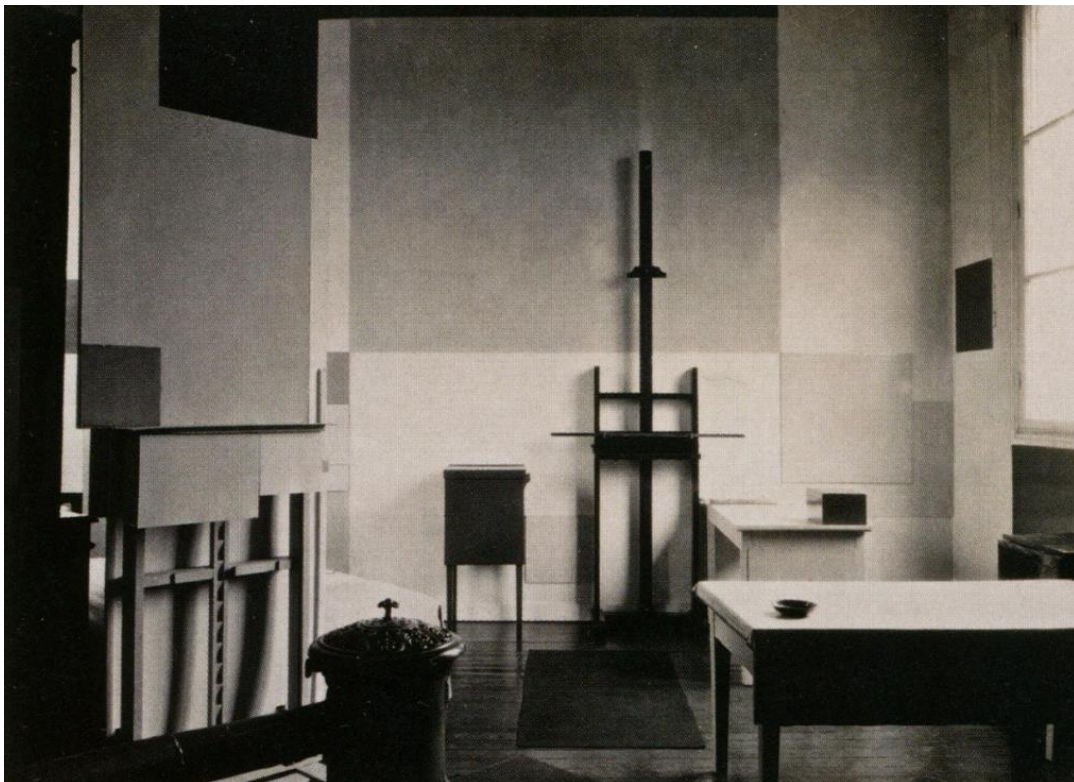


Figure 9: Mondrian's studio at 26 rue de Départ, Paris, 1926.
Photograph Gemeentemuseum, Documentation Archive, The Hague.
(Milner 1994:176).

Thus meticulously composing an agreeable environment in which he could reside and work, Mondrian did succeed in establishing his utopia in concrete terms, but on a personal, limited scale. Mondrian (1986d:169; original emphasis) ruefully observes: "What was achieved in art must for the present be limited to art ... Nevertheless, *the great beginning has been made*". Ironically, the studio itself had several diagonals, as it was five-sided and uneven, resembling a right-angled triangle with its two sharp corners cut off. Figures 8 and 9 show the studio from two opposite sides, and some of the furniture can be seen to be arranged at diagonal angles. Thus even in his most concrete utopia, compromises had to

be made. Mondrian's vision of transforming society *in toto* by implementing Neoplasticism universally was not realised. Concrete steps toward this end would, arguably, be dystopian in the extreme.

Figure 10 shows Mondrian's studio at 15 East 59th Street, New York: a much larger and lighter space, as well as rectangular. Along one wall, a mural made with coloured cards shows the same visual deviation from the pure Neoplasticism he had created in his mature paintings, and had clarified in such detail in his essays. The painting on the easel is his last, unfinished work, titled *Victory Boogie-Woogie* (1944). Not even the artist himself could sustain the vision of an eternal, unchanging utopia he had devised.

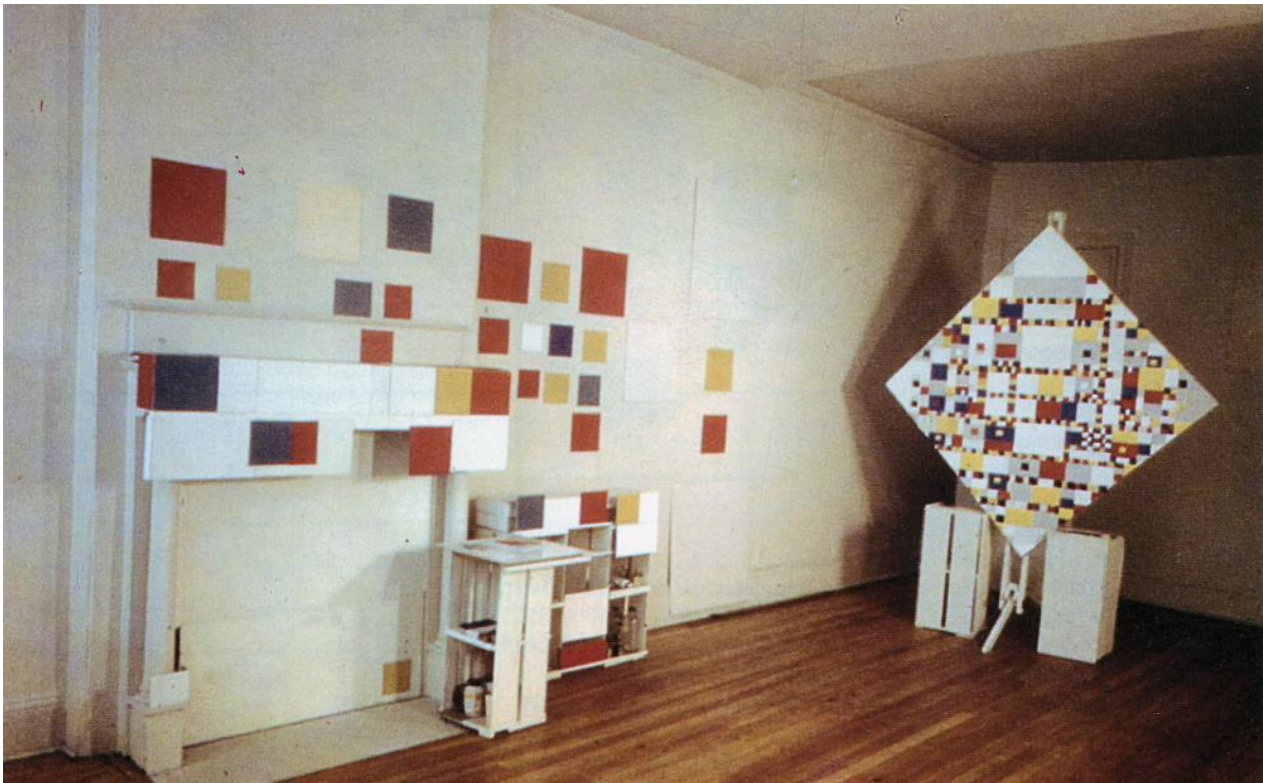


Figure 10: Mondrian's studio at 15 East 59th Street, New York, 1944.
Photograph Harry Holtzman.
(Savinio 2013).

The last aspect of Mondrian's utopia of importance to this discussion, is its lack of agency. Concerning agency, utopia can be critically appraised both in terms of the level of sociopolitical autonomy that members of a utopian society enjoy, and in terms of who the agents of change in utopia are envisioned to be – that is, who is deemed a suitable founding member of a utopia. Ideal societies characterised by stasis and timelessness

preclude autonomous inter/action, bringing to mind Dahrendorf's (2008:106) observation that the "difference between utopia and a cemetery is that occasionally some things do happen in utopia".

In Mondrian's Neoplastic utopia, there are, effectively, no agents. As for the establishment of his utopia, Mondrian (1986b:99) believed that the Neoplastic system *he*, as a 'progressive artist', had created would in some way act as the catalyst for a perfected world. He states: "The contemporary artist must *in every way lead the development of his [sic] time ... [society] is guided by intellectuals or artists, and it is to them that we must look for the new art ... To realize the new harmony is the difficult task of the new artist"* (Mondrian 1986b:109, 121, 114; original emphasis). Mondrian's conception of the agency of the artist is, however, contradicted by his Hegelian stoicism, which positions all adversity as the prerequisite for an improved future. Mondrian (1986b:107; 1986a:43; original emphasis) explains: "So we see that evil, *in terms of evolution*, sometimes is not evil. Generally, everything, good or bad, causes the new to arise ... if we can detect the *true* life behind the tumult [then] we can see *the consciously abstract spirit* at work behind all concrete phenomena". Disregarding this inconsistency, as the creator of Neoplasticism, Mondrian clearly positioned himself as the pre-eminent facilitator of an ideal society. Less cultivated individuals are not estimated to be useful for the establishment of utopia.

The worker is, according to Mondrian (1986b:121), "too exclusively preoccupied with material things", as are members of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. The general population is also regarded in bleak terms, and he ponders, "Will the backwardness of the masses make *perfect life* impossible even in the remote future?" (Mondrian 1986d:168; original emphasis). Mondrian's agent of change is thus a member of the educated elite, and, more specifically, the creative class – an extension of Mondrian himself. Mondrian's subject position, furthermore, is closer to the category of the same, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, than to the category of the other.¹⁸ Nor does he identify with the other, as his writing, arguably misogynist and classist, reveals. This aspect of utopianising praxis, that is, the position from which a utopia is conceived, can be declared to be a crucial element in

¹⁸ The same, referred to as the majority by Deleuze and Guattari (1993:105), is defined as the "the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language". This figure, in terms of head-count a minority, is classified as majoritarian on account of his sociopolitical clout. The minoritarian, by contrast, is indexed by *difference*, the embodied figure of the other (see 3.3).

determining the sociopolitical framework of the utopia envisioned. The following sub-section analyses Mondrian's utopia of the same by comparing it with the utopia of difference and dissidence, or, distopia.

6.1.3 Neoplasticism and distopia: a comparative analysis

Mondrian's utopia has been discussed in terms of three broad themes, namely its function, its form, and its underlying dynamic. It can be seen to function as an alternative world to an identifiably dystopian reality, and its form and dynamic are determined by its positioning as such. As a utopian form, the image of a city, described by the artist as Neoplasticism extended to the built environment, indicates a specific dynamic, namely coercive control. The unwavering lines between the rectangles in Mondrian's Neoplastic compositions are not lines of flight, but rather boundary walls that ward off the other. Mondrian's positioning of utopia as abstract, universal and non-material aligns it with a Platonic framework that privileges the intangible, and the establishment of utopian balance and harmony by means of the progressive neutralisation of all oppositional phenomena, draws directly on the concept of the Hegelian dialectic. Such a utopia is envisioned in terms of wholeness and unity.

Utopia, for Mondrian, is furthermore 'placed' in the fourth dimension, which can be seen to constitute 'no place', in accordance with traditional utopias, as indicated by their naming as such: no place, perfect place (see 2.5). It is hence not regarded as imminent. As a non-locus characterised by stasis, utopia cannot engender the new, but can only linger on changelessly. Lastly, in the no-place of the classical utopia, which is also Mondrian's utopia, history is eradicated along with place. Agency (situated in time and space), consequently, also evaporates. A comparison between distopia and Mondrian's utopia, shows the incommensurability between the two constructs, and helps to distinguish distopia in terms of what it is *not*.

Distopian space is conceived as liminal, the zone of cultural production through hybridisation of cultural tropes and practices, but also as concrete. Identity work and cultural work have palpable effects in the world: they establish tangible counter-zones in the form of bodies, actions, concrete places of sociocultural contestation, and counter-

discourses. Distopia, like Mondrian's utopia, is characterised by a particular conception of time, and an involution of time in distopia might be associated with the notion timelessness in Mondrian's utopia. However, the two concepts of time are disparate. Distopia is not 'timeless', but, to use Bloch's (2000:200) words, conceived as an "operative sphere of active life". As such, distopia is only achievable through active exertion, thus in historic time, and distopian endeavour is made possible by a kind of 'timeful simultaneity' – the past is an accessible reservoir of revolutionary possibilities, and the future, as alternative prospect, is concretised by hauling it into the present. The Now Time referred to by Ouspensky as the plane of the fourth dimension is also diametrically contrary to the now-time or *jetztzeit* of third space (which is also the space of distopia). Now Time as the fourth dimension comprises a metaphysical zone of changeless stasis. *Jetztzeit*, on the other hand, is status quo kryptonite, rendering the past, present and future open to their other, or, the new.

Distopia is not positioned in terms of universality, wholeness or unity, but acknowledges disparity, fragmentation and difference. To attempt to resolve difference calls on elements of utopia and dystopia as envisaged and enforced by the same, and is thus anti-distopian. In cancelling difference, Mondrian's utopia cannot be regarded as a productive engagement with pluralism, including cultural pluralism. When Deleuze and Guattari (1993:280) describe worlding as the making of a "necessarily communicating world" where one has "combined 'everything'", they are not referring to a nullifying procedure, but to the constitution of a rhizomatic zone of pluralism and difference. The process of cultural work is, furthermore, not conceived in terms of a predetermined end-state, but as destabilisation, endlessly or not, of the majoritarian power base. Cultural work is, lastly, positioned as work, and as agentic praxis.

To conclude, a comparison of the function, form and dynamic of Mondrian's utopia with that of distopia, shows that both kinds of utopia are envisioned as alternatives to a given sociocultural dispensation. Mondrian reacts to the turmoil of his era, while distopia attempts to grapple with sociopolitical equity and its ramifications for cultural pluralism in the context of the global dissemination of late capitalism. The former can, however, be regarded as utopia in its escapist form, whereas the latter is established through tactical and tangible engagement. As a form, Mondrian's utopia references the city both as literal, if abstract, depiction of an ideal metropolis, and in terms of the city's structural embeddedness in

processes of exclusion. The form of dystopia, however, cannot be predetermined, and is established by the agents at work on it.

The dynamic in Mondrian's utopia entails a mutually negating process (the Hegelian dialectic), in which otherness is eradicated, and which culminates in an envisaged end state of radical unity characterised by stasis and a lack of agency. Bloch (2000:185), critiques Hegel on exactly this urge to shore up all possible phenomena into a single, unified whole, where "everything painful, unendurable and unjust about life ... [is] developed as something safe, always occurring ... [an] eternally completed logical silence". The dynamic at work in dystopia, by comparison, is closer to a Marxist dialectic in that it seeks to effect changes in the *material* base of the status quo, which in turn affects the lived experience of the agent. The Hegelian dialectic is furthermore a process of radical assimilation, whereas dystopia is predicated on dissent, resistance to normalisation and assimilation, and newness. In essence, Mondrian's utopia is the utopia of the same, whereas dystopia is the tactical zone of the other.

6.2 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the function, form and dynamic of Mondrian's utopia which was subsequently compared with dystopia. Mondrian's mature Neoplastic compositions were read as depictions of abstract cities, capturing the dynamic of control and coercion of the first city as a utopia, and of classical utopias *per se*. This dynamic, of exclusion and nullification of the other, can also be related to the utopian project of modernity, broadly. In Mondrian's utopia, the dynamic, summarised as the drive of the same toward the elimination of the other and toward finality, is determined by Mondrian's conception of space and time, both in effect abolished in his vision of an alternative society. Mondrian's utopia is hence not conducive to cultural pluralism, dissent or agency, the central concerns of dystopia. The following chapter explores the utopia of Mondrian's fellow Dutch artist, Constant Nieuwenhuys.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEW BABYLON AND DISTOPIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the utopia of Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920-2005) is explored, again in terms of three broad categories, namely function, form, and discernible dynamic. Nieuwenhuys's conception of a suitable alternative environment and society is consequently compared with that of Mondrian, and critiqued from a dystopian perspective in order to determine Nieuwenhuys's approach to cultural pluralism, newness, dissidence, and agency.

7.1 *New Babylon*: the utopia of Constant Nieuwenhuys

The utopia of Mondrian's fellow Dutch artist, Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys, was formulated and exhibited over the course of 18 years (from 1956 to 1974).¹ During this time, Nieuwenhuys produced three-dimensional architectural models, drawings, paintings, collages, lithographs, and numerous texts regarding his conception for a reformed human habitat and social sphere. Nieuwenhuys's utopia became known as *New Babylon*, and it, like Mondrian's utopia, can be analysed in terms of its function, and in terms of the form and dynamic it accordingly adopted.

7.1.1 *The function of New Babylon*

Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys have in common utopianising world-making in the face of the ordeal of war. Nieuwenhuys, born in 1920 in Amsterdam, was 22 years old when World War II ended, and its effects had a decisive influence on his formulation of a counter-world. His reconceptualisation of the spaces in which people could live, and the ways in which they might conduct themselves in those spaces, became known as *New Babylon*.

¹ Nieuwenhuys actively worked on *New Babylon* from 1956 to 1969. In 1974 an extensive exhibition of the project was curated at the Haags Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, for which he wrote the catalogue (Boersma 2005).

As with Mondrian's utopia, *New Babylon* was formulated as an antidote to the perceived *causes* of the conflict and destruction. Nieuwenhuys contended that the War had its foundation in the exploitative dynamic of capitalism, and he accordingly framed the outlines of a reformed society in Marxist terms. Imagining *New Babylon*, Nieuwenhuys (1998g:160) implores:

[L]et us suppose that all nonproductive work can be completely automated; that productivity increases until the world no longer knows scarcity; that the land and the means of production are socialized and as a result global production rationalized; that, as a consequence of this, the minority ceases to exercise its power over the majority; let us suppose, in other words, that the Marxist kingdom of freedom is realizable.

As a member of Situationist International, founded by Guy Debord in 1957, Nieuwenhuys rejected the phenomenon of the spectacle, and wished to renew art and society through the collective creation of "modes of cultural intervention" (Debord 1998:95).² He positioned *New Babylon* as such an intervention, on an urban and even global scale. Art, as intervention, is experienced as the active co-creation of an event, or *situation*, resistant to commodification. A post-war leftist dissenter, Nieuwenhuys also believed that culture, broadly, was redundant and on the verge of collapse.³ Debord (1998:96) cites Nieuwenhuys's contention that their generation was witnessing the climax of a "cultural void", and Nieuwenhuys (1998l:236) himself felt late modern culture to be "largely destructive". From this perspective, the War was merely a foreseeable outcome of a general cultural implosion and of the capitalist system in which it was embedded. Along with capitalism and a terminally dysfunctional culture, Nieuwenhuys (1998e:132-133; 1998c:115) identified increasing automation as a threat to social stability and contentment, and also condemned the "dismal and sterile ambience" that resulted from a functionalist approach to urban development, and to life in general. *New Babylon* was posited as a solution to both: it would provide an outlet for the surplus time and creative energy resulting from automation, and also negate the utilitarian drabness of the built environment.

² Nieuwenhuys and Debord briefly collaborated on projects and publications concerning the concept of unitary urbanism before Nieuwenhuys disassociated himself from Debord and the Situationists in 1960.

³ The term culture as used by Nieuwenhuys seems to refer to the general artefacts of human creativity as well as to the dominant sociopolitical and cultural dispensation in the west, that is, to late modernity in general.

Lastly, Nieuwenhuys was confronted by the tangible reality of the erasure of large sections of cities across Europe. Nieuwenhuys (in Boersma 2005) describes the impression of witnessing Frankfurt in 1951, reduced to a "great heap of rubble, with here and there some places that had been flattened so you could walk over them like paths". The urgent need to remedy this urban decimation as well as an acute post-war housing shortage, made urbanism, according to Nieuwenhuys (1998b:111), the key social problem of the post-war period. He saw in the ruins the potential for renewal of both the built environment and the sociocultural sphere as a whole, and it was five years later, in 1956, at a congress in Alba,⁴ Italy, that the concept of a radically new world took shape in the form of the first models of *New Babylon*.

7.1.2 *New Babylon: form and dynamic*

Unlike Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys did not attempt to apply a system he had developed through his painting praxis to adaptations of the built environment, but directly sought to remake the urban landscape, and, along with it, society. Thus Nieuwenhuys's drawings, collages, paintings and prints were, for the duration of the project, created in order to augment and clarify the sociopolitical vision encapsulated in his many architectural scale models. It was as a shaper of the built environment that Nieuwenhuys approached his goal of social renewal (Figure 11), and *New Babylon*, which he described as "architectural science fiction ... [an] ambience-cit[y] of the future", pre-eminently took the form of a city, imagined to sprawl across the entirety of the globe (Nieuwenhuys 1998b:111) (Figures 12-17).

The necessity and form of *New Babylon* was extrapolated from Nieuwenhuys's interaction with a Roma community that periodically migrated through the town of Alba, north-western Italy. For Nieuwenhuys, the Roma came to symbolise a society free from exploitative labour, private property, and divisive nationalism, and he also admired their nomadism. Observing a Roma encampment, where they had settled temporarily after having been banned from the town itself, the notion of a 'Gypsy camp' coalesced for Nieuwenhuys into

⁴ The *Primo Congresso Mondiale Degli Artisti Liberi* (First World Congress of Free Artists) was organised by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, which had been founded in 1953 by the painter Pinot Gallizio and Nieuwenhuys's former Cobra collaborator, Asger Jorn (Wigley 1998:14).

the concept of a new and potentially global sociopolitical dispensation. Nieuwenhuys (1974) describes this seminal moment:

[The Gypsies] were assigned a bit of grassland on the banks of the Tamaro, the little river that goes through the town: the most miserable of patches! It's there that in December 1956 I went to see them [on] this uneven, muddy, desolate terrain ... they'd made an enclosure, a 'Gypsy Town.' That was the day I conceived the scheme for a permanent encampment for the gypsies of Alba and that project is the origin of ... a New Babylon where, under one roof, with the aid of moveable elements, a shared residence is built; a temporary, constantly remodeled living area; a camp for nomads on a planetary scale.



Figure 11: Constant Nieuwenhuys in his studio, Amsterdam, 1966.
Photograph Nico Koster.
(Wigley 1998:72).

The sprawling construction of *New Babylon* was imagined as a conglomeration of semi-autonomous 'sectors', and the evocative models Nieuwenhuys built over the course of thirteen years are the formal expressions of these key structural segments. Figure 12 shows an assortment of sectors placed side by side. In the back row, *Industrial landscape* (1959) can be seen on the left, and *Orient sector* (1959) in the centre. In the front are

Ambience of departure (1959), left, with the *Yellow sector* (1958), to the right. Figures 13 and 14 show the *Large yellow sector* (1967) and *Red sector* (1958), respectively.

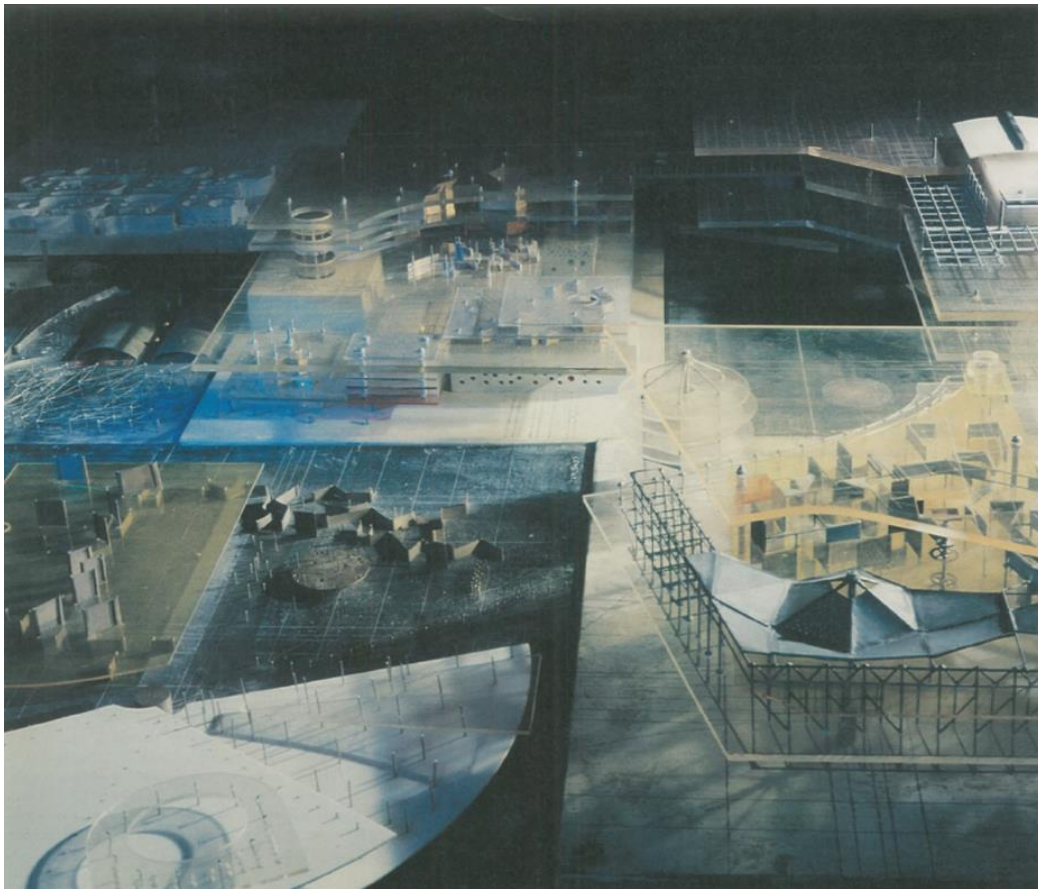


Figure 12: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Combinatie van sectoren* (Combination of sectors), 1958-1959.

Iron, aluminium, copper, ink on plexiglass, oil on wood, variable dimensions.

Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys.

(Wigley 1998:210).

Each sector comprises a hub, compared to a link in a system of intersecting chains that ultimately form an irregularly strung together "decentralized, reticular structure" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:162; 1998e:134) (Figure 15). The proliferation of interconnected sectors would ultimately constitute a mega-city, which "might eventually expand to cover the entire surface of the earth" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:133). Nieuwenhuys (1998c:115) details the necessary elements as follows: "The city of the future must be conceived as a continuous construction on pillars ... an extended system of ... suspended premises for housing, amusement ... production and distribution, leaving the ground free for the circulation of traffic and for public meetings" (Figure 16).

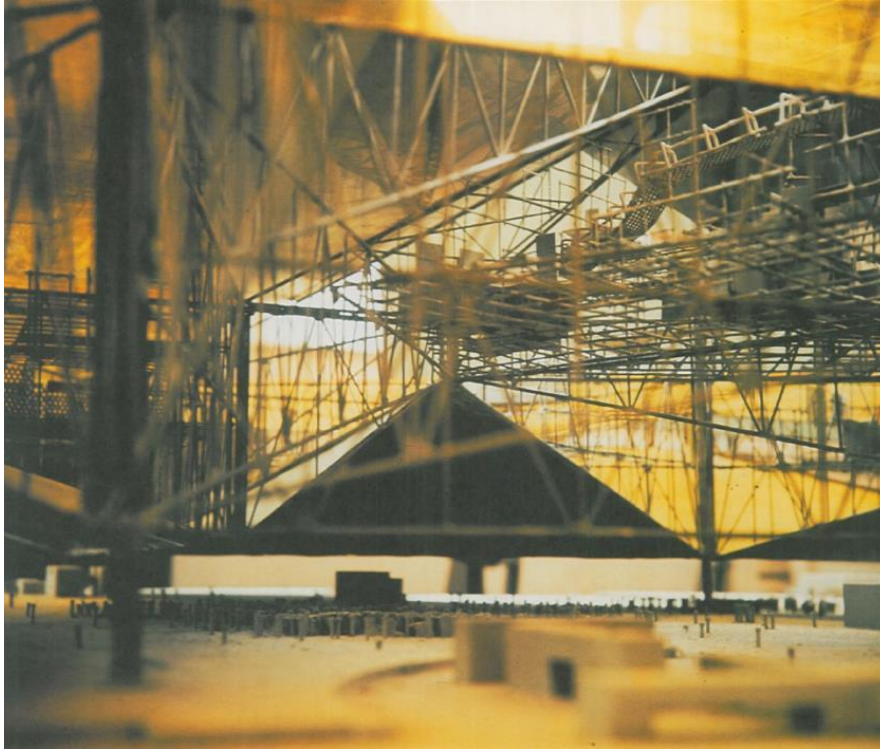


Figure 13: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Grote gele sector (Large yellow sector)*, 1967. Iron, aluminium, copper, plexiglass, oil on wood, 38 x 131 x 155 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys. (Wigley 1998:181).

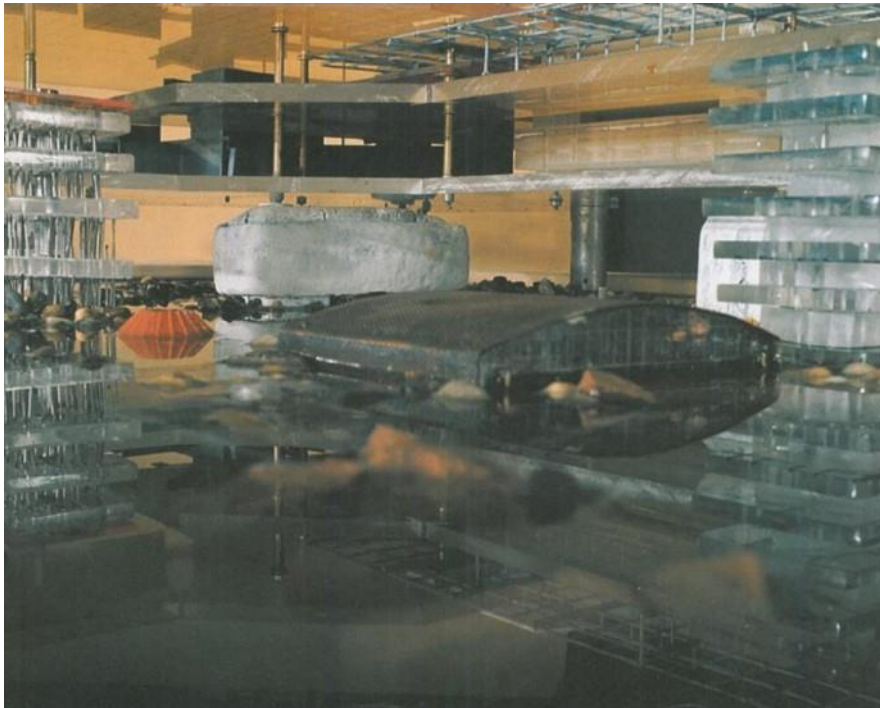


Figure 14: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Rode sector (Red sector)*, 1958. Iron, steel, aluminium, copper, ink on plexiglass, oil on wood, 24 x 96.5 x 77.5 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph Har Oudejans. (Wigley 1998:94).

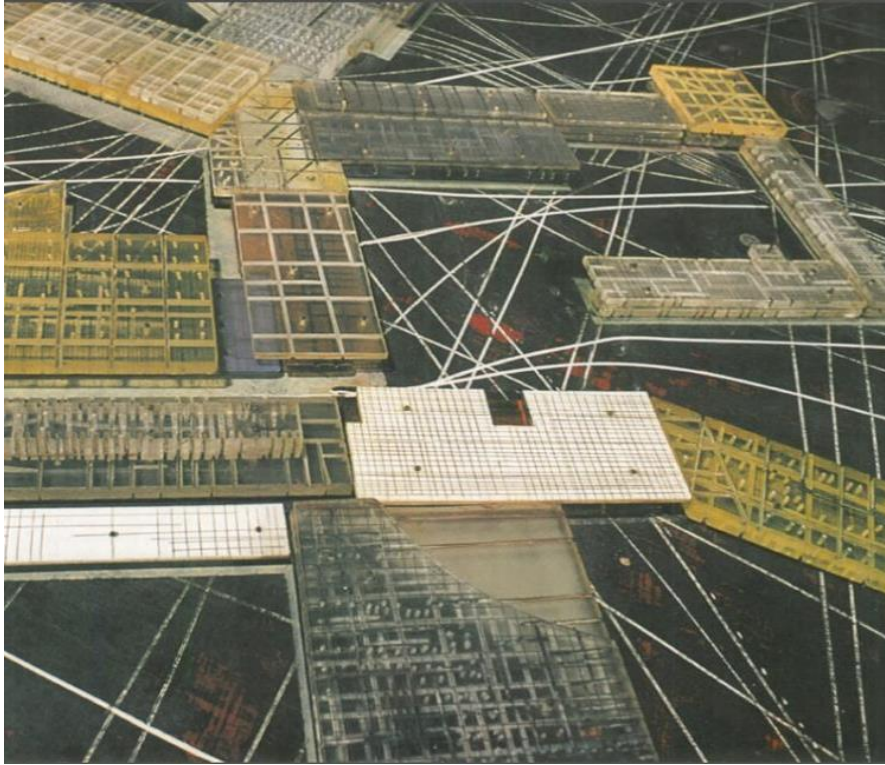


Figure 15: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Groep sectoren* (*Group of sectors*), 1959. Iron, copper, ink on plexiglass, oil on wood, 4.5 x 100 x 100 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph Bram Wisman. (Wigley 1998:121).

Each sector is envisaged to range in size between ten and twenty hectares, suspended fifteen or twenty meters above ground, and thirty to sixty meters in total height, with an average population of 10 million inhabitants (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:162; 1998e:134). The sectors are constructed in varying levels, "accessible everywhere by stairs and lifts" (Nieuwenhuys 1998c:115) (Figure 17). In between the sectors are dispersed, as necessary, "entirely automated units of production ... transmitter antennae ... drilling rigs, historic monuments, observatories and other facilities for scientific research ... [and] livestock" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:161). Automated factories are built underground (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:134). In keeping with its designation as a 'camp for nomads', only 15 per cent of the sectoral space is consigned to permanent housing, the remainder comprising communally traversed social space (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:135).

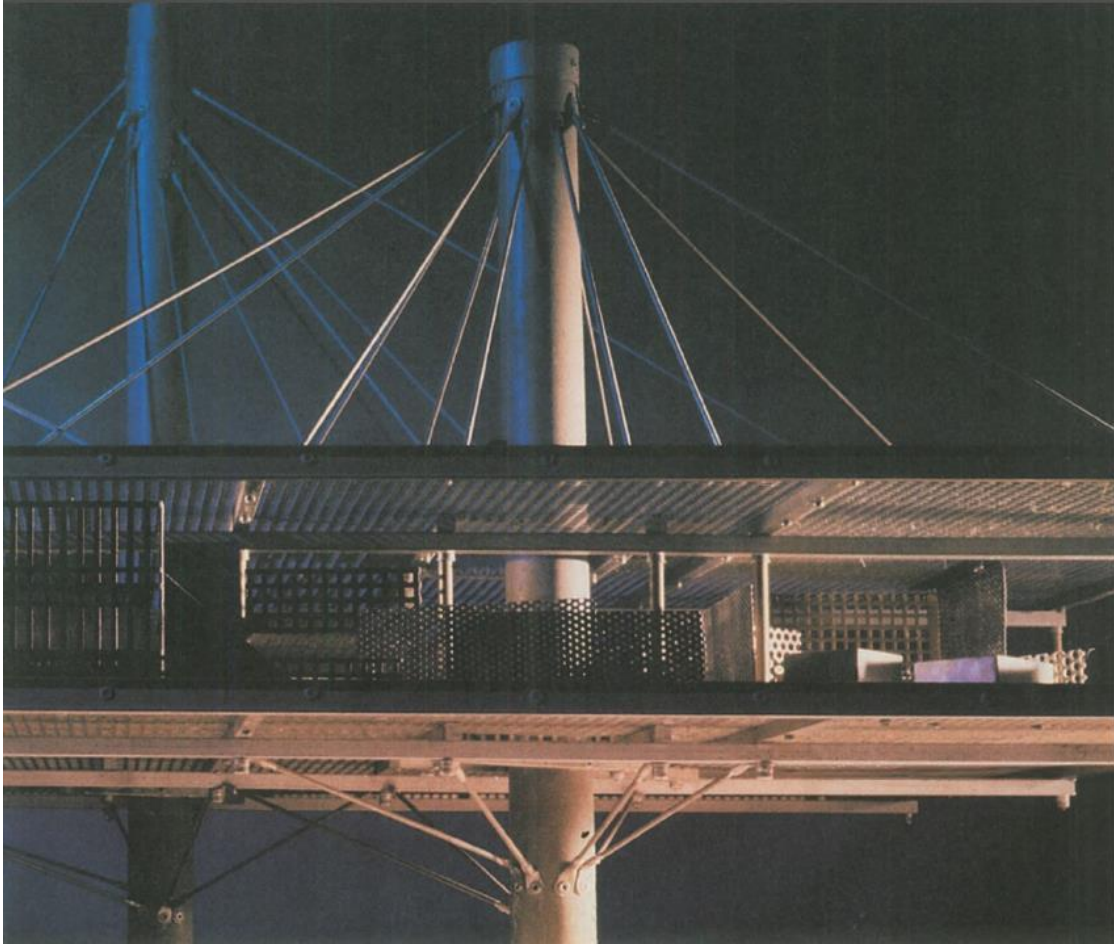


Figure 16: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Hangende sector (Hanging sector)*, 1960. Iron, steel, copper, aluminium, blind rivets, oil, 100 x 130 x 80 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys (Wigley 1998:127).

Figure 17: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Klein labyr (Small labyrinth)*, 1959. Iron, aluminium, plexiglass, oil on wood, chalk, 70 x 35 x 56 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys (Wigley 1998:104).

Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys share a disregard for nature in their respective utopias. Nieuwenhuys (1998d:122; 1998e:134) states of *New Babylon* that "nowhere has it been sought to imitate natural conditions ... There is no attempt to effect a faithful imitation of nature". To be an inhabitant of *New Babylon* is to have successfully defeated nature as well as the climate, both "injurious to human beings" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:133). The envisioned habitat is only feasible under conditions of the total control and utilisation of natural resources, and the terminology Nieuwenhuys uses to describe nature echoes Mondrian's insistence on domination and subjugation. Nieuwenhuys (1998e:133) recommends "a total exploitation of the earth's surface, with unlimited development", and perniciously asserts that "nature cannot remain inviolate". He considers technology essential to this end, again echoing his fellow utopian's enthusiasm for the machine and for progress. Yet, whereas in Nieuwenhuys's (1998f:142) estimation, technology had represented "old fashioned" discipline to the members of De Stijl, for him it signified the possibility of a life of unlimited liberty. Nieuwenhuys (1998e:135) expressly positions *New Babylon* as a technologically enabled society "based on freedom".

The city of the future is described in great technical detail in numerous articles written by Nieuwenhuys. The point of the specified details is, for him, however, the particular way of life it enables, indexed by reconceptualised social relationships and by the notion of life as play. Nieuwenhuys (1998e:132; 1998g:160; 1998i:174; 1998j:201) uses the term *homo ludens* – playing human – to refer to the inhabitants of his imaginary world.⁵ The notion of life as ceaseless play and interaction with the built environment is furthermore related to the concept of the *dérive* as developed by the Situationists.⁶ Debord (1958) describes the *dérive* as follows:

One of the basic situationist practices is the *dérive*, a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects ... In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there ... the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself ... slipping by night

⁵ Nieuwenhuys wrote an extensive manuscript, never published, between 1960 and 1965 on his conception of life as play, titled *Opstand van de homo ludens* (The revolt of homo ludens). The concept of *homo ludens* is derived from the work of Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga, whose eponymous book appeared in 1935.

⁶ The term *dérive* means 'to drift' or 'drifting', and can be used as both a verb and a noun (Knabb in Debord 1958).

into houses undergoing demolition, hitchhiking nonstop and without destination through Paris during a transportation strike in the name of adding to the confusion, wandering in subterranean catacombs forbidden to the public, etc. – are expressions of a more general sensibility which is no different from that of the *dérive*.⁷

The *dérive* is thus an excursion in which the physical, psychological and emotional experience of traversing a given city, suburb or even street, results from awareness of the "psychogeographical contours ... currents ... and vortexes" that regulate day-to-day passage (Debord 1958). The information gleaned can be used to draw up psychogeographical maps, which have no relation to official urban maps that delineate only infrastructure and utilities. Figure 18 shows such a map, or 'guide', of Paris, created by Debord and his Situationist colleague Asger Jorn. The *dérive* is conceived as a primarily urban activity, best practiced in "the great industrially transformed cities – those centers of possibilities and meanings" (Debord 1958). It is significant that Nieuwenhuys originally intended to name his urban project "Dériville" (Wigley 1998:16).



Figure 18: Guy Debord, Asger Jorn, *Guide psychogeographique de Paris* (*Psychogeographical guide of Paris*), 1957. Collage, dimensions unknown. Photograph Rijksbureau voor Kunst-historische Documentatie, The Hague. (Wigley 1998:19).

⁷ According to Debord (1958), it is possible to drift alone, but the activity is preferably undertaken by several groups of two or three people who can subsequently correlate their psychogeographic experiences. The drift can last a few hours or a number of days, and cover an area ranging from that of a large city, to a single urban block. Debord (1958) sites an extreme case of "a static-dérive of an entire day within the Saint-Lazare train station".

Life as play in *New Babylon* determines both the social relations of the inhabitants and the particular form of its structure, which is conceived as a never-ending, co-constructed labyrinth,⁸ open for exploration. A city plan of the hypothetical Northern region of *New Babylon* closely resembles a psychogeographical map, with vectors of movement in between the randomly sprawling macro-structural sectors (Figure 19).

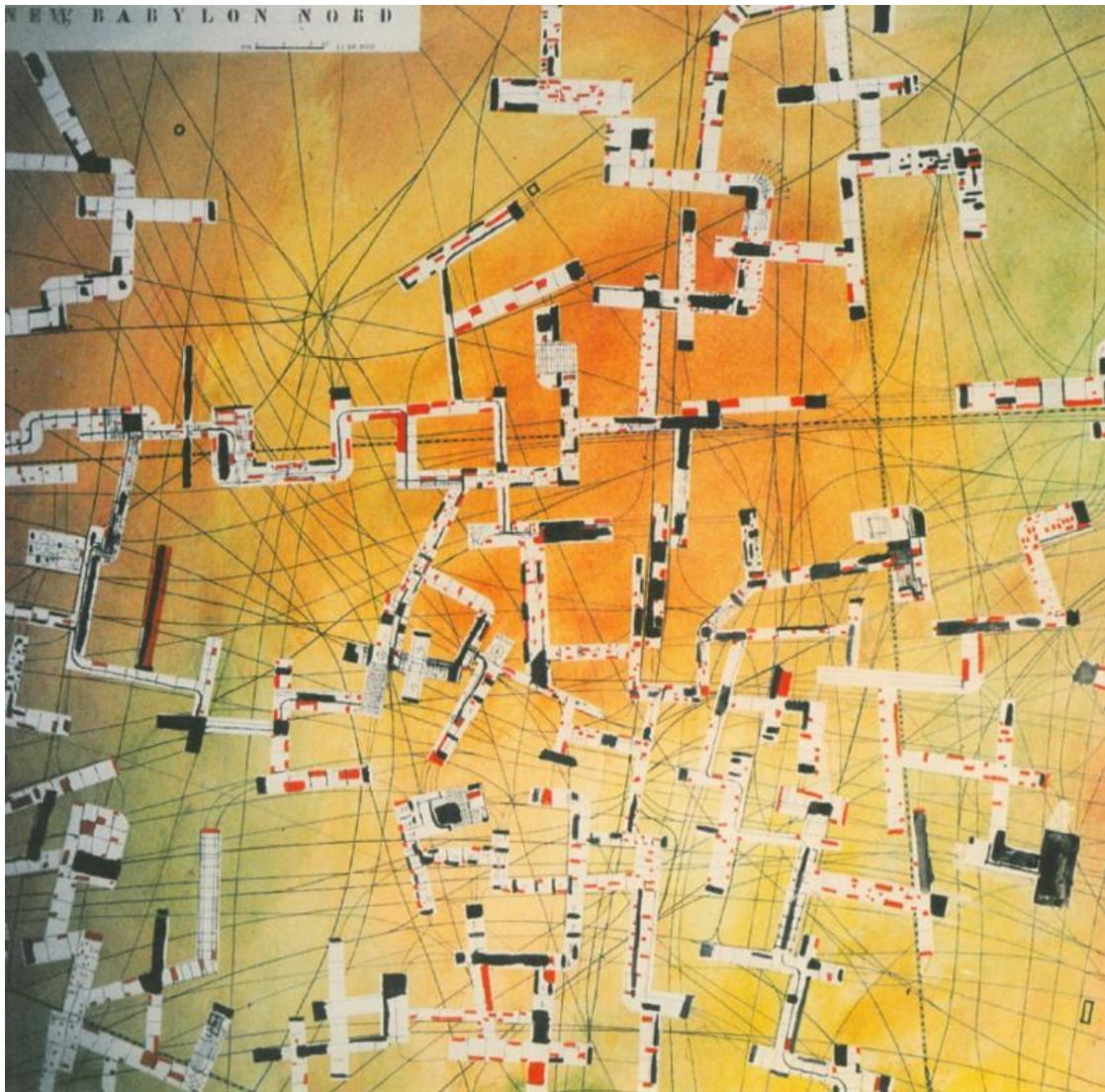


Figure 19: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon nord* (*New Babylon north*), 1959. Watercolour and collage, 100 x 100 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. (Wigley 1998:117).

⁸ Debord also mentions the impact of psychogeography on the evolution of labyrinthine architecture. He states: "Within architecture itself, the taste for *dériving* tends to promote all sorts of new forms of labyrinths made possible by modern techniques of construction ... in March 1955 the press reported the construction in New York of a building in which one can see the first signs of an opportunity to *dérive* inside an apartment" (Debord 1958).



Figure 20: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Mobiel ladderlabyrinth* (Mobile ladder labyrinth), 1967.
Brass, ink on plexiglass, oil on wood, 73 x 96 x 67.5 cm.
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.
Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys.
(Wigley 1998:187).

Rather than encouraging passive experience, the structural elements of the maze-like city, including ramps, walls, bridges, stairs, floors, and furnishings, are movable and interchangeable, subject to the impulses of the nomadic travellers who happen to be traversing the sector (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:135; 1998d:122). The labyrinthine space of *New Babylon* is conceived as a flexible environment enclosed inside the macro-structural sectors, which are permanent and fixed (Figures 20 and 21). Nieuwenhuys (1998e:132) describes this artificial environment as wholly independent of the external climate and geography, with the light, sound, temperature, size and ambience of any given segment, or labyrinth, determined by the actions and interactions of the trekking nomads, at any given time. Such control over every aspect of the ambience is made possible by a system of

adjustable regulators. Nieuwenhuys (1998g:165) elaborates: "Each sector will be provided with the latest equipment, accessible to everyone ... at the service of ludic activity ... each person can at any moment, in any place, alter the ambience by adjusting the sound volume, the brightness of light, the olfactive ambience or the temperature". In this way, advanced technology allows New Babylonians, "[w]ithout the passivity of tourists ... [to] act upon the world, to transform it, recreate it" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:162). *New Babylon* is, essentially, a technologically enabled maze of "permanent variation", meant to be traversed as an adventure (Nieuwenhuys 1998d:122). As such, it is, for Nieuwenhuys (1998j:201; 1998g:162; 1998e:135), more than a structural hull – it is the extended playground for a nomadic life of creativity and freedom, conceived as an urban scale *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

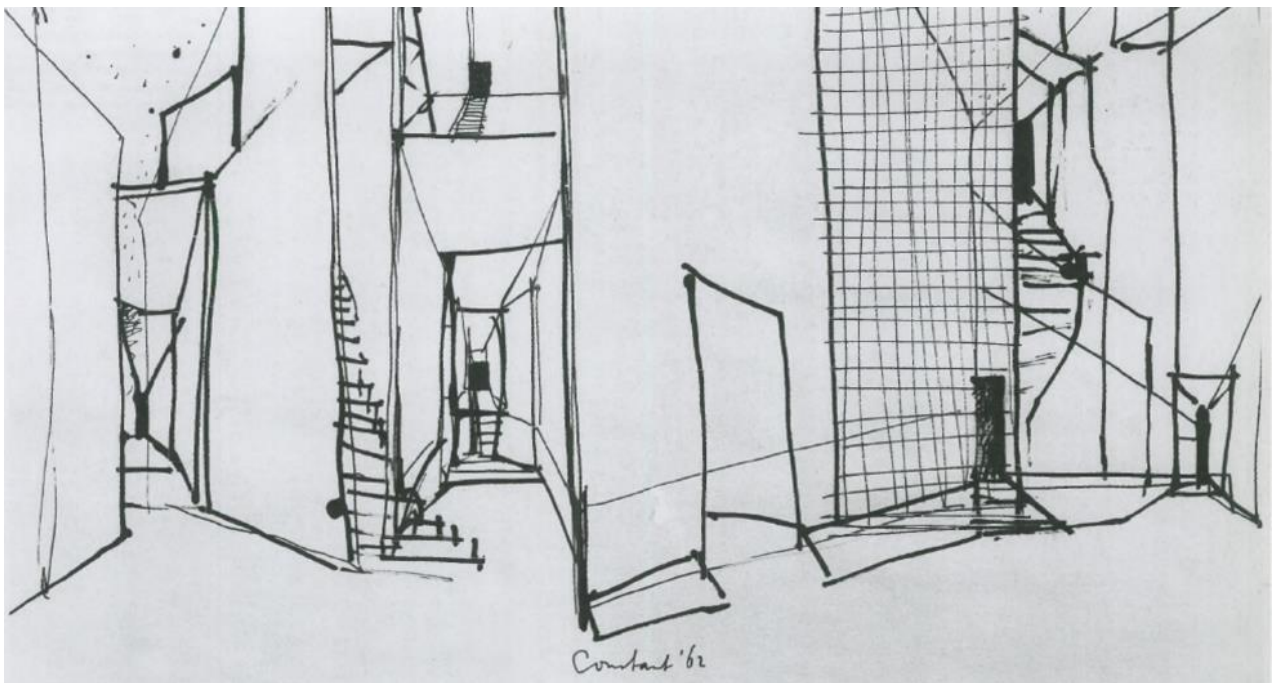


Figure 21: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Interieur met trappen en deuren* (Interior with steps and doors), 1962. Ink on paper, 27.4 x 45.6 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. (Wigley 1998:145).

Describing the structural aspect of his utopia in such detail, and building models to clarify his vision, is, for Nieuwenhuys (1998g:165), about delineating an alternative *social* system, indexed by personal independence and the freedom to permanently create and play. Such a fundamental level of autonomy is based, firstly, on the premise of full automation, which obviates both working life and the subsequent need to live in one place (Nieuwenhuys 1998c:115; 1998e:133). Secondly, Nieuwenhuys re-imagines interpersonal social relations

by rejecting the moral and economic justifications for the traditional family unit. In *New Babylon*, what Nieuwenhuys (1998g:162) regards to be the "restrictive social relations" characteristic of the nuclear family, are replaced by "more varied and changing emotional ties". Such ties are "made and unmade without any difficulty, endowing social relations with a perfect openness" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:164). New Babylonian life, is, consequently, premised on freedom from work, a fixed residence, and family ties, enabling an itinerant existence of ceaseless motion and the whimsical co-creation of the urban environment.

Nieuwenhuys's broad re-conception of the social fabric and of the urban setting it both requires and engenders, has – as with most utopias – a particular temporal and spatial mode. It is possible to compare Nieuwenhuys's framing of time and space with the utopian time-space envisaged by Mondrian. In *New Babylon*, time and space can be seen to mutually act upon each other in what constitutes a spatiotemporal matrix: Nieuwenhuys (1998k:225) notes that in the labyrinth, space and time form a "new, dynamic relationship". A description of time as it occurs in *New Babylon*, and, subsequently, of its effect on the spatial idiosyncrasies of this urban milieu, follows.

Firstly, Nieuwenhuys (1998g:160) reconceptualises time on the level of the everyday. Full automation of work eliminates the regular procession of work hours interspersed by predetermined periods of leisure. The need for ordinary time keeping becomes obsolete. It is the resulting abundance of free time that makes "a new kind of urbanization" possible, and that has the potential to effect changes in the social structure as a whole (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:160; 1998l:234). Nieuwenhuys (1998e:133-134) secondly rejects the value placed on permanence and eternity, as embodied, for instance, in traditional art, where individual artworks, as objects, are created and then treasured to ensure their longevity and ongoing consumption. The notion of eternity is more apt to Mondrian's utopia of harmony and balance, whereas Nieuwenhuys (1998e:132) denounces the conception that locates "the meaning of life beyond this life, in the super-terrestrial, the abstract, [which] is essential to that fragment of human history [that is] determined by the struggle for material existence". To this, he contrasts *New Babylon* as a "live art work" which "exists *in time*" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:133; emphasis added). *New Babylon* is thus positioned as the locus of an urban scale activation of the "temporary, the emergent and transitory, the changeable, the volatile, the variable", and the dominant temporal mode of the present is characterised by chance

and coincidence (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:133-134). It is hence the ephemeral mode of the lived moment that is central to Nieuwenhuys's utopia.

This fleeting expression of temporality, that is, time as the medium of the deployment of spatial events, co-constitutes *New Babylon* as a vast, *dynamic* labyrinth (as opposed to a classic, motionless labyrinth, which can only be navigated in a directed way). It is only through action in the present that the form and space of *New Babylon* take shape. Space is created and altered as a flow of unpredictable events in time, and time is measured in units of created and lived space. Nieuwenhuys (1998k:225) describes the *mutual* dilation of time measured in terms of space, and of space measured in terms of time – both of which expand as they amplify one another. Jointly intensified in this milieu of creativity and heightened awareness, both time and space are experienced more acutely. The *Spatiovore* in Figure 22, captures an element of the apparent spatial and temporal dynamism and flow of *New Babylon*.

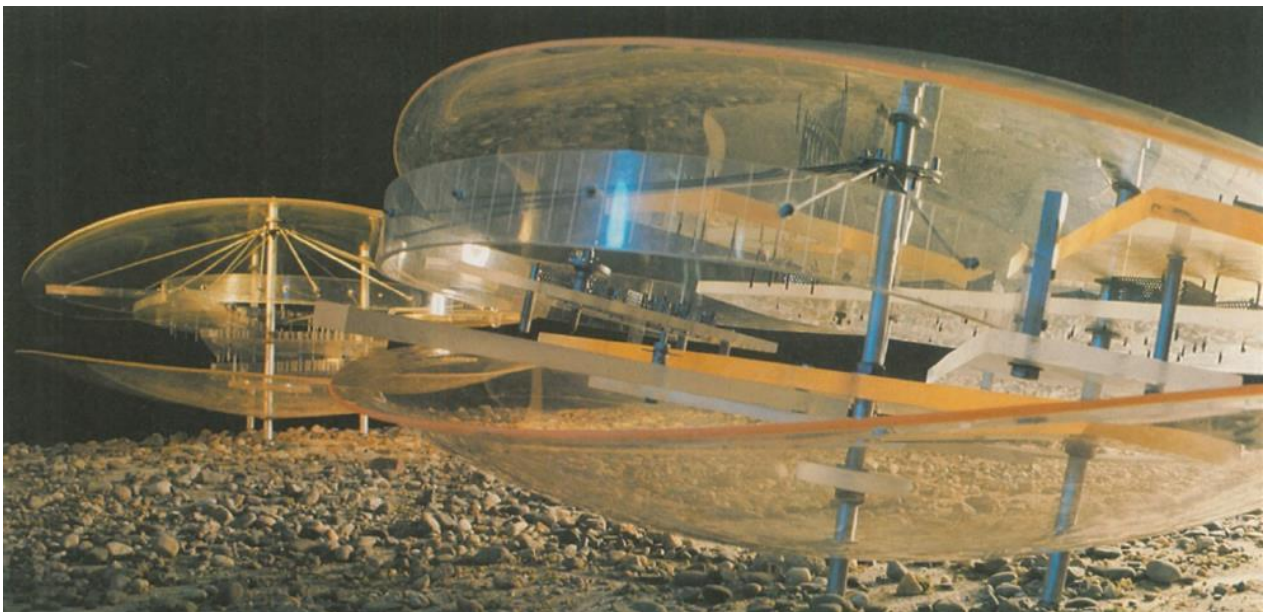


Figure 22: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Spatiovore* (Space eater), 1959.
Metal, ink on plexiglass, paint on wood, 65 x 30 x 65 cm.
Private collection.
Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys.
(Wigley 1998:114).

To summarise, for Nieuwenhuys the crucial element in distinguishing creativity as a way of life (which is the premise of his utopia), is a rejection of time in both its mundane, cyclical form, and in its normatively valued eternal form. Critical time is thus that of the current

event, and Nieuwenhuys (1998e:134) regards the event-based space of the dynamic labyrinth as the embodiment of unitary urbanism. In the *Amsterdam declaration* (1958), Nieuwenhuys and Debord (1998:87) describe unitary urbanism as the conversion of situationist events into the more tangible form of the built environment, or the concretisation of the *dérive* into urban space. As such, unitary urbanism (and *New Babylon*), are both partially tangible environment, and partially "complex ... constant activity, a deliberate intervention in the praxis of daily life" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:132).

Extrapolating from the nature of time and space in Nieuwenhuys's utopia as described above, *New Babylon* is the manifestation of a time-space matrix closer in concept to third space, as discussed in Chapter Four. In third space, neither time nor space are elided, but co-constitute utopia. In comparison, Mondrian's utopia of balance resides in the fourth dimension, where time, subsumed by space as one of its dimensions, ceases to exist. Nor is *space* in the fourth dimension perceptibly 'here', but ethereally transcendent. Conversely, third space is where identity work and dissident activity in the present creates a liminal, yet concretely effective, arena where culture is made. Nieuwenhuys has a similar conception of *New Babylon*. The milieu he delineates for his utopia (a particular kind of unity between time and space), is, according to him, "vital for culture", and *New Babylon* is expressly envisaged as "a social space in which a new culture could arise" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:132, 134, 131). In other words, the key characteristic of Nieuwenhuys's utopia is that it is presented as the only viable space in which culture can be renewed. Nieuwenhuys furthermore associates such cultural rejuvenation with the presence of the socioculturally abject. He notes: "The acculturation process takes place within the social environment: if this environment does not exist, no culture can form ... the culture-forming process is strongest in those districts where the population is looked down upon as antisocial" (Nieuwenhuys 1998h:169). Nieuwenhuys accordingly positions the time-space of *New Babylon* as an unhomely zone where culture is forged. As such, *New Babylon* becomes the 'location of culture', or third space. However, important differences exist between Nieuwenhuys's utopia and third space, as clarified below.

As a zone of cultural alterity, *New Babylon* also exhibits heterotopian qualities. In lieu of the concrete deployment of unitary urbanism on a planetary scale, Nieuwenhuys singles out zones of transportation in the existing urban structure as suggestive of the space he has in mind for *New Babylon*. The conception of the alterity and social function of these zones is

close to Foucault's notion of heterotopia (see 3.2). Nieuwenhuys (1998j:200) describes what he clearly admires as a precursor of New Babylonian time-space as follows: "Among the buildings that form a city – buildings of many natures and functions – there are some that play a very special part. These buildings ... have an atmosphere of their own which deviates from that of the rest of the city ... their function is in a sense contradictory to the function of the city ... they are, as it were, cities within cities". The spaces in question "have to do with departures and arrivals – stations, harbour installations, airports", the haunts of the modern nomad, whose wanderings "are concentrated where normal city-life is least manifest" – at the city's interface with the greater global dispensation (Nieuwenhuys 1998j:200). Such spaces of transit perform the heterotopic function of subverting the dominant functionalist ordering of the city as a space in which one can only reside, work, consume, or commute. An airport, to the contrary, facilitates activity that is antithetical to the bustle of city life, and "reflects ... the atmosphere of the age that is dawning ... [that of] of the new nomad, homo ludens, playing man" (Nieuwenhuys 1998j:200-201). Spaces of transit thus represent for Nieuwenhuys not merely infrastructure, but the promise of an alternative social order *within* the existing built environment: that is, utopia in its heterotopian form.

Nieuwenhuys juxtaposes the space of the airport, and of *New Babylon*, with spaces of ordinary work and life, and this dichotomous framing can, accordingly, be compared to smooth space and striated space as described by Deleuze and Guattari (see 3.3). Nieuwenhuys (1998k:225) rejects the order and "effective orientation" of the utilitarian city, where "use of time is judged in terms of output". Echoing Deleuze and Guattari, Nieuwenhuys (1998h:169) furthermore observes: "The fact that all bureaucrats are enamoured of order, of a regulated society, leads them to destroy acculturation zones". Space for homo ludens, is, on the contrary, unpredictable and unregulated, "a toy rather than a tool" (Nieuwenhuys 1998k:225), and the dynamic space of the co-created labyrinth is the smooth space of sociocultural alterity. Negating the city grid and the social order it embodies, the sectors of *New Babylon* spread like rhizomes or like disrupted crystal matrices across the globe, and ostensibly enable equally indeterminate social relations (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Symbolische voorstelling van New Babylon* (*Symbolic representation of New Babylon*), 1969. Collage, 122 x 133 cm. Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. (Wigley 1998:203).

Nieuwenhuys's framing of *New Babylon* as the concretisation of the agentic and playful aspects of the *dérive*, is, lastly, reminiscent of the tactics of the walker, as described by de Certeau (see 3.5). The rigidity of striated (official) space is nullified by the actions of the dwellers / creators of dynamic space, who, in their nomadic activation of the environment, do not merely tour space, but "act upon the world" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:162). To be a 'resident' of *New Babylon*, is, for Nieuwenhuys, to live in a mode of spatial counter-praxis.

To summarise, time and space in *New Babylon* deviate from their ordinary framing in a functionalist urban environment based on the requirements of capitalist processes. Both repetitive work / leisure time keeping and the notion of eternal time are rejected in favour of the contingent and the temporary. The time of *New Babylon* is the present moment of direct

action, and cannot be separated from space as altered in the course of time's unfolding. Nieuwenhuys also refers to this time-space confluence as unitary urbanism: a concretisation (as the urban environment) of the playful and unpredictable event of the *dérive*. As a zone of cultural alterity and renewal, and of spatial counter-praxis and agency, *New Babylon* can be compared to third space, to Foucault's heterotopia, to rhizomatic smooth space, and to de Certeau's space of urban tactics.

The nature of time and space in the respective utopias of Nieuwenhuys and Mondrian can be compared as follows: whilst Mondrian's utopia is characterised by timelessness, Nieuwenhuys expressly invokes time as the medium through which space is both altered and created. The space in which Mondrian's utopia resides, namely the fourth dimension, is conceived as the neutralisation of chronological time in a permanent and changeless present. Conversely, time co-constitutes the spatial matrix in *New Babylon* in a way that is reminiscent of third space, as it serves as the milieu in which culture is renewed. The seemingly divergent spatial and temporal characteristics of the two utopias impact on several facets of the dynamic of these respective ideal societies, including the artists' framing of their utopias as concrete and imminent (Nieuwenhuys), or as abstract and transcendent (Mondrian).

Nieuwenhuys consistently addresses the material conditions that impact upon the sociocultural sphere: in an early Cobra⁹ manifesto, Nieuwenhuys (1948) extols what he refers to as "a fertile relationship with matter", and in a retrospective lecture on *New Babylon* in 1980, he reiterates "what we are considering here is no abstraction but a *material world*" (Nieuwenhuys 1998l:233; emphasis added). Thus, while both refuting and confirming the notion of *New Babylon* as utopian, Nieuwenhuys (in Neelissen 1966; 1998l:235; 1998e:132) unwaveringly asserts that his vision is feasible and concretely realisable. He describes his city of the future as "the optimum organization of *material conditions*" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:161; emphasis added). For Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon* is plainly conceived as worldly and material and in this sense it constitutes the opposite of Mondrian's utopia. As for its practicability, Nieuwenhuys (1998l:235; 1998e:132) declares that the preconditions for *New Babylon* already exist, and he notes: "New Babylon ... is a

⁹ Cobra was the predominantly Dutch experimental painting movement co-founded by Nieuwenhuys in 1948. It ended in 1951.

futuristic project ... Nonetheless, I prefer to call it a realistic project ... because it is founded on what is technically feasible". Lastly, Nieuwenhuys (1998c:115) sees in the city in its current form the conditions of its transformation. He conceives of the practical transformation of the existing urban environment into *New Babylon*, as follows:

The implementation of *New Babylon* is a slow process of growth of a sectoral world that progressively replaces pre-existing urban structures. At first one sees, in among the conglomerates, isolated sectors appearing that become poles of attraction ... to the extent that ... the settlement becomes disorganized. During this time, the sectors are meeting places, socio-cultural centers of a kind ... A New Babylonian way of life then begins to be defined, which takes off when the regrouped sectors make up a network (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:161).

New Babylon is thus positioned as a concretely realisable utopia in the material world, and, as such, diverges radically from Mondrian's conception of an abstract, transcendent utopia. There are, nevertheless, aspects that the two utopias have in common, including elements relating to wholeness and stasis. Mondrian's utopia is unambiguously predicated on these concepts, whereas Nieuwenhuys frames his utopia as fragmented and dynamic. *New Babylon* can, however, be shown to contradict such a framing upon analysis of its deep structure. Furthermore, both utopians invoke a similar unfolding of the dialectical process, as clarified below.

When Nieuwenhuys describes *New Babylon* as the random confluence of semi-autonomous sectors, his global city resembles a rhizomatic structure, characterised as it is by its lack of centre and by a degree of fragmentation. However, contradicting this superficial level of disjuncture, both the macro-structure, and the adjustable micro-structures that constitute the interior spaces of the sectors, are ultimately conceived as part of a systemic whole. Nieuwenhuys (1998g:161) describes the permanent infrastructure of *New Babylon* in terms that relate to entirety and completion, and states: "[O]ne will see many sectors group together, unite and form a whole ... *New Babylon* ends nowhere ... The whole earth becomes home". Similarly, the interior milieu forms an uninterrupted expanse which the inhabitants need never exit. It is "perceived from within as a continuous space ... the image of a kaleidoscopic whole" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:160). Thus both the external structure and interior spaces of *New Babylon* are conceived in terms of structural unity which is, furthermore, universalised. The behaviour of *New Babylonians* is,

correspondingly, imagined as a single, universal phenomenon. According to Nieuwenhuys (1998g:160), "[t]he culture of New Babylon does not result from isolated activities ... but from the global activity of the whole world population".

From these descriptions, *New Babylon* emerges as a closed system similar to Mondrian's utopian scheme (and to More's human-made island), with the difference that Nieuwenhuys's vision is shaped by a growing mid-twentieth-century awareness of the effects of globalisation. Northrop Frye (1965:346) notes that "Modern utopias derive their form from a uniform pattern of civilization spread over the whole globe ... world-states, taking up all the available space". The new utopias stem "from the shifting and dissolving movement of society that is gradually replacing the fixed locations of life" (Frye 1965:347). Frye captures a main difference between Mondrian's utopia and *New Babylon*, which expands to encompass the globe and serves as a habitat to an increasingly mobile world population. A map showing the expansion of *New Babylon* in the Ruhr region of Germany inauspiciously resembles a fungal growth, and visually captures the apparently inexorable aspect of globalisation (Figure 24). However, both utopias constitute a sealed system and are characterised by stasis and finality.

It seems contradictory to designate *New Babylon*, described as it is in terms of endless movement and fluidity, as static. However, resembling a hermetic and inescapable social apparatus rather than a dialectically negotiable terrain (either socially or conceptually), the stasis of Nieuwenhuys's urbanism derives not from the incessant fluctuation of its inhabitants or its micro-structure, but from the finality and singularity of its envisaged dynamic. Lewis Mumford (1965:275) summarises this paradox in observing that a society "committed to change as its principle ideal value, may suffer arrest and fixation through its inexorable dynamism and kaleidoscopic novelty no less than a traditional society does through its rigidity". *New Babylon* can, in effect, be described as a sealed *perpetuum mobile*, an urban mobility machine indexed not by its (apparent) kinetic dynamism, but by an underlying systemic stasis of *perpetual flux*. In this, it once more invokes the stultifying reterritorialization of the negative, absolute deterritorialisation described in *Plateaus*.



Figure 24: Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon / Ruhrgebiet* (New Babylon / Ruhr Region), 1963.
Ink on map, 52.5 x 63.5 cm.
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.
(Wigley 1998:153).

Similarly, whilst posited as a space of creativity and infinite change, Nieuwenhuys's utopia is, in effect, a concluded system, and the artist's invocation of Marxist historical materialism does not preclude the dynamic of finality. Nieuwenhuys (1998c:115; 1998g:161; 1998l:232) envisions a teleological trajectory for the expansion of *New Babylon* (which is imagined to develop out of existing material conditions), and also directly invokes the Hegelian dialectic when observing that "life represents not continuity but a succession of moments", and that "each successive moment disavows and erases its predecessor". However, this dynamic process is not ongoing. Once all necessary concrete and social transformations have taken place, New Babylonian society reaches an end state no less final and encompassing than the Hegelian Absolute, or the classical utopia, or Mondrian's system. Significantly, *New Babylon* is described as not only "feasible" and "desirable" (at least from the vantage point of its creator), but as "*inevitable*" (Nieuwenhuys 1998e:132; emphasis added). Thus, whereas Nieuwenhuys conceptualises his urban environment as endlessly dynamic and as

predicated on individual choice and freedom, there is no sociocultural or political alternative to the system he has devised: Nieuwenhuys's utopia ceases to adapt once achieved, and turns into a rigidly petrified dystopia. As such, the dynamic of *New Babylon* is also antithetical to newness, which, as in Mondrian's utopia, is permanently expunged once the idealised stage of development has been reached. Ironically, both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys invoke the new in the respective titles of their constructs: Neoplasticism and *New Babylon*. However, newness as truly inassimilable agentic praxis fails to materialise in either of these two social systems, once established.

Further similarities between the two utopias compared here can be discerned. Both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys are argued to approach notions of social diversity and cultural pluralism in limiting ways. Mondrian's thought and Neoplastic compositions can be seen to constitute a denial of difference in which the opposites identified by him are cancelled. As such, Mondrian's utopia represents a yearning for social harmony which is achieved by obliterating the other. Decades later, Nieuwenhuys similarly proscribes the systemic sociocultural conflict of his time, but perceives the solution to strife in Marxist terms: firstly, as the equitable distribution of resources and the abolition of class war and, secondly, with reference to Situationist thought, in terms of the rejection of functionalism and an emphasis on collectivity. These most pressing social problems, for Nieuwenhuys, are addressed and resolved in *New Babylon*, and he does not dwell on cultural diversity. On the contrary, Nieuwenhuys seems to be oblivious of the lived experience of subject positions not similar to his own as a white, male, middle-class, educated member of the creative class, and his statements on cultural pluralism are problematic, closer to Mondrian's complete occlusion thereof in utopia.

As with Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys's rejection of nationalism seems to be a promising prospect for harmonious global relations. Nieuwenhuys (1998g:161) paints a cordial picture of *New Babylon* where "there are no more national economies ... or collectivities ... Every place is accessible to one and all". Furthermore, for Nieuwenhuys (1998g:163), in a society no longer characterised by the capitalist scramble to survive financially, "competition disappears at both the individual and group level". In such a society "[b]arriers and frontiers also disappear. The way is open to the intermixing of populations, which results in both the disappearance of racial differences and the fusion of populations into a new race, the world-wide race of New Babylonians" (Nieuwenhuys 1998g:163-164). Diversity is thus de-

problematised for Nieuwenhuys, as for Mondrian, by the nullification of difference and a resulting homogeneity. When Nieuwenhuys does consider cultural pluralism, he does so solely in terms of amusement and appropriation. He notes: "Th[e] acculturation process can be seen in the interest in foreign languages and ways of life, or in foreign food. One can dine in a Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Yugoslav or Greek restaurant in Holland ... people drink wine with their meals, record shops sell folk music from all over the world" (Nieuwenhuys 1998j:201).

The insidiousness of a liberalist annihilation of sociocultural diversity, in the guise of benevolent affirmation, is similarly reflected in Nieuwenhuys's support for the practices of the tourist, notably positioned as progressive and sophisticated, that is, as the same: "The tourist introduces a new atmosphere into societies that had, until recently, a closed set of norms, thereby contributing to the downfall of those norms" (Nieuwenhuys 1998j:201). Instead of 'those norms', Nieuwenhuys (1998h:169) privileges the "the norm of creativity", not stopping to critically assess the universal desirability of his vision, but merely assuming its status as such. It emerges that what Nieuwenhuys describes as acculturation, is in effect cultural cannibalism and colonisation: the culture *he* extols will be the "culture of everybody" (Nieuwenhuys 1998f:142). Consuming 'foreign' cuisine and music is propositioned as an adequate validation of cultural difference. Yet, paradoxically, cultural difference is imagined to dissipate over time in the human maelstrom that is *New Babylon*. The other has ceased to exist. It can be concluded that neither of the two utopias analysed here address diversity discourse (or diverse lived experiences), in a constructive manner.

Lastly, similar problematics pertain to the notion of agency in both Mondrian's utopia and in *New Babylon*. Nieuwenhuys finds inspiration in Marx's exhortation to change and not merely interpret the world, and seems to underscore the importance of human agency. However, a critical assessment of the nature of the agency exercised by the inhabitants of *New Babylon* reveals a restrictive conception thereof. *New Babylon*, positioned as the sum-total of the "explorative activity of the populace", is predicated, for Nieuwenhuys (1998k:226; 1998g:165), on radical autonomy: each resident "will be able, in complete freedom, to give his [*sic*] existence the form of his [*sic*] desires". Described in these terms, agency in *New Babylon* seems unlimited. However, self-determination becomes radically curtailed when the range of activities is framed in terms of a single, predetermined way of living. It is the pure expression of creativity, expanded into a way of life, that is valued by

Nieuwenhuys (1998c:115; 1998e:132-135; 1998f:142; 1998g:162-165; 1998h:169), who excludes other forms of expression of individual aptitude and identity. This universalisation of one aspect of the human psyche is stated in absolute terms when Nieuwenhuys (1998g:160) declares that "it is as a creator, and only as creator, that the human being can fulfill and attain his [*sic*] highest existential level". Thus, the New Babylonian has social and personal freedom, but only to create and play. Even the range of creative activities is limited to the incessant adjustment of the interior environment and resultant ambient sensation, which appears to be a severely limited application of the creative facility. Nieuwenhuys's conceptualisation of the alternative forms that interpersonal relationships can take (that is, as deviations from the norm of the nuclear family), is perhaps the most promisingly subversive aspect of his utopia, but arguably boils down to the sole possible assertion of agency therein.

Life in *New Babylon*, besides being more restrictive than at first apparent, is also less egalitarian. What Nieuwenhuys (1998b:111; 1998c:115; 1998e:135; 1998g:164) regards as maximal personal autonomy is, as clarified above, predicated on the possibilities afforded by advanced technology. However, it emerges that New Babylonians are in effect still merely consumers, albeit with a broader range of choices. For instance, in describing the *Yellow sector* (Figure 12) as a "joyful ... zone of play", rendered such by its permanent colour, the *pre-determined* nature of the macro-structure crystallises (Nieuwenhuys 1998d:122). The infrastructure in question is shaped by designated members of society, namely "teams of psychologists, architects, urbanists, engineers, and sociologists" (Wigley 1998:67). In some essays, it emerges that even the ambience of the labyrinths is not manipulated by the nomads themselves, but by "situationist teams, in conjunction with the technical services" (Nieuwenhuys 1998d:122). Thus both the hull of *New Babylon* and its interior ambiances are in the hands of what seems to constitute a privileged group of citizens. These specialists comprise an elite class in what is posited as a radically egalitarian society, and perform the work of social engineers. The kaleidoscopic melange of the city takes on a nightmarish quality of predetermination and inescapability not unlike a prison (Figure 25). Nieuwenhuys (1998c:115) refers to the specialists in charge as "professional situationists" and it is possible to assume that he imagines himself in this role.

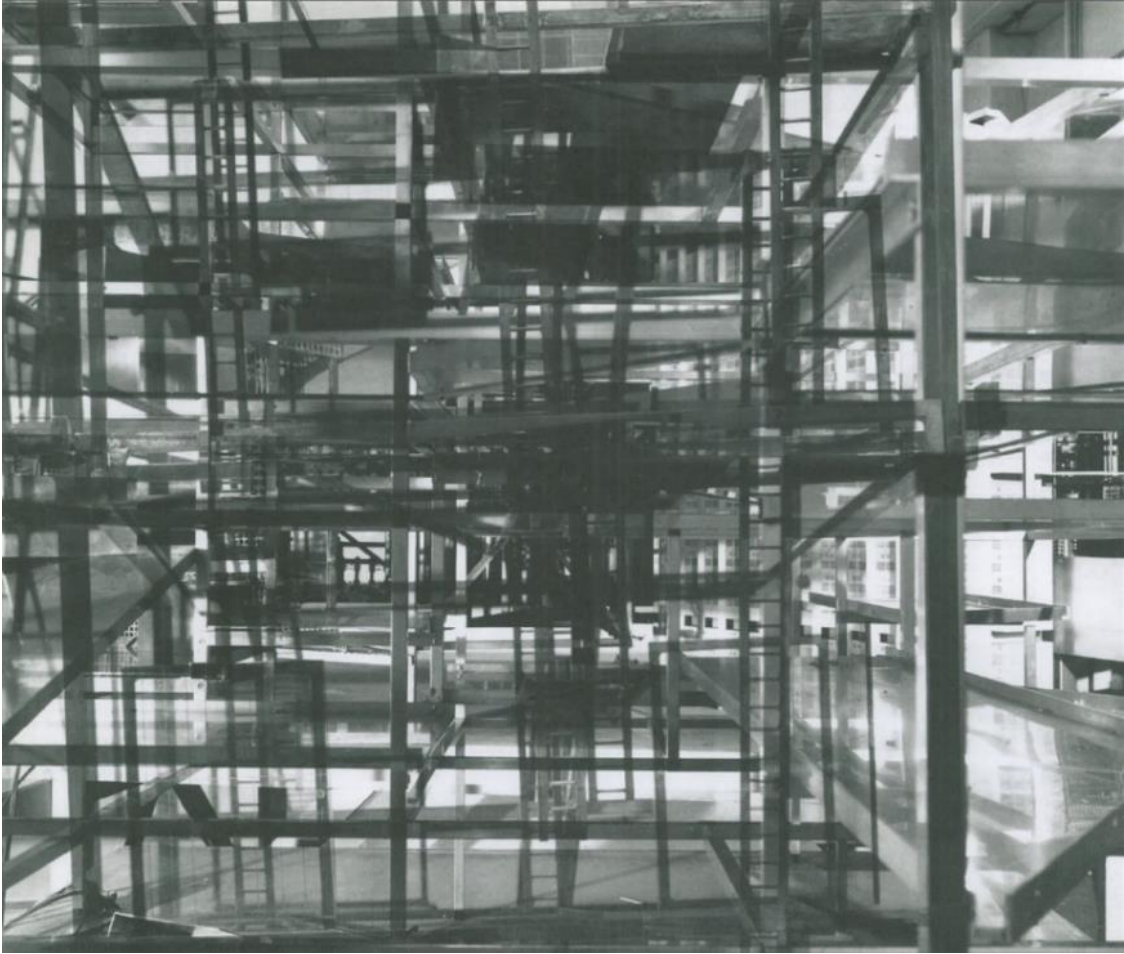


Figure 25: Constant Nieuwenhuys, Untitled. 1969.
Metal, electronics, 1.5 x 1.5 x 2 m. Destroyed.
Photograph Victor E Nieuwenhuys.
(Wigley 1998:64).

Lastly, Nieuwenhuys has very particular members of society in mind as suitable for launching his idealised urban environment, not unlike the members of society in control of *New Babylon's* structural and atmospheric elements once it has been established. Once again, a certain ambivalence appears in his designation of significant members of pre-New Babylonian society, identified as important for its future establishment. As a Marxist, Nieuwenhuys (1998e:132, 131) regards revolutionary intervention in the built and social environments as essential, and furthermore acknowledges "the bourgeoning masses, who are becoming increasingly influential". However, he has more specific members of society than the masses in mind when describing the preparatory stages of his ideal city. For Nieuwenhuys, echoing Mondrian virtually word for word, it is the artist who has the wherewithal to transform society and establish utopia. Nieuwenhuys (1998i:174; in Nieuwenhuys & Debord 1998:87) states: "The task of the artists ... is the preparation of a

culture that will activate the total creative force of all humanity ... The creation of ambiances favourable to this development is the immediate task of today's creators". More specifically, he designates architects and city planners as the essential instigators (Nieuwenhuys 1998f:142). It emerges, however, that situationists, as "explorers specializing in play and recreation", are the primary agents of change in his utopia (Nieuwenhuys 1998b:111).

Thus, like Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys can only imagine members of his own, immediate sociocultural class as adequate to the task of initiating utopia, and then of maintaining it in an ideal stasis, as determined by his personal proclivities. And, again, like Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys does not exclude a modicum of force when contemplating the necessity of establishing an alternative system. Condescending to artists in general (as they "have not known what to do with ... technical inventions"), the situationists must "force" individualist artists to change their ways and become part of the avant-garde collective (Nieuwenhuys 1998a:101; 1998b:111). Based on the preceding analysis of Neoplasticism and of *New Babylon*, it becomes apparent that there are several differences between the respective utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. However, there are also significant congruencies between their envisaged systems. A brief comparative summary of the two constructs, presented below, serves to contextualise the current reading of Nieuwenhuys's utopia against the function, form, and dynamic of distopia.

7.1.3 *New Babylon and distopia: a comparative analysis*

It emerges that Nieuwenhuys in some respects mirrors Mondrian's attempts to create an alternative world from which the suffering of war can be abolished. However, Mondrian's utopia is comparatively impractical and escapist, eliciting those aspects of utopia that are implied when the term is used pejoratively. (The intangible nature of Mondrian's utopia is not regarded as a problematic aspect in the current study). As a Marxist, Nieuwenhuys, on the other hand, pro-actively engages with architectural and urban planning discourse and praxis in order to create what is for him a concretely practicable social and environmental alternative. Mondrian's utopia is, accordingly, 'abstract', whereas Nieuwenhuys's is positioned as 'concrete'.

Both utopias can be seen to take the form of the city: Mondrian's utopia is read here as a non-figurative representation of the deep structure of the classical utopia – that is, the originary utopia as city, founded on coercive order. *New Babylon* takes the literal form of a city, but is an apparently equitable and anarchic reconceptualisation thereof, contextualised against the rising impact of globalisation. Both artists dismiss nature as inconsequential in their utopias, and assign technology a constructive role. Mondrian embraces technology in terms of an elusive relation to a generalised notion of progress, whereas Nieuwenhuys invokes it in more practical terms: *New Babylon* is premised entirely on advanced technological processes and full automation of work. Visually, the respective utopias take the form of, on the one hand, an asymmetrical grid, and, on the other, a haphazard rhizome. These differing visual manifestations of the utopias in question seem to correlate with differing conceptualisations of the nature of time and space in each, and with the respective underlying dynamics of the envisaged ideal societies. This apparent divergence is, however, contested in this study.

Space is shown to obliterate time in Mondrian's utopia, resulting in a static and permanent terrain located in the fourth dimension. Nieuwenhuys, by contrast, situates *New Babylon* in the 'real' world, and emphasises spatial dynamism as co-created by its inhabitants in the equally dynamic temporal mode of the present. However, an end-state in both constructs precludes any further evolution in either a spatial or a temporal sense. The utopias are also equally predicated on wholeness, whether in the intangible form of the Absolute, or in a more concrete, globalised sense, where there is no 'outside' to *New Babylon*. The conceptualisation of utopia in these terms can be attributed to the invocation of the Hegelian dialectic by both artists, albeit indirectly by Nieuwenhuys. Lastly, an element of authoritarianism can be detected in the utopian writings of both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. It is thus possible to read both these respective constructs – so apparently divergent – as classic and traditional utopias. Nieuwenhuys's praise of the potentially subversive aspects of zones of transit (compared above with heterotopia, smooth space, and the rhizosphere), becomes meaningless when these aspects of difference are universalised and normalised in the built form of *New Babylon* and in the globally similar activity of its inhabitants. If there is no alternative way to live life in *New Babylon* than that imagined as valid by Nieuwenhuys, no subversive cultural- or identity work is possible. Traversing *New Babylon* cannot be seen to be tactical (in the way that de Certeau describes the movements of the urban walker to be), or agentic, but, rather, repetitively

mechanical and potentially exceedingly meaningless.¹⁰ The pursuit of a "richer and more fulfilled life" in *New Babylon* seems to be conceived as a panacea for what is essentially the boredom of a privileged class within a late modern, western context (Nieuwenhuys 1998c:116). Neither Neoplasticism nor *New Babylon* make allowance for sociocultural contestation or for the tactical negotiation of interpersonal power relations.

To summarise, the utopias correspond with regard to their respective functions (as world-making in response to threatening sociohistorical realities), as well as in the dynamic deployed in each. Notably, both utopias are conceived as universal, whole, concluded, and static, and exhibit elements of coercion. Both are interpreted to be antithetical to newness, alterity, cultural pluralism, and agency. The two utopias also coincide in terms of certain aspects of their respective forms, namely as varying embodiments of the city. The identifiable differences between the constructs shrink to, firstly, the conception of utopia as ideal and transcendent, as opposed to utopia as a material and concrete built environment, and, secondly, to utopia formulated as the manifestation of order, contrary to utopia as ostensibly anarchic. However, given the systemic regulation of agency in *New Babylon*, as clarified above, anarchy, if defined as the truly autonomous self-determination of sociocultural and political lived experience, devolves merely to a surface impression of kinetic dynamism and freedom. In conclusion, even the generational rift between Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys does not amount to an appreciable difference in their respective reframings of the world and of the sociocultural interactions possible within it. Both utopias can be interpreted as idealised extensions of the subject positions of their creators as members of a privileged and socioculturally empowered class. Accordingly, the utopias are merely the *extended* systemisation of the political agency already enjoyed by the two artists as representatives of the same. As utopias, these constructs are consequently neither agentic, nor conducive to difference, or dissidence.

With regard to the similarities and differences between Nieuwenhuys's utopia and distopia – the utopia formulated in this study – the former can be read as similar to distopia in terms of its function, that is, in its attempt to address perceived sociocultural and political

¹⁰ The term 'meaning' as used here does not imply a pre-determined framework according to which activities can be judged to be more or less meaningful (which is arguably what Nieuwenhuys is doing when extrapolating one aspect of human activity as the only valid way to live), but, conversely, as an agentially negotiated value.

deficiencies. However, given that potentially all, or a critical mass of, utopias can be considered to function in a similar way, as argued in Chapter Two, this becomes an inessential similarity. In terms of form, it is not feasible to compare either of the utopias discussed here with distopia, as the latter has no preconceived form. The systemic and formal predetermination of the utopias of both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys makes it possible to interpret them as utopias of oppressive exclusion. Distopia is formulated to avoid this aspect of utopia in particular. Its dynamic is, consequently, also significantly different to that of the utopias discussed, as newness, agency, dissidence and difference, in the form of productive cultural pluralism, are the central concerns of distopia, positioned as the utopia of the politically marginalised other. It is essential to emphasise that the figure of the other does not represent a fixed population, group, or designation, as the other is a figure of variable sociopolitical exclusion in relation to the same. The programme of distopia is therefore accordingly envisaged in terms of adaptability rather than in terms of a predetermined, inflexible agenda.

7.2 Conclusion

In this chapter, Nieuwenhuys's utopia was analysed with reference to its function, form, and dynamic, and compared with Mondrian's conception of utopia. Whilst similar in terms of function in addressing problematic social constructs, from the point of view of the respective creators, as well as comparable in terms of form (the city), there are detectable divergences between the two utopias. Nieuwenhuys most significantly wished to change society in material ways, and applied a Marxist materialist dialectic to his project, in contrast to the overtly Hegelian dialectic adopted by Mondrian. Space is subsequently envisaged in more concrete terms by Nieuwenhuys, but *time* is argued to be similarly elided in both utopias. In terms of imagined interpersonal dynamic, unexpected similarities between the two utopias emerge. Despite Nieuwenhuys's insistence on the dynamism of his envisaged global city, it has been read as a manifestation of closure, finality, exclusion, and othering, mirroring Mondrian's utopia in these respects. *New Babylon* is, accordingly, not commensurate with the agency, dissidence, newness and cultural pluralism foregrounded in distopia, and is interpreted to be a utopia of the same.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE NEW WORLD EMBASSY AND DISTOPIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on the work of the third and last Dutch artist discussed in this study, namely Jonas Staal (b. 1981). A visual artist currently based in Rotterdam, Staal (2014e:25) describes his artistic praxis as comprising "interventions in public space", and in his prolific writing he interrogates "the relationship between art, democracy, ideology, politics, and propaganda". Through his artistic praxis, Staal engages directly, and controversially,¹ with Dutch and global politics and the ways in which politics (including party politics, state policies, and interpersonal sociopolitical relationships), impact on space, both concretely and conceptually. Staal's artistic and theoretical *oeuvre* is read here as exemplary of utopianising and world-making praxis, relevant to the newness / agency / cultural pluralism nexus addressed in this study under the rubric of distopia. The following sections interrogate Staal's utopia – as manifest in the *New World Summit* (2012-ongoing) and, most particularly, the *New World Embassy* (2014). The *New World Embassy* was created with Tuareg activist Moussa Ag Assarid (b. c.1975).² The analysis will once more discuss the function, form, and dynamic of the utopia in question, before comparing it with the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and with distopia.

8.1 Embassy for a New World: the utopia of Jonas Staal and Moussa Ag Assarid

The *New World Embassy* is the creation of Dutch visual artist Jonas Staal (Figure 26) and Tuareg activist Moussa Ag Assarid (Figure 27), in the form of a diplomatic embassy for the as yet unrecognised state of Azawad. The *Embassy* was officially inaugurated on 9 September 2014, in the Utrecht based Basis Voor Actuele Kunst (BAK). Its

¹ Staal has consistently clashed with Dutch Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders, notably as a result of a series of installations (titled *The Geert Wilders Works*, 2005), which consisted of candle-lit street memorials to Wilders in Rotterdam and The Hague. Wilders interpreted the works as death threats, for which Staal was arrested and prosecuted. The trials, conducted in 2007 (Rotterdam), and in 2008 (in the Dutch Supreme Court, The Hague), were regarded as further performative aspects of the artwork by Staal, who wrote his defence plea in the form of a manifesto, published in the NRC *Handelsblad* newspaper on 16 May 2008 (Staal 2008). Staal's installations were not considered to constitute death threats in either of the trials (Staal 2015/08/20). Wilders is known for his stance against Muslim communities in The Netherlands, encapsulated in statements such as "I ask the government to build a Dutch detention center for *potential* terrorists, modeled after Guantánamo Bay" (Staal 2014a; emphasis added).

² As a Tuareg nomad, Ag Assarid, born in the region of Gao, northern Mali, had to guess his age when applying for official documentation, as the Tuareg do not keep records of birth dates (Staal 2014b).

conceptualisation and creation by Staal and Ag Assarid is rooted both in Staal's preceding art praxis, specifically the establishment of the *New World Summit* in 2012, and in Ag Assarid's involvement in founding the independent state of Azawad, itself embedded in the complex and turbulent colonial and postcolonial history of what is now known as Mali. Although the focus of this chapter is the *New World Embassy*, its dynamic as a utopia cannot be adequately grasped without insight into the *New World Summit* and the historical unfolding of a West African liberation struggle over the course of a century, which has culminated in the declaration of the independent state of Azawad. A brief overview of the scope of the *New World Summit*, and of the sociopolitical events that have shaped the formation of the state of Azawad is given before discussing the *New World Embassy* as a utopia, in greater detail.



Figure 26: Jonas Staal giving a lecture in Kochi, India, in 2013, in preparation for the third *New World Summit* (Kochi). The background image shows Fadile Yildirim (on the right), representing the Kurdish Women's Movement, and her interpreter, at the first *New World Summit* (2012, Berlin). (Sebastian 2013).

The *New World Summit* was initiated by Jonas Staal in 2012 in order to provide "alternative parliaments" for the hosting of "organizations that currently find themselves excluded from democracy" (van Gerven Oei 2012:i). It has taken the form of six separate summits held in Berlin, Germany (4-5 May 2012); Leiden, The Netherlands (29 December 2012); Kochi,

India (March 2013); Brussels, Belgium (19-21 September 2014); Derîk, Rojava,³ (16-17 October 2015); and Utrecht, The Netherlands (29-31 January 2016), and the summits can collectively be described as the inscription of an alternative history, "according to resistance movements" (Impressive first Kochi-Muziris Biennale, 2013).



Figure 27: Moussa Ag Assarid at a pro-independence protest in Tédjererte, near Ménaka, Azawad. (Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:26).

At the inaugural Berlin *New World Summit*, representatives of blacklisted organisations, that is, organisations placed on one or more of several international terrorist lists, or lawyers representing such organisations, were asked to elucidate the political positions of the movements in question. Movements such as those for Basque and Kurdish independence, and the Tamil Tigers, were represented. As part of the proceedings, the arbitrary and inconsistent grounds on which organisations and individuals are officially designated as

³ Rojava declared itself an independent Kurdish state in 2013 the region of West-Kurdistan / Northern Syria.

terrorist, as well as the secretive and undemocratic way in which such decisions are made, were interrogated (Kluijver 2012:13-15). Staal (in NWS Leiden 2012a) notes that "[o]ne could rightfully say that by its own standards the [EU] committee that is in charge of placing organisations outside of democracy is itself organised in a fundamentally undemocratic manner".

The public and institutional hosting of members of blacklisted organisations was possible for three reasons. Firstly, the legal representatives of the organisations in question are free to travel and convene as they wish. The second factor revolves around discrepancies between the designated terrorist lists of various states and global organisations, such as the United Nations, whereby a person or movement could be blacklisted in one state or region, but not another, a permutation that, for Staal (in NWS Leiden 2012a), "says something about the relativity of the concept of terrorism". Because of these discrepancies, the summits could proceed in a legal manner, exploiting "the juridical grey zones" of global democracies, and in so doing, expanding "the outer limits of the political system" of such democracies (NWS Leiden 2012a). The third factor involves the status of the summits as artistic praxis, as opposed to explicitly 'political' events. Highlighting art's political exceptionalism, and that of the *New World Summits* in particular, Robert Kluijver (2012:14) notes:

Interestingly, attempts to engage 'terrorist organizations' in dialogue by think-tanks, academic institutions and political organizations have all failed up to date. A researcher from the Berlin-based Berghof Foundation, for example, spoke about her attempts to bring together leaders of banned terrorist organizations in peace-building efforts; the University of Amsterdam has tried to provide a speaking platform to representatives of such organizations; and several political parties in Europe have tried to engage banned organizations such as Hezbollah or Hamas in dialogue; but all such efforts were foiled by juridical or political arguments. In the case of the New World Summit there were difficult negotiations between the artist and the sponsors but ultimately the argument that it was an artistic project was accepted. It thus appears that art can go where politics and academia cannot go; art is a realm where fundamental political discussions can still take place.

Chairman of the *New World Summit* (Leiden), Vincent van Gerven Oei and *Summit* collaborator Adam Staley Groves (2012:37) observe that "a real conference on the matter appears ... as an art project ... any established, international institutional system that deals

in the machinery of governance directly would not possess that capacity to open a space of discourse in such a way". It is on this basis that Staal (2012b:27) asserts that, whilst art is often, yet erroneously, positioned as operating outside of the political sphere, it can become "more political than politics itself." The exceptionalism of art, and the stealthy manipulation in the hands of Staal and Ag Assarid of the 'juridical grey zones' of democracy in order to turn the mirror of democracy on itself, makes it possible to assess art as a particular kind of political and utopian space. (This positioning of the *Summit* also calls to mind Bloch's appraisal of *art* as the vehicle of newness). The various kinds of utopian space constituted by art, and specifically by the *New Word Embassy*, are clarified below.

The second summit, held in Leiden, further explored the "political, economic, ideological, and juridical interests that are invested in upholding the notion of the 'terrorist'" (Staal 2012a:9). The keynote speaker was Professor Jose Maria Sison, co-founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Other speakers included Jan Fermon, deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and Dutch public prosecutor Alexander van Dam. Fermon, who, as Sison's lawyer, battled to remove Sison from the Dutch and EU terrorist lists for seven years (finally succeeding in 2011), described the extraordinary casualness and undemocratic opacity of the procedures in place to designate individuals and movements as terrorist, which happens without the need of proof, nor of discussion of the merits of any given case, but merely by the submission of names by the respective national representatives (Fermon in NWS Leiden 2012b). Speaking 'for' the juridical 'system' of The Netherlands and its approach to matters of national security, van Dam had successfully led the case against the *Hofstadgroep* (Hofstad Group), an apparent terrorist cell in the Netherlands of which Mohammed Bouyeri, convicted of the murder of Theo van Gogh, had been a member. Van Dam, looking terrified, was at pains to emphasise that the primary goal of terrorists is to spread fear (NWS Leiden 2012c).

The Kochi summit, held in tandem with India's first art biennale, was closed down before it could convene. The parliamentary structure had already been built and officially opened when it was 'altered' by members of the Kochi police, who painted over the depictions of flags of the banned organisations that were to be hosted. Amidst the unfurling controversy before the opening of the summit, Staal (in Philip 2012) insisted on the legality of the event, noting "[o]ur summit is legal. We seek to enlarge the space within which we explore the

concept of democracy but we do this within the space provided by Indian law". Despite its juridical legitimacy, three *New World Summit* members, including Staal, were charged under of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, Section 10(4), which is the same act under which the illegal organisations that were to be hosted, have been banned (NWS Kochi 2014).⁴ The *Summit* had been successfully terminated, possibly illegally.

The fourth *Summit*, held in Brussels, was organised around five themes over three days, interrogating the notion of the state. The themes were the oppressive state, the progressive state, the global state, the new state, and the stateless state. The summit hosted twenty stateless political organisations that have "either been denied representation by a state, or ... may wish to take over an existing state, or alternatively, create a new state altogether" (NWS Brussels 2014a:3). The "unacknowledged, yet nonetheless operational states" represented included Kurdistan, Oromia, Basque Country and Azawad.⁵ The state of Azawad, under the theme of the new state, was represented by Ag Assarid (NWS Brussels 2014a:3).

The scope of Staal's work, as reflected in the *Summits* described here, provides the conceptual context within which the *New World Embassy* was created. The *Summits* address the notions of self-determination, democracy, the political machinations around the process of blacklisting individuals or organisations, and the nature of the state itself. But the creation of the *Azawad Embassy* has a concretely historical-political context as well, linked to the declaration of the independent state of Azawad in 2012. The creation of the Embassy is thus not limited to a single event marked by the creation of an art installation in a European city. The *Embassy* is part of a global "mass-performance that [constitutes] the art of creating a new state", in which Ag Assarid, as a key member of the liberation struggle waged by Azawadians, has played a central role (Staal 2014b). Involved in their respective capacities, both Staal and Ag Assarid contest existing notions of statehood. Staal (in NWE 2014b) notes: "[T]he stateless state, different than the acknowledged state, does what art does: it exists but it also questions the conditions of its own existence". The creation of the *Embassy* of Azawad is thus simultaneously part of a complex discourse around statehood

⁴ Staal had not been able to determine the status of the charges against him as late as August 2015, and was still unable to travel to India at that time (Staal 2015/08/20).

⁵ Kurdistan comprises a dispersed region which includes sections of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Basque Country (*Euskal Herria*) extends across both France and Spain. Oromia is a region within the borders of Ethiopia, and seeks independence from it (NWS Brussels 2014a:40; 26; 18).

and human rights, and of the establishment of a tangible geopolitical artefact, namely the state of Azawad. In order to clarify this context, a brief overview of the events leading up the declaration of Azawadian independence in 2012, is given below.

The state of Azawad was declared independent from the West African state of Mali on 6 April 2012 by the MNLA⁶ after several months of armed rebellion. The as yet unrecognised state of Azawad comprises roughly two thirds of the current state of Mali, notably the arid and sparsely populated northern region predominantly inhabited by the Tuareg, and, to a lesser extent, Arab, Fula and Songhai populations (Staal 2014e:21). Figure 28 shows Mali and its neighbouring states.



Figure 28: Map of Mali. (Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection [sa]).

Figure 29 shows Azawad comprising all three northern regions of Mali, namely Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal. Each of the three regions has an eponymous regional capital. Azawad is

⁶ MNLA is the French acronym for *Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad*, which translates as the Azawad National Liberation Movement.

thus a state within a state, as well as, currently, a stateless state, in lieu of international recognition.



Figure 29: Map of Azawad. (Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:9).

Historian Berny Sèbe (2014:115) notes that "the process of decolonization of the Sahara proved to be much more protracted and complex than elsewhere in Africa". The current borders of Mali were determined during the period of its colonisation by France, and remained in place after independence (1960). The Tuareg rebels sought to resolve the on-going problematics of the legacy of colonialism, which sundered nomadic peoples throughout the Sahel and Sahara regions by segmenting these regions and arbitrarily allotting the sections to the various states around the Sahelo-Saharan periphery (Sèbe 2014:125). Mali is thus in effect the product of a historical, haphazard conflation of its current Northern and Southern territories, two vastly different regions with differing climates, populations, customs and histories. The Tuareg were severed from a space they were able to freely traverse and from their fellow Tuareg, and, in a process that ignored "human and geographical realities" (Sèbe 2014:115), were forced to merge with the sub-Saharan

populations of Western Africa. In addition, after independence, national borders drawn during the colonial period were more strictly enforced, resulting in less autonomy for the Tuareg than during the colonial period (Sèbe 2014:116). The Tuareg desire for secession, consistently present throughout the period of Mali's independence, thus springs from a general perception that the postcolonial project launched by its first president, Modibo Keïta, was unresponsive to and dismissive of Tuareg specificity and needs.⁷ Subsequent on-going developmental neglect of the northern region, government corruption and human rights abuses of the Tuareg population by the Malian state furthermore continue to be cited as the driving forces behind the Tuareg desire for autonomy (Ag Assarid 2014:107; Declaration of the independence of Azawad 2014:45-48; Eyre 2014:55; Maracci 2013; Morgan 2014; NWS Brussels 2014b; Sèbe 2014:130; Staal 2014b; Staal 2014c:92; Staal 2014d:31). Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:32) testifies: "The Malian state has been by far the most violent against the Tuareg population; it has massacred most of its civil population, and I'm only being polite in not simply referring to their actions as genocide", and one of the popular slogans of the 2012 rebellion reads "*Armée Malienne Est Égal Au Terrorisme*" (the Malian army equals terrorism) (Touré in Staal 2014c:97).

This dynamic of exclusion set in motion by colonialism and intensified, for the Tuareg, under postcolonial rule, has resulted in a series of secessionist uprisings dating back to 1915. This seminal revolt was launched in order to secure the independence of the northern region of Azawad from the French Sudan (as Mali was then known) (Douglas-Bowers 2014). No further uprisings ensued during the colonial period, as the Tuareg enjoyed a relative amount of autonomy.⁸ The first of four uprisings after independence took place when a Tuareg plea to the French government for Azawad not to be included in the borders of Mali was dismissed. Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:31) explains: "[T]his led to the first Tuareg rebellion in 1963 ... It was a revolt that ended in blood ... It was not only our fighters, but also civil populations, who were massacred by the army. These events laid the groundwork for the subsequent Azawadian uprisings". The Tuareg took up arms again in

⁷ Sèbe (2014:115) notes that "the postcolonial history of the Sahara has tended to be absorbed more or less artificially within the national narratives to which it came to belong (with or without the consent of its populations)".

⁸ According to Sèbe (2014:129), "the French authorities had established with these [nomadic] tribes a kind of *modus vivendi*, which had led to relative peace in the region". The Tuareg furthermore "enjoy[ed] favorable treatment in the French sphere as a result of their willingness to collaborate with the colonizers, and also probably due to a national collective feeling of passion towards them which I have called elsewhere *Saharomania*" (Sèbe 2014:120).

1990, 2006, and, most recently, in 2011. The latest rebellion was bolstered considerably by Tuareg soldiers armed with heavy weapons returning from Libya in that year. Staal (2014e:21) notes: "This time, the MNLA successfully defeated the Malian army".

The 2011 rebellion sparked an opportunistic coup by mutinying Malian soldiers in March 2012 (before the Malian army was successfully driven from northern Mali, and the region declared independent by the MNLA). Subsequent to the declaration of independence, an almost immediate take-over of the northern region was orchestrated by a coalition of Islamist militant movements active in the Sahel and Sahara (Diarra & Diallo 2015; Flood 2012). The main factions involved in destabilising the region shortly after the declaration of independence and up to the present are Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM (Flood 2012; NWS Brussels 2014a:44; Ag Assarid in Staal 2014d:36).⁹ What was up to that point a successful rebellion, from the perspective of the secessionist Tuareg, was in effect derailed by jihadist movements with little to no representation in the region (NWS Brussels 2014b). Lastly, the MNLA, along with other observers, contend that the Malian government has encouraged the presence of militant Islamic groups in Mali (NWS Brussels 2014b).

Thus the main factions involved in the original uprising, its unsuccessful quelling by the Malian army, and subsequent jihadist takeover of the region are: the MNLA, consisting predominantly, but not solely, of Tuareg rebels; the Malian army; Ansar Dine; MUJAO; and AQIM. After unsuccessful efforts to stop the jihadist groups from encroaching on southern Mali and its capital, Bamako, the Malian government (predictably) appealed to the French government for armed assistance. Operation Serval, led by French soldiers, was deployed in January 2013 and soon displaced the jihadist groups. At its dissolution on 15 July 2014, Operation Serval was replaced by a broader initiative, named Operation Barkhane, which is still in place (Operation Barkhane 2015). A further supplementary operation, MINUSMA

⁹ Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith), is also referred to as Ansar Eddine and Ansar al-Dine. This study makes use of the term Ansar Dine as used by Staal and Ag Assarid in their writings. MUJAO is the *Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*, or Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, and AQIM is the acronym for Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Ansar Dine, formed during late 2011 or early 2012 by Tuareg rebel leader Iyad Ag Ghaly, originates from the region and is embroiled in ongoing Tuareg struggles for independence. Ag Ghaly had been involved in the 1990 Tuareg rebellion. The members of MUJAO and AQIM are, however, regarded as opportunistic intruders with criminal intent centred on drug trafficking and other illegal enterprises (Flood 2012; NWS Brussels 2014b). After a brief attempted coalition between the MNLA and Ansar Dine in 2012, the MNLA has repeatedly distanced itself from all three movements (Maracci 2013; MNLA Europe CQÉ 2015; Ag Assarid in NWE 2014b; Ag Assarid in Staal 2014d:36, 38).

(United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), led by Dutch foreign minister Bert Koenders, was launched on 1 July 2013, and is also still in place (MINUSMA 2015). The Netherlands had moreover pledged €150 million to the stabilisation mission (NWE 2014a). France and The Netherlands thus also became role players in the aftermath of the rebellion, a permutation Staal emphasises at the opening of the *New World Embassy* (NWE 2014a). The 2011 rebellion, referred to as a *revolution* by Ag Assarid (NWE 2014a), continues to impact on current (2016) events in Mali, as the Malian army and Islamist militants continue to clash.¹⁰ The position of the MNLA on the presence of the jihadist movements in what they regard as their state, is that they are willing to assist the French armed forces, but not the Malian army, in eradicating the presence of the movements, without relenting their claim to the region (NWE [sa]).

It is in the midst of this melee that the *Embassy* of Azawad was created by Staal and Ag Assarid. The permutations briefly sketched here have direct bearing on the function, form, and dynamic of the *New World Embassy* as a utopia, discussed below.

8.1.1 The function of the New World Embassy

Born in Zwolle in 1981, Staal, like Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys before him, has been witness to epoch altering events. Staal (in NWS Leiden 2012a) observes: "I belong to the generation that has come to political consciousness in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001". According to Clark (2011), 9/11 suddenly made visible (to ordinary western observers), a counter-threat from a "different kind of enemy", indexed by the twin designations 'terrorist' and 'Islamic'. In the wake of the events of the day, the response of the United States government, and those of several western states following its lead, launched a new international political landscape, which is still predominant. The day after 9/11, Schmemmann (2001) reports on an official *eradication* initiative aimed not only at the attackers involved, but also at anyone seen to harbour or support terrorists. Subsequent US National Security Agency activities as revealed by Snowden in 2013 (in Greenwald 2014), has shown that both the definition of what constitutes a terrorist threat, and what constitutes

¹⁰ Islamic militants took a number of hostages at a hotel in Sévaré, near Mopti, on Friday 7 August 2015. Thirteen people, including five UN workers, of which one was a South African national, were killed. Four hostages were saved (Mali hotel siege 2015).

material support of terrorist activity, have become improbably and untenably broad. The *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (Kean 2002:337), commissioned on 27 November 2002, quotes GW Bush to the effect that "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists". The comment epitomises a totalising gesture of othering, and has set the tone of domestic and foreign US policies around national security, demonstrated to be illegally implemented in many cases. Within the context of ensuing global political and economic dynamics, Staal (in NWS Leiden 2012a) positions his praxis as an interrogation of "the dark architecture of extra-territorial prisons such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay", at the basis of which lies "an American dream that has turned into a world-wide ... nightmare". Staal's work, in short, addresses "present day ills" (Hlavajova 2014:15).

In his work on the *New World Summit* and the *New World Embassy*, Staal focuses particularly on the notions of democracy and on the state, and on the relationship between these two phenomena. This relationship has become, according to Staal, a predominantly inverse one, that is, marked by a discernible deficit of democratic practices in those states and regions that profess to exemplify democratic rule.¹¹ The rule of law thus appears to be malleable in the extreme when it applies to matters of state security. Staal (2014b) observes: "Only recently, the UN Security Council unanimously decided that the mere suspicion of terrorist activity can be enough to strip citizens of their passports, so they can be bombed safely without having to consider international law". In the face of a perceptible crisis in democracy as practiced by western states and institutions, Staal's (2012a:11) statement of purpose for the *New World Summit* reads as follows:

The New World Summit springs from a wish to contribute to an international democratization movement, collectively aiming for the development of new democratic instruments and the deconstruction of the monopolies of power that want us to believe that democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech are the exclusive domain of the self-proclaimed 'enlightened' Western world and its current rulers.

¹¹ Deputy secretary general of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Jan Fermon (in NWS Leiden 2012b), compares juridical processes regarding matters of 'national security' in the European Union after 9/11 with procedures followed by the Spanish Inquisition, and concludes that democracy as practiced by western states has undergone rapid attrition in the age of the 'war on terror'. Transparent violations of electoral mandates and the rule of law by ostensibly democratic governments and institutions are furthermore also common. Sassen (2011:577) highlights the precarious position of individuals and populations *vis-à-vis* the late modern state, which engages in activities such as "rendition, torture, assassinations of leaders they find problematic, excessive bombing of civilian areas, and so on, in a history of brutality that can no longer be hidden and seems to have escalated the violence against civilian populations".

The notion of democracy itself is not unproblematic, but a working definition as formulated by Kekic (2007:1-2) defines it beyond the vote and free and fair electoral processes (which are important for democracy but inadequate as its only markers), to include: the protection of basic human rights (where majority rule, as constituted by the vote, is combined with the protection of individual and minority human rights); a properly functioning government that can fulfil its democratically determined mandate; and broad civic participation in the sociopolitical sphere. This expanded definition of democracy is closer to the model of democracy Staal (2014a) seems to have in mind when he refers to *fundamental* democracy, that is, democracy characterised by "accountability, legality, and transparency". Fundamental democracy is defined by Staal (2014a; 2014b) as democracy liberated from the state. He furthermore defines democracy as, on the one hand, "power that belongs to the people as a whole", and, on the other hand, as "a shared space" in which it is possible to explore "radically different voices and political positions" (Staal in NWS Leiden 2012a; emphasis added). Staal's positioning of democracy as a specific kind of political space makes it possible to compare it with the spatial aspects of the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and with those of distopia, clarified below.

Staal (2012b:25) juxtaposes the democratic project he has in mind with a mode of "superterrorism" deployed by neocolonial Empire, in the form of extra-judicial and opaque processes for which it is rarely, if ever, held accountable, and that masquerades as a democratising project (Staal 2014a). The collusion between neocolonial Empire and the multinational market interests that have come to characterise late capitalism, is what Staal (2014a) refers to as the deep state, and as "capitalist democracy", or "democratism" (Staal in BAK [sa]). The alignment of the deep state with neoliberal ideology, and its manifestation through the prison-industrial-war complex as superterrorism, brings to mind Grey and Garsten's (2002:17) observation that "[t]he free market has its own death camps, more usually called the third world" (see 2.5). Hence, although Staal does not pertinently embrace a Marxist or post-Marxist critique of capitalism, as Nieuwenhuys does, the economic system, like the state, is, for him, in need of reform (Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:177).

Staal (2014a; 2014b; NWE 2014b; 2014e:22; NWS Brussels 2014a:3; 53-57; NWA [sa]) accordingly envisages an alternative to the status quo in the form of firstly, stateless democracy, and, secondly, the stateless state, and he overtly positions the invocation of

these alternatives as a world-altering project. The names *New World Summit* and *New World Embassy* indicate Staal's praxis as *world-making*, but he also expressly references early-twentieth-century socialist author Upton Sinclair's exhortation to the artist for her or him not to make art, but "*to make a world*" (in Staal 2014a; emphasis added).¹² This appeal appeared in Sinclair's *Mammonart* published in 1925, at the same time that Mondrian was grappling with his Neoplastic utopia, and in the same utopianising spirit. It also mirrors Bloch's early-twentieth-century Marxist framing of the utopian project of world renewal. In addition, Staal, like Bloch, Mondrian, and Nieuwenhuys, positions *art* as the means through which utopia might be achieved. The utopianising / world-making project of liberating democracy from the state, exemplified in the stateless state, finds superlative expression in Staal and Ag Assarid's collaboration on the *New World Embassy*.

The last aspect of the function of the *New World Embassy*, the utopia created by Staal and Ag Assarid and highlighted here, relates to Ag Assarid's involvement in the MNLA and its creation of the state of Azawad. The creation of the *Embassy* serves to highlight the existence and struggle of the Tuareg and other oppressed groups in Azawad, from the perspective of the rebels. From Ag Assarid's viewpoint it is hence a geopolitical project, world-making in its most concrete form. To summarise, the *New World Embassy*, read here as a utopia created by Staal and Ag Assarid, addresses the late modern dynamic of the deep state and its distorted (according to Staal and Ag Assarid) application of democracy. Like the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, it is positioned to act as a catalyst for newness. The alternative dispensation proposed by Staal and Ag Assarid manifests in an embassy for a new state, meant to enable an exploration of the concept and practice of fundamental democracy, and to further the cause of the recognition of the state of Azawad itself. The *New World Embassy* is thus simultaneously the product of post-9/11 political activism, and of a century of Tuareg dissent that has culminated in the declaration of a stateless state. Its function is to counter the machinations of the modern state and late capitalism on the one hand, and the dystopian legacy of colonialism on the other. The particularities of the form and dynamic of the *New World Embassy* are explored below.

¹² Staal (2014a) quotes the following, utopian, urging by Sinclair: "The artists of our time are like men hypnotized, repeating over and over a dreary formula of futility. And I say: Break this evil spell, young comrade; go out and meet the new dawning life, take your part in the battle, and put it into new art; do this service for a new public, which you yourself will make ... that your creative gift shall not be content to make art works, but shall at the same time make a world".

8.1.2 *New World Embassy: form and dynamic*

This section sounds the particularities of the form of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia, as well as its dynamic, with reference to aspects such as stasis and closure (or their opposites, namely dynamism and openness); the presence or absence of processes of exclusion; conduciveness to cultural pluralism and difference; the role of newness; perceived concrete attainability; and, lastly, envisaged agency which includes dissent.

The *New World Embassy* functions as a utopia that addresses its inimical sociopolitical and sociocultural milieu. It takes the form, firstly, of the embassy of an African state in a city in the European Union. Figure 30 shows the façade of the Embassy with a banner on which appear the Azawadian flag and the name of the state in three languages namely English, Tamasheq¹³ and Arabic. In Figure 31, an interior view of the *Embassy* shows a press conference table in the form of the state of Azawad, which becomes a visual and physical centre in the room.

Set up as an installation on the premises of the artistic foundation BAK (*Basis Voor Actuele Kunst*), on 4 Lange Nieuwstraat, Utrecht, between 6 September and 12 October 2014, the *Embassy* was officially opened on 9 September 2014.¹⁴ Upon its inauguration, the 'actual' nature of the *Embassy* proved to be internationally contentious. In the media, Ag Assarid describes the *New World Embassy* as "a temporary diplomatic mission ... An embassy as part of a democracy", whilst the Secretary for Public Affairs of the Dutch embassy in Bamako claims it as "actually a cultural center, a private initiative" ("*Ambassade*" du MNLA aux Pays Bas 2014). Bamako itself remained silent on the matter.

¹³ Tamasheq is the language spoken by the Tuareg who refer to themselves as the *Kel Tamasheq*, which means "those who speak Tamasheq" (Ag Assarid in Staal 2014d:29).

¹⁴ Speakers at the inauguration included Moussa Ag Assarid, representing the state of Azawad; Jonas Staal, as founder of the *New World Summit*; activist Fathi Ben Khalifa, former president of the World Amazigh Congress; political scientist Jolle Demmers from the Centre for Conflict Studies, Utrecht University; Socialist Party politician Jasper van Dijk; independent conflict journalist Arnold Karskens; diplomat Jeroen Zandberg from the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization; and journalist Raymond van den Boogaard from the NRC *Handelsblad*. The speakers addressed the current status of Azawad, the notions of statehood and statelessness, the geopolitical machinations of the modern state, Dutch state involvement in Mali and Azawad, the intersection between the media and politics, and mechanisms through which unrepresented states and peoples can gain recognition.



Figure 30: New World Embassy, Lange Nieuwstraat, Utrecht, The Netherlands. (SaharaRebelle 2014).

Clashes regarding the 'proper' designation of the *New World Embassy* reflect the process of political representation and counter-representation – the embassy as diplomatic mission, as cultural centre, and as (for Bamako) non-existent – and the platform on which such wars of representation are waged in the late modern era, namely, the international media. These proclamations secondly reflect the varying and contradictory *forms* that the embassy embodies. It is, from the point of view of the MNLA as represented by Ag Assarid, and from that of Staal, a 'real' embassy, meant to function as such in establishing international relations and facilitating cultural and political recognition of the state of Azawad (NWE [sa]). (The notion of the 'realness' of the embassy as a political institution is explored in more

detail below, when addressing the *Embassy* as envisioned by Staal and Ag Assarid in terms of its immanence).



Figure 31: Still from the inauguration of the *New World Embassy* (Part I). The conference table is in the shape of the state of Azawad, forming a centre. Lange Nieuwstraat, Utrecht, The Netherlands. (NWE 2014a).

The *New World Embassy* is also an artwork in the form of an installation and performance. The speakers present, the audience, and the viewers and readers of the footage, text and news reports evolving from the inauguration, became, for the duration of the event, and continue to become, enactors of the process around the creation of a new state, and the representation of this process in the form of the *New World Embassy*. Staal and Ag Assarid's *Embassy*, in its form as an artwork, is thus instrumental in utopian world-making in a way consistent with Bloch's conception of the utopian role of art (see Chapter Five). The project of the *New World Embassy*, as a diplomatic institution and as an artwork, makes a distinction between the roles of the cultural actors involved (that is, the 'artists'), and the political actors (that is, the politicians, diplomats, spokespersons, and rebels), difficult, and unnecessary. In the opening address, Staal (in NWE 2014a), referring to Ag

Assarid and himself, notes: "[W]e do both believe that the cultural and the political are related in a fundamental way ... we have referred to this [project] as the art of creating a new state ... [the] signs, symbols, historical narratives [of Azawad are] defended by artists and soldiers alike".

The *New World Embassy* is hence also a *representation*, specifically of the stateless state and of stateless democracy as concepts, and of the actual state of Azawad. As such, it reflects the "symbolic universe of the unacknowledged state" (Staal 2014a). It performs in accordance with the significance that Bhabha (1994:18) attaches to the products of cultural work in times of agentic, political struggle, that is, it functions as an "image of ... psychic survival". The image or representation of the utopia is a primary means through which it might be achieved, and is, accordingly, indispensable to the utopian project. The *Embassy* of the state of Azawad functions as one such tactical representation to a global audience. The project has also generated further representations that similarly concretise the struggle for Azawadian independence. Figure 32 shows a flag planted in the expanse of a desert, an act of geopolitical re-inscription, the mobile image of which enables the margin to gain representation in the centre of Empire. As the creators of the representation of an envisaged world that has gained international attention, Staal and Ag Assarid show themselves to be wily utopian world-makers.

The *Embassy* is also a specific kind of space, notably described as an arena in which to develop new cultural and political forms (NWE 2014a). The description of the *Embassy* in these terms mirrors almost exactly sociologist Saskia Sassen's (2011:574; original emphasis) description of the "Global Street", the site of collective resistance in the postmodern urban centre, as a key location "where new forms of the social and the political can be *made*". Sassen (2011:574) positions the globalised urban centre as a space in which the excluded agent can "make history", a site for "the production of 'presence' by those without power". In the *New World Embassy*, Staal and Ag Assarid produce the cultural and political presence of the unrecognised state of Azawad and of those subjected to the processes of the deep state. A comparison can thus be made between the *New World Embassy* and the city as envisaged by Sassen, as the medium through which agency and dissent can become publicly and more broadly represented, and gain momentum. The *Embassy* thus functions, and takes the form of, a kind of city.



Figure 32: An Azawadian flag in the desert.
Photograph by Moussa Ag Assarid.
(Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:145).

The city that functions as a medium of political assertion enables a dynamic that is contrary to the dynamic of the city as a machine for oppression, the original utopian city of order and exclusion. The postmodern city, still implicated in practices of exclusion and othering, simultaneously facilitates civic resistance that becomes an object of global cognisance in a way not possible in extra-urban struggles. De Certeau (1988:93, 96) similarly refers to the city as a bi-location, a doubled space simultaneously comprising the "Concept-city" (the panoptic space of the dominant system), and the tactically deconstructed space of the politically minoritarian. The city as such is a "double belonging that makes one place 'work' on another" (de Certeau 1997:146-147). (See also 3.5).

The *Embassy*, like Sassen's city, becomes the site of a counter-praxis, functions as a contestatory utopia where the excluded can alter time (historically), and space (geographically) (Sassen 2011:579). It becomes "a technology of resistance" (Sassen

2011:577), or, in Jameson's (2008:403) words, "a machine for neutralizing ideological contradictions". The *Embassy* can accordingly be described as a city within a city, one that represents a stateless state within a state. As such, the *Embassy* can be seen to telescope the desert region of the state of Azawad, and the urban centre of Utrecht, The Netherlands. This re-indexes the desert state, which was off the global radar for more than a century of efforts at self-determination by its inhabitants, as a global centre in which a counter-history is in the process of being made.

Lastly, the role of nature in Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia can be compared to its designation in the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. The *New World Embassy* is, amongst other things, a location and event in Utrecht (as described above). However, as a liminal space of geographical, cultural, and political confluence, it also represents a desert people for whom it (the desert) is not an externalised force to be subjugated and exploited, but an environment that, ironically, provides protection, against 'invaders'. Ag Assarid (2014:106) describes this relationship between the Tuareg and the desert as a pact, and declares: "If anyone wants to fight the Tuareg, he should not look for them in the desert: he would lose. No one knows the Sahara the way the Tuareg do. The soul of the desert protects them". Thus, from Ag Assarid's perspective, the desert is a fellow agent. This dynamic is far removed from the master / slave relationship between the inhabitants of the utopias of both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and nature. The particularity of the state of Azawad as a desert, furthermore materially determines the modes of physical and discursive struggle required to create the Tuareg utopia of independence. That is, the remoteness of the region determines the nature of the guerrilla skirmishes with government forces, jihadist militants and the master discourses of Empire alike. The Tuareg have a strategic advantage in the isolated expanse of Azawad. However, the remoteness of the desert (its discursive as well as geographic isolation), also determines the tactical necessity of bringing the struggle to the centre, and the city, as Staal and Ag Assarid have done in the creation of the *Embassy*. In other words, the nature of conditions in a particular, isolated territory informs the terms of battle as engaged by Staal and Ag Assarid in the creation of their utopia. Here nature (as the desert) informs utopian praxis, and is not the collateral damage of such praxis.

To summarise, the liminal condition of the *New World Embassy*, as a multivalent space of sociopolitical contestation, is mirrored in the way in which it convenes geopolitical and

sociocultural realities: the 'first' and the 'third' world, the centre and the margin, the territory of the coloniser, and that of the colonised, the densely populated urban node, and the sparsely inhabited desert. The ambivalent position that the *Embassy* occupies, foregrounds the way in which these seeming opposites are interconnected, dialectically acting upon each other. The *New World Embassy*, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia, thus takes on a more complex and multivalent form than that of either Mondrian or Nieuwenhuys. Not reducible to a single form, it serves as a prismatic lens through which to view and reimagine the outcome of a struggle in the Sahel and Sahara, and the notions of statehood and democracy that have become derailed by the machinations of Empire.

This section has explored the various forms of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia. It has been described as a functioning diplomatic establishment; a visual art installation and performance; the representation of a struggle; a space of sociopolitical contestation; a technology of resistance; and a city within a city. The multiple forms of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia make it possible to read it as a heterotopia, as smooth space and as third space, and to compare its temporal mode(s) with that of *jetztzeit*. These spatiotemporal permutations also inform its envisaged sociocultural dynamic, discussed below.

As a 'city within a city' that serves as the urban centripetal node for a liberation struggle in a remote desert, the *Embassy* functions as a heterotopia. Its multi-locationality is similar to that of the spaces of transit that Nieuwenhuys envisages as destabilising of ordinary urban space, and that he extrapolated into *New Babylon*. However, the *New World Embassy*, as a heterotopic mode of critique of existing space, is read here as more politically subversive than *New Babylon*. The nodes of transportation that Nieuwenhuys identifies as destabilising of utilitarian urban space, are implicated in a touristic mode of consumption (see 7.1.2), thereby bolstering the narrative of capitalist consumption, whilst imagining itself to critique it. The *New World Embassy*, on the other hand, positions itself, and is read here as, a more radical and productive problematisation of prevailing discourse. The *New World Embassy*, as a city within a city that represents a stateless state, indexed by subversion, criticality, and dissent, takes on both the form and function of the heterotopia as described by Stager Jacques. He notes that the heterotopia "floats in a polydimensional reality [which] is firmly tied to the unravelling of Western modernity" (Stager Jacques 2002:29).

Further links between the spatialities explored in Chapters Three and Four, and that of the *New World Embassy*, can be identified. The *New World Embassy* is, for instance, also an exemplary manifestation of smooth space, if smooth space is the region in which it is possible to "make a world", as Deleuze and Guattari (1993:280) define it. To begin with, the precolonial space of Azawad, described by Sèbe (2014:126) as "an extremely porous, almost borderless open space", was subjected to striation by various state apparatuses, first that of the coloniser, and subsequently those of the independent African states that came to comprise the former unbounded Tuareg space.¹⁵ In contrast to this segmenting spatialisation, the current geopolitical *contestation* of the region of Azawad directly recalls the dynamic of the smooth space of the nomad (that is, the sociopolitical other), that serves as the arena of agentic counter-praxis. In other words, the Tuareg alliance, in its rebellion against the effects of striation, constitutes Azawad as the smooth space of minority praxis.

Beyond making these straightforward connections between agentic smooth space as discussed in Chapter Three and the space(s) of the *New World Embassy* and of the stateless state of Azawad that the *Embassy* represents, more intricate permutations of smooth space in the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid can be identified. For instance, whilst the *Embassy*, and through it, the state of Azawad, can be read as representing (and producing) smooth space, the declaration of Azawad as an independent *state* invokes the striated space of the state apparatus. Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:41-42) notes that the Tuareg, in positioning their sociopolitical project as a state, have adopted late modern geographical terminology despite reservations among the Tuareg about the ability of the state form to adequately represent them. This ambivalence regarding the suitability of the state as a relevant political form, is also reflected in Ag Assarid's lecture, at the 2014 Brussels *New World Summit*, titled *Revolution without frontiers: The 21st century will be that of peoples, not of states* (NWS Brussels 2014b). The paradox of declaring an independent state in defiance of the state form is described by Deleuze and Guattari (1993:472) as follows: "It is hard to see what an Amazon-State would be, a women's State, or a State of erratic workers, a State of the 'refusal' of work. If minorities do not constitute viable States culturally, politically, economically, it is because the State-form is not appropriate to them".

¹⁵ According to Sèbe (2014:127), "The space dominated by the Tuareg ... became divided between five postcolonial states after independence (Algeria, Libya, Mali, Niger, Burkina-Faso)".

In addressing this ambivalence by creating the *New World Embassy*, Staal and Ag Assarid deconstruct the concept of statehood *per se*. Similarly, Azawad's *current* status as a stateless state, destabilises normative geopolitical designations, as it takes on the position of the other of *both* the recognised state, with its striated space, and of a (smooth) borderless precolonial space. In its form as a stateless state, it negates an uncomplicated dichotomous positioning of striated versus smooth space. It is possible, however, to interpret the contested region as more characteristic of smooth space, as, in its current form, it functions as dissident minority space, the space of the other, and is indexed by figurative as well as sociopolitical exteriority.

The complexity of Azawad as a stateless state, and of the *Embassy* as a heterotopia, furthermore mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's description of smooth space as simultaneously the region of sociopolitical dissent, and as the space of the deep state in its hypercapitalist form. (They thus describe smooth space as the spatial matrix of both the nomad and of neoliberal capitalism). Deleuze and Guattari (1993:492; original emphasis) observe of capitalism that it "recreated, reconstituted, a sort of smooth space in which the destiny of human beings is recast ... Striation, of course, survives in ... the state pole of capitalism ... [but] at the complementary and dominant level of *integrated (or rather integrating) world capitalism*, a new smooth space is produced in which capital reaches its 'absolute' speed". Globalised / globalising late capitalist processes thus constitute a kind of 'hypersmooth' space. Furthermore, the state itself does not only work towards the *striation* of space. The state also "reconstitutes smooth space ... [for] military-industrial, and multinational complexes ... a worldwide war machine" (Deleuze & Guattari 1993:387). For Deleuze and Guattari (1993:466) this serves as an indication that "[w]ar clearly follows the same movement as capitalism". Smooth space is thus simultaneously the spatial matrix of dissent, the medium of hypercapitalism, and the global arena of the militarised deep state.

This re-inscription of smooth space by and as striated space, and *vice versa*, necessitates reflection on its dynamic in terms of whether it (smooth space) serves and is created as a medium of dissent, or whether it is produced in furtherance of the totalisation of power. This dynamic also explains the complex sociopolitical polyvalence of the region of Azawad, serving as it does, at present, as the medium of contestation for the Tuareg and their allies, but also as a region in which various, reportedly criminal jihadist organisations freely circulate. Sèbe (2014:135) notes the ironic circumstance whereby "an extremely mobile

terrorist group has finally recreated a sense of borderless space that so many generations [of Tuareg] had craved for". This confluence is also borne out by Olivier J Walther and Dimitris Christopoulos's (2014:20) observation that "[t]errorism is, together with international migration, smuggling, or cross-border investment flows, challenging the vision of nation-states as containers of these processes ... Terrorists have found favorable conditions to develop their activities in the north of Mali precisely because of their mobility and exploitation of the weakness of territorial states".¹⁶ Further complicating the dynamic, the jihadist movements in question enforce sharia law on the local populations, making it difficult to determine whether their motives are predominantly determined by economic or religious considerations. The cultivation of *power* can however, be argued to operate at the heart of either projects. A confluence between smooth space as constituted through the absolute speed of late capitalism and through the supranational and covert circulation of the opportunist jihadist organisations in question, thus emerges. The jihadists can be said to have reached the absolute speed of late capitalism in the contested region of Azawad, functioning in a similar mode of universalisation and totalisation. In *contrast* with smooth space in its absolute and universal form, the smooth space of the Tuareg asserts the particularity of a minority position. Deleuze and Guattari (1993:472) note of the "power of minority, [and] of particularity", that "if [minorities] are revolutionary, it is because they carry within them a deeper movement that challenges the worldwide axiomatic ... The minorities issue is ... that of smashing capitalism, of redefining socialism, of constituting a war machine capable of countering the world war machine by other means [to] delineate a new Land."

The complexity of statelessness as a smooth space is further nuanced and deconstructed by Staal, who analyses the difference between the supranationalism of the IS fighters and the stateless internationalism of Tuareg rebels.¹⁷ Staal's interpretation of space as created by Islamic fundamentalist ambition, that is, the space of universalised sharia law, can be

¹⁶ It is important to emphasise that the designation of a group or an individual as terrorist remains problematic. The MNLA is itself branded as variously criminal, terrorist, and seditious, depending on the agendas of the discourses in which they are mentioned, whilst distancing itself from the groups that they in turn, regard as terrorist. The designation 'terrorist' can perhaps be qualified in the same way as the designation of smooth space can: that is, as indicative of the presence either of minority dissent, or of totalising coercion.

¹⁷ Staal is referring to the Islamic State, also known as ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), and as ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham). In June 2014, the movement adopted the name Islamic State, "removing Iraq and the Levant from its name and ushering in 'a new era of international jihad'" (Withnall 2014). Challenging the authority of al-Qaida, IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was controversially declared caliph of the new state.

read not as an intensified variant of smooth space as described above, but as its opposite: an extreme manifestation of striated space in the form of the absolute or total state. Staal (2014a) notes: "The performative gestures of Islamic State fighters publicly destroying their passports and thus allowing no administrative way back ... actually oppose statelessness ... committ[ing] to one absolute and total state". By contrast, the Tuareg struggle, and particularly the declaration of the independence of Azawad, represents, for Staal (2014a), a stateless internationalism that rises above the designation of statehood, even as it lays claims to statehood.¹⁸ Staal's reading thus makes it possible to identify the claims to the total state, as made by jihadist extremists, as constituting extreme striated space, in contradiction to a reading of their praxis as the creation of smooth space similar to that of the hypersmooth space of neoliberal fundamentalism.

To summarise, as space constituted by the agency of the sociopolitical other (namely the Azawadian nomad and her allies), both the *Embassy* and the state of Azawad manifest as the smooth space of minority, sociopolitical contestation. However, the invocation of statehood conforms to the notion of striated space. The ambivalence of the position of the state of Azawad as a stateless state, nonetheless, renders it a medium through which the notion of statehood is contested rather than confirmed. Azawad and its *Embassy* are interpreted here to negate the striation of the state apparatus as described by Deleuze and Guattari, and to re-inscribe the region of Azawad and the space of its *Embassy* as smooth. Furthermore, smooth space itself is double: it manifests as minority space, but also as the space in which capitalism reaches its absolute speed, and in which extraterritorial opportunistic criminal activities and totalising ideology circulate. Lastly, as a region subject to fundamentalist ambitions – the universal imposition of sharia law – Azawad takes on the rigidity and hyper-striation of what Staal calls the superstate. The Azawadian rebels thus seem to contest striated space on two fronts: against the state of Mali, and against the superstate of the jihadists. Smooth space, on the other hand, constituted by parallel and opposing sociopolitical projects in the region, appears as an uneven triad: as the space of the nomadic rebels; as that of several opportunistic jihadist groups; and as that of the deep state of neocolonial Empire that continues to hover over the region's resources.¹⁹ In the

¹⁸ Staal (2014a) notes that the Tuareg drive for independence takes the form of "a political struggle that attempts to redefine a common culture beyond territorial and ethnic demarcations".

¹⁹ At the inauguration of the *New World Embassy*, Demmers pointed out that international economic interests include Dutch claims to gas resources in the region (NWE 2014b).

context of this heightened complexity, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia can also be compared to the 'plane of consistency' described by Deleuze and Guattari, indexed by its ability to constitute a loose and shifting confluence of disparate elements.

There is another space in which the *New World Embassy*, and the state of Azawad, exist, namely the space of international media, which includes online media, or digital space. Whilst the Tuareg alliance wages a highly embodied, armed revolution in furtherance of independence, their revolution has gained wider recognition because of efforts by the MNLA to represent its case to a global audience, particularly through Ag Assarid who plays the role of intermediary and spokesperson. In this way, the MNLA can distance itself on an international arena from fundamentalist groups it is erroneously conflated with by the Malian government in a bid to discredit its claims to independence.²⁰ However, digital space, like smooth space is (at least) double. It represents a disembodied arena well suited to anonymous activism and tactical engagement with the media that is nonetheless dependent on concrete infrastructure. Figure 33 shows the transnational matrix of digital space in the form of a global pattern of internet cables. Digital space is arguably as smooth as capitalist space, but its infrastructure is embedded and regulated in striated (national) space. As such, digital space manifests as smooth and striated simultaneously, as does the state of Azawad. As a space for minority agency as activated by Staal and Ag Assarid, it is however, constituted as smooth space in which their utopia can unfurl. In engaging with the media, and with online culture, the Tuareg alliance (through Ag Assarid, and through the project of the *New World Embassy*), has vastly amplified the production of discursive, smooth space.

These complexities reflect the multivalent *forms* of the *New World Embassy* as described above (that is, as an official diplomatic institution, as an artistic project, as a visual and concrete representation of a utopic alternative, as an infrastructure of resistance, and as a heterotopically telescoped city within a city), and of the stateless state of Azawad, which is simultaneously a state, a stateless state, and the region of competing and incommensurate projects. These forms determine the complex dialectical relation between smooth and

²⁰ In February 2013, Daniel Tessogué, prosecutor for the Republic of Mali, issued arrest warrants for leaders of the Tuareg rebellion, including Ag Assarid, and for members of Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO, on charges of drug trafficking, terrorism and sedition (Le Matin 2013). No distinction is made between the factions involved, nor is there any mention of contravention of international law by members of the Malian military, as observed in UN reports on the 2011 uprising and subsequent government reprisals.

striated space, although Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is read here as predominantly representative of minority agency and of world-making, thus, smooth. The following section focuses on the *New World Embassy* as a manifestation of third space, that is, as a space in which the sociocultural and the political are agentially and strategically contested.

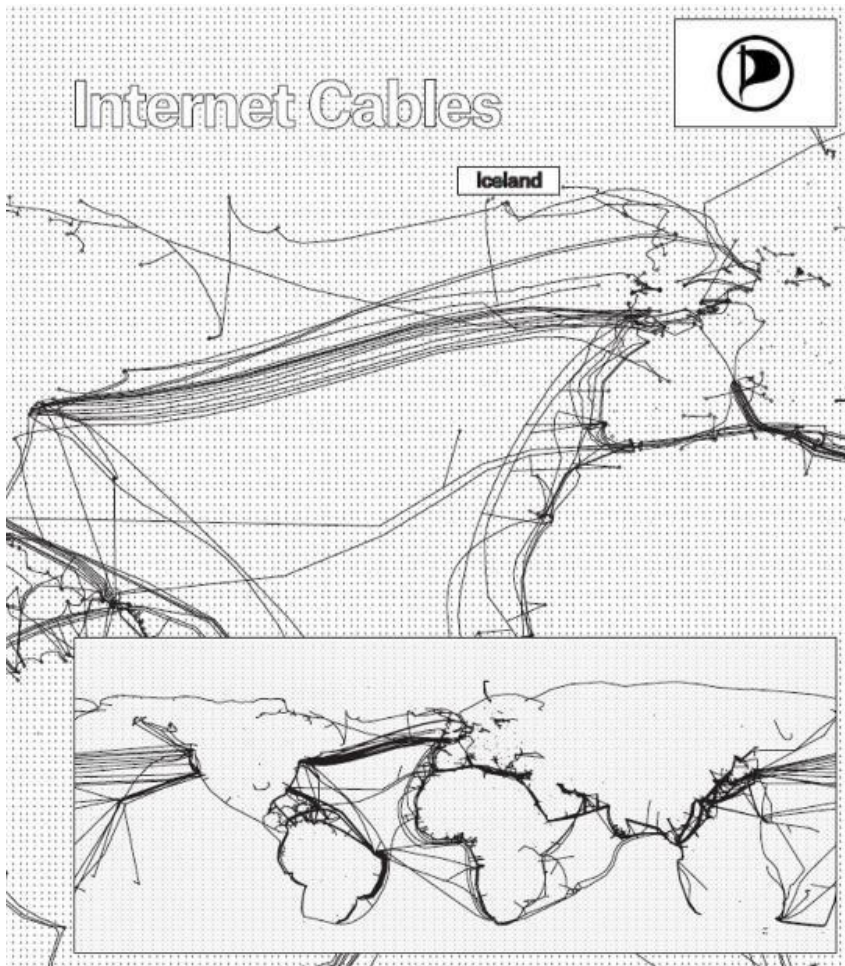


Figure 33: A map of global internet cables, as created by Birgitta Jónsdóttir (member of the Pirate Party Iceland, the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative, and co-founder of WikiLeaks), for the presentation *Democracy beyond the State: WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party and the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative* given at the Brussels New World Summit (2014). (NWS Brussels 2014a:55).

The spatiality of the *New World Embassy* is read in this study as the epitome of hybrid third space that, in the words of Homi Bhabha (1994:38), is "the precondition for the articulation of [that] occult instability which presages powerful cultural changes" (see 4.2). In his opening address at the inauguration of the *Embassy*, Staal (in NWE 2014a) states: "Our task has been to explore at what level [the *New World Embassy*] can be a space that can develop new forms of cultural and political representation". As such, the *Embassy*, by virtue of representing an unrecognised state, and through its re-presentation of institutions that are seemingly incontestable (the coercive state involved in superterrorism disguised as a democratising project), functions to reposition cultural and political tropes. It is, accordingly,

an ontologically interstitial location productive of crucial discursive and geopolitical newness. Its socioculturally and geopolitically hybrid position allows it to reveal the workings of the deep state as "something other than what its rules of recognition assert" (Bhabha 1994:112). In other words, the *Embassy* embodies the confluence of hybridity, otherness, contestation, and newness that is the location of culture, and of the political, *per se*.

The *Embassy* and the state of Azawad can also be compared to a multivalent discursive and geopolitical *border* region, as described by both Marin (who defines utopia as pre-eminently a liminal boundary between opposing positions – see 3.4), and Bhabha, who inscribes third space specifically as an *in-between* space. The description of the *New World Embassy* as an "*extraterritorial* space of representation, negotiation, and international exchange" foregrounds its position as interstitial (NWE [sa]; emphasis added). The state of Azawad itself, similarly, falls in a region that has been a buffer zone between the differing decolonisation trajectories of Northern Africa (particularly Algeria) and of Western Africa (Sèbe 2014:115). In addition, it hovers in-between the meta-narratives of a western neocolonial scheme which continues to be invested in its resources; an African postcolonial project that has overridden Tuareg particularity; and (what is perceived by the Tuareg as) a parallel colonial project by Arabic regimes in the region (Sèbe 2014:115; 129). The state of Azawad, as a discursive object and as a geographical region, is thus a border region, but as a utopian *project* of sociopolitical liberation, it is, paradoxically, a border region that itself has no borders. Graffiti on a wall in Kidal reads "*La révolution est sans frontière, la révolution en continue*" (The revolution is without frontiers, the revolution continues) (Figure 34). It is the complexity of the Azawadian position that informs the depth of its alterity and allows the *Embassy* and the stateless state of Azawad to inhabit a *quintessential* third space position, poised to be instrumental in a significant re-inscription of current global narratives.

Third space, as envisaged by Bhabha, is indexed, lastly, by a specific kind of *tactical* subversion. Cultural work does not entail merely taking up a contradictory position. Bhabha (1994:155) observes that it is only by "[i]nsinuating itself into the terms of reference of the dominant discourse" that a counter-discourse gains the power to disarm prevailing narratives. This is what Staal does in creating the alternative parliaments of the *New World Summits*, which legally host illegal organisations and their representatives; when he

exploits the exceptionality of the position of art with regard to politics, making art 'more political than politics'; and again when he interrogates the institution of democracy as practiced by the deep state by its own professed standards, thereby foregrounding the 'democratism' of the deep state as antithetical to basic human rights.



Figure 34: *La révolution est sans frontière, la révolution en continu*. Kidal, Azawad.
Photograph by Moussa Ag Assarid.
(Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:174).

This tactical infiltration (made possible by a subversive and subverting third space position), is also what Ag Assarid achieves by inscribing the Tuareg struggle as partially an art project, and partially an exercise in diplomacy, in addition to engaging with the founding of the state of Azawad as a material struggle. Political scientist Jolle Demmers (in Staal 2014b), describes their strategy as one of "mocking the state", that is, of appropriating state structures in order to build a collective entity (the stateless state of Azawad), "outside of recognized state structures". Staal and Ag Assarid manipulate their varying levels of sociopolitical exteriority in order to maximise the productivity of their project. They insert

themselves into the status quo like a virus, thereby exemplifying the tactics of a third space insurgent.

Briefly, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia has been interpreted as a more subversive heterotopia than *New Babylon*; as manifesting a multivalent spatiality that comprises both the smooth space of the nomad as sociopolitical other and the striated space of the absolute state; as co-constituted by digital space, which is similarly dialectically both smooth and striated; as a quintessential hybrid third space; as a geopolitical and discursive border region; and as a zone of tactical infiltration of the same by the other. These spatial permutations inflect upon the temporality of the *New World Embassy* as a utopia.

The temporal dimension of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is interpreted in this study as a variant of *jetztzeit*. The Tuareg struggle for independence has taken the form of five separate insurgencies (in 1915, 1963, 1990, 2006 and, most recently, 2011) but can arguably be seen in terms of a continuum. Journalist Andy Morgan (2014) observes that "many Tuareg argue that the north has been in one constant state of rebellion, with periods of greater or lesser open armed conflict", and Sèbe (2014:132) similarly describes northern Mali as existing in a state of more or less permanent instability. The on-going instability of Azawad calls to mind Walter Benjamin's description of history as a permanent state of emergency (see 4.2). The state of inexorable volatility does appear, however, to have reached a climactic point at which a line of flight, or a flash of *jetztzeit*, seems poised to re-inscribe a history that has not been, but could be: that is, history from a minority perspective, a nomadology in the form of a transition towards liberation. The line of flight turns the state of emergency into a state of emergence (Bhabha's correlation), interrupting and renewing the past. As if to confirm the event moment of nomad agency, Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:41) declares: "In the MNLA we have women and men who make history. And our history is now".

The time-space matrix of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia can be summarised as radically multivalent in its telescoping of spatial frameworks as well as of time (the folded structure of *jetztzeit* that subverts linear history). As with the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, the spatial and temporal framework of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia determine key aspects of its sociopolitical dynamic. The aspects, as they relate to the notions of harmony, control,

wholeness, abstraction, completion, newness, the role of technology, difference, and agency are discussed below in order to enable a comparison of the three utopias.

Whilst Mondrian's utopia is envisaged as an orderly, balanced, harmonious whole, Nieuwenhuys posits *New Babylon* as conducive to radical social and personal dynamism and freedom. The inescapability and finality of his utopia is indicative, however, of a deficit of freedom and choice, making it as closed and inexorable as Mondrian's utopia. By contrast, the utopian project of Staal and Ag Assarid is not characterised by a fixation on order, harmony, or balance, and is, hence, in these respects, incommensurable with the vision of either Mondrian or Nieuwenhuys. Addressing the dynamic of late modern utopias, Parker (2002:7) observes that "there is no point in pretending that the world is coherent, complete, transparent, [or] controllable", and Jolle Demmers (in NWE 2014b), speaking at the inauguration of the *Embassy*, aptly observes: "[A]lthough the ideas presented in this project speak of poetry and art, creating a new state is also about killing and dying. Claiming a territory as one's own upon which so many interests [are focussed] ... will involve the use of violence and bloodshed. It does involve becoming part of a project which is ugly and difficult to control, which is easily corrupted and in need of constant critique". Neither Staal nor Ag Assarid make claims to, or envision the possibility of, controlling the process of which they are part. The project of Tuareg liberation is furthermore not predicated on the notion of harmony, but rather, waged in defiance of the terrifying peace of the deep state. Yet nor is armed struggle the *raison d'être* of the rebels.²¹

The *New World Embassy* and the stateless state of Azawad are furthermore not conceived in terms of a whole (as universal), nor in terms of completion. The real-world complexity of the project pre-empts ambitions of wholeness, and approximates more closely utopia as described by Stager Jacques (2002:29), that is, as a project that "relinquishes the ideal of ... perfection ... [because] all the pieces do not, necessarily, *can* not, fit into the same puzzle". Any aspiration toward universalising or finalising the position of the Tuareg and their allies would make the project of a piece with the totalising frameworks against which it is pitted. This permutation is not an excluded possibility: the State of Azawad could reach a stage of "naturaliz[ing] itself

²¹ Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:32) states: "We prefer peace, but we will defend ourselves against the Malian army – which we do not regard the same as the Malian people – against its massacres and policies that force our people into disappearance".

into permanence" (Staal 2014b). Even this eventuality is, however, not inscribable in terms of finality, as it would in turn create "new minorities and new stateless entities" (Staal 2014b). Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia exists as a paradoxical 'permanent revolution', as the counter-intuitive negation of permanence. Staal emphasises the project as *emergent*. He notes "for me what has been crucial about ... working with ... stateless states is that they are permanently in construction" (Staal in NWE 2014b).

Staal and Ag Assarid's *New World Embassy* furthermore calls to mind Valérie Fournier's description of *utopianism* (in contrast with utopia, which is, according to her, more readily associated with control and finality). She notes: "Utopianism is about movement and process rather than 'better states' ... it is about ... establishing the conditions for the development of alternatives" (Fournier 2002:192). It is for this reason, that, according to Fournier (2002:192) "utopianism cannot end with a critique of the present, nor even with the construction of a better future; it cannot end at all". Staal's positioning of the project as specifically emergent lastly aligns it with Deleuze and Guattari's definition of minoritarian praxis characterised by potentiality and becoming, and also invokes the dynamic of third space as constituted through necessarily *emergent* politics. Rather than conceptualising his praxis, including involvement in the creation of the *Embassy*, as a 'solution', Staal (2012b:21; original emphasis) positions it as "an *instrument*, through which politics is brought back to the streets". The concept of the stateless state consequently represents, for him, "not a goal in and of itself, but a space *through which* a stateless internationalism is articulated" (Staal 2014a; original emphasis). He hence dwells on the possibility that Azawad, as "[t]he *nomad state* – the nomadic parliament – might be a first articulation of a stateless state. Not a Deep State, but a liberation *through the state from the state*" (Staal 2014a; original emphasis).

The proscription of finality in Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is linked to the form that the dialectical processes in their utopia take, in comparison with those of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. Mondrian aims for an apotheosis in his utopia – the result of the balancing and cancelling of all opposites and difference, and this dynamic is directly derived from the Hegelian dialectic which comes to finality as the Absolute. Nieuwenhuys's utopia is posited, by him, as a dynamic, social space that is under continuous construction, but is nonetheless read in Chapter Seven as representing a

state of incontestable finality, essentially indistinguishable from Mondrian's vision in this regard. Nieuwenhuys, as a Marxist, is interpreted to summon the Hegelian dialectic to the extent that there is a final form to his construct, even if formulated in materialist rather than idealist terms. In contrast with the dynamic of finality in the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, brought about by their invocation of the Hegelian dialectic, Staal observes a different dialectic in the utopia he has created with Ag Assarid. Referring to the Azawadian flag planted in the desert (see Figure 32), Staal (2014b) notes: "The space of the desert is injected with a symbol of a complex relationality, a symbol that embodies the heritage of successive processes of internal ethnic and class conflict, colonization, and revolution". Describing the intricacy of the project that he and Ag Assarid are involved in, he observes: "Fanon identifies a complex dialectic that exists between national liberation movements and the colonial states that try to suppress them. But can another dialectic exist, one between successive or parallel—and perhaps conflicting—liberation movements?" (Staal 2014b).

Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is positioned as expressly emergent, not simply because it is still under construction in the present (the status of Azawad as a stateless state is still in the process of being contested), but because their utopia is interpreted to take the form of contestation itself.²² The dialectical dynamic detectable in their utopia is, consequently, closer to that described by Harvey in Chapter Four, that is, as a process of complex negotiation and development in which the claims and counter claims of all the agents involved, mutually work upon each other in an unpredictable way. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia, necessarily emergent, is in this regard very unlike the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. There are, however, several points of contact between Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia and those of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. The Tuareg rebellion is articulated, for instance, in terms of freedom, as is *New Babylon*. Staal

²² The extent to which the project of establishing the independent state of Azawad is still in flux is reflected in the rate at which organisations involved in the region form alliances, disband these alliances, and splinter off to form new organisations. As at August 2015, the MNLA itself is described as subject to a schism caused by the signing by some of its members of the Algiers Accord on 20 June 2015, plunging it into its most serious crisis since its inception in 2011 (MNLA Europe CQÉ 2015). A statement by 'MNLA Europe' reads "the Secretary General and the leaders who endorse the signature of 20 June 2015 knowingly violated the founding texts of the MNLA" and furthermore calls for "all citizens – MNLA fighters – to join the undersigned to organize an extraordinary congress as soon as possible" (MNLA Europe CQÉ 2015).

(2014a) describes the Azawadian struggle as one of "self-determination, freedom, and emancipation", and Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:35) states: "Azawadians needed to take their destiny into their own hands, as all national liberation movements before them have done". There is, however, a discernible difference between the conceptualisation of freedom in the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid, and in that of Nieuwenhuys. Nieuwenhuys's utopia is based on the notion of freedom from boredom, whereas the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid is based on the notion of liberation from the excesses of the deep state (a globalised military-industrial complex), and the repressive state (Mali). The difference is informed by the sociopolitical position of the respective protagonists. Nieuwenhuys's subject position is interpreted as representative of the same, whereas the positions of Staal and Ag Assarid are interpreted as representative of the other. Ag Assarid, in his liminal position as European spokesperson for the Tuareg alliance, can be seen as an agentic other to both the sociopolitically dominant Malian state and to neocolonial Empire that is vested in maintaining the geopolitical status quo. Staal is interpreted as taking a minority position with regard to violations of human rights perpetrated by the state in the name of democracy, although his ideologically exterior position is voluntary. The invocation of the term 'freedom' takes on vastly differing connotations depending on the subject position from which it is invoked, that is, from varying levels of structural privilege.

A further permutation of the notion of freedom as envisaged by the utopians discussed, relates to the role of mobility or, by contrast, stasis, in their utopias. Mondrian did not position his utopia in terms of either mobility or freedom, whereas freedom was central to Nieuwenhuys's utopia, and was based, for him, on the possibility of hyper-mobility. It is in the (romanticised) mobile figure of the nomad that Nieuwenhuys takes inspiration for an alternative social model. The notion of freedom in Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia (as liberation from oppression), is predicated, on the one hand, on the mobility of ideas that digital technology affords. More concretely, on the other hand, Staal and Ag Assarid themselves belong to a mobile elite of global travellers. In the case of Ag Assarid, his mobility is ironically in contrast with that of the nomadic Tuareg he represents, as they are unable to traverse a region they previously could, or to exit the borders of Mali as

travellers.²³ In the late modern era, the position of the nomad is indexed by systemic stasis rather than by mobility.

The utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, as well as that of Staal and Ag Assarid, all emphasise the notion of utopia as socially encompassing or as collective. Mondrian favours heightened collectivity as a preferable social model to one based on individuality. However, as agency is argued to be missing from Mondrian's utopia, it is not *co-created*, whereas *New Babylon* is imagined as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* by Nieuwenhuys, an immense socially co-produced environment. Staal (in NWE 2014a; 2014b) similarly reads the Azawadian struggle for independence as a "collective work of art", and his praxis is described as part of a "collective resistance to hegemonic articulations of the world" (Hlavajova 2014:15). Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:41) declares: "Every element, every person, each fighter is an actor in our common Azawad". The particularity of their project and its underlying dynamic is argued here, however, to prevent it from crossing the border between an envisaged collectivity and making claims to universality.

A third element of confluence (besides the notions of freedom and collectivity), appears in the form of the utopians' position regarding the role of technology in their envisioned alternatives. In so far as Mondrian embraces culture and progress, while rejecting nature, his utopia can be read as abstractly in favour of technological processes, which could assist in delivering humanity from individualism and social disharmony. It could conceivably shape and further collective discipline. Nieuwenhuys directly invokes advanced technology as a precondition for his utopia. Staal and Ag Assarid, whilst not concerned with technology *per se*, make tactical use of it in the form of digital media. They host blogs and web pages, and maintain Twitter feeds and Facebook profiles, enhancing the visibility of their project, and enunciating their sociopolitical position to a global audience (or, at least that part of the global population that is digitally empowered).

The last similarity between the divergent utopias is the centrality of the notion of newness. Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys believed their proposed societies to be without precedent. The

²³ Ag Assarid (2014:108) explains the position the Tuareg find themselves in: "We were denied, by states, the right to cross borders without a passport, and yet we couldn't obtain a passport. To get a passport, we needed an identity card, and to have an identity card, we needed a birth certificate, but we could only obtain one if [we] were born in a maternity hospital and on a specific [determinable] date".

designation of their respective utopias as such (as truly new), is reflected in the names they chose: Neoplasticism; *New Babylon*. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia, the *New World Embassy*, is also positioned in terms of newness, and the Tuareg alliance similarly seems to create a new geopolitical form, currently taking shape as a stateless state. In answer to the question whether "one can still believe in society", Staal (2012a:10; original emphasis) responds: "The answer ... should be an unequivocal 'yes, but not in *this* society'". Staal's praxis is thus positioned explicitly in terms of creating the new. And it is *art*, Staal argues, that is capable of productively cultivating the sociopolitically new. In this he mirrors Bloch and Bhabha in the role they assign art in facilitating systemic renewal. Opening the second *New World Summit* in Leiden, Staal (in NWS Leiden 2012a) observes "[a]rt is the political tool [through which] to imagine a different politics", and reiterates (in Hlavajova 2014:16; original emphasis): "It is art that carries the history of a people, and with it, the promise of a *new world*".

The creation of the state of Azawad is hence congruent with the creation of art, and the stateless state "does what art does ... [it] questions the conditions of its own existence" (Demmers in NWE 2014b). Significantly, statelessness can usher in the new as the product of agency, as it (statelessness) is "not simply a product of victimization, but the prerequisite of a necessarily new model of political organization" (NWS Brussels 2014a:3). Newness is also ushered in by "destabilis[ing] stable meanings in the shadow of powerful explanations" (Demmers in NWE 2014b). Thus Ag Assarid and Staal's praxis recalls Bhabha's (1994:25, 219; original emphasis) description of newness as that which emerges from third space, "a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, [that] properly alienates our political expectations ... a 'third' politics of the future-as-open-question ... [a] 'new world (b)order'". The *Embassy* and the state also constitute a tangible openness of the future as described by Doreen Massey and David Harvey. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is interpreted here as constitutive of radical newness.

The utopias analysed in this study vary in the degree to which the artists ascribe to the immanence of their visions. Mondrian's utopia was not, according to him, realisable in the immediate future, and in some cases its realisation was deferred by him to a very distant future. Nieuwenhuys argued that the utopia he envisaged was technically achievable in his own time, but was only prevented from being realised because of the envisaged disastrous social repercussions of full automation, a social problem *New Babylon* was meant to solve.

By contrast, it is possible to argue that in engaging socio- and geopolitically in the manner that they have and do, Staal and Ag Assarid have already realised their utopia. It has already achieved its purpose of negating both the denial of the 'reality' of the state of Azawad (negating a negation), and of negating the invisibility of Azawad for global observers previously unaware of its existence. Staal (in NWE 2014b) asserts that the *New World Embassy* "is not outside the real", but "constitutes a different real". The difference between the existence of the *Embassy* and of Azawad as a utopia, and the longed for existence of the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, is interpreted in this study as the consequence of the envisaged forms of the respective utopias. Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys allocated a final form to their utopias, for which the conditions (for varying reasons) had not been met in their time. Staal and Ag Assarid position their utopia as an *act* of imagination and defiance, and it is hence constituted in the performance of their utopia, as artists, and as insurgents. Invoking Marx at the opening of the *New World Embassy*, Staal (NWE 2014a) foregrounds the importance (for art) to not merely reflect on the world, but to change it. In its signification of an sociopolitical alternative, with which the press, politicians, and the creators of discourse have engaged and continue to do engage, Staal and Ag Assarid can be said to have changed the world, and to have instituted their utopia as the performance of alterity. They have made a world with which it is possible to engage. Figure 35 shows an Azawadian visa stamp in Staal's passport, as issued by the *Embassy*.

The last two aspects relating to the dynamic in Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia to be discussed here are its engagement with difference, and the role of agency.

The Tuareg nomads of Azawad historically and discursively cut the figure of the other. Their systemic exteriority can be traced back to the early postcolonial period. Morgan (2014) observes: "At independence in 1960, Mali, Algeria and Niger effectively co-opted the French strategy of divide and rule to deal with their Tuareg populations, favouring and advancing 'friendly' tribal chiefs whilst curtailing the power of hostile ones ... Meanwhile, the new rulers of Mali ... thought of the Tuareg as belligerent, racist, feudal, arrogant and lazy. They could not understand ... these recalcitrant nomads". The colonial othering strategy imposed by the French thus appears to have been continued by the newly independent Malian government. This legacy has, according to Sèbe (2014:134) "ironically [led] to accusations of the imposition of colonial-style overrule 50 years on from decolonization".

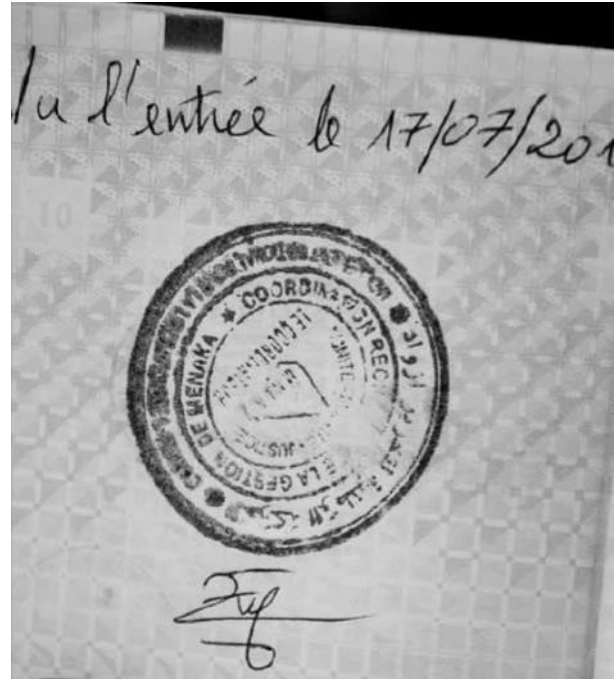


Figure 35: A passport page showing an Azawadian visa stamp. (Staal & Ag Assarid 2014:102).

Ag Assarid (2014:107-108) describes the more recent position of the Tuareg:

Until 1990, 30 years after Malian independence, the Tuareg community was practically absent from the country's institutional life, to the extent that the Tuareg were seen by other Malians as foreigners who should go back home, to Algeria or Libya ... [by] 1996 ...the Tuareg were still not regarded as citizens. When the rebellion broke out, my brother and I understood it very well, because we knew what it meant to be excluded.

As part of the greater Berber group, the Tuareg are also carelessly conflated with the Arab communities amongst which they live. Speaking at the inauguration of the *New World Embassy* as the former president of the World Amazigh Congress, Fathi Ben Khalifa (in NWE 2014b) notes:

I am Amazigh from Libya. When we talk about the Amazigh people, their culture and identity and rights, we are talking about a group of people that exceed 60 million persons [globally] ... Here in Holland you have around half million of Amazigh, but you call them just Moroccans, or Muslims or Arabs, because you believe that our countries are Arabic ones ... Even their revolutions, their

revolutions which are still being [fought] with their own blood in order to get rid of the Arabic colonialism, are still unanimously being called the Arab spring.²⁴

The Tuareg are thus politically underrepresented in their 'own' countries, and simultaneously globally robbed of their particularity, merging (for western observers in particular) with a non-specific Middle Eastern other. The struggle of the Tuareg is further complicated by a colonial and pre-colonial legacy of unequal ethnic relations. Staal (2014b) describes the current situation of the Tuareg in particular, noting that "the Malian government and the ethnic groups that dominate it continue to frame the rebels as ruthless oppressors – a reference to the historical enslavement of some of these groups by the Kel Tamasheq ... [T]he Azawadians, while recognizing their history of slave ownership, claim that this rhetoric has become a tool of propaganda to legitimize massacres of their people". Mutual ethnic hostility is thus discernible as part of an already historically intricate legacy of postcolonial exclusion of the Tuareg, and of a precolonial social system in which the Tuareg constituted a privileged class.

In reaction to accusations of furthering an ethnically fuelled cause, the MNLA repeatedly positions itself as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious movement, distancing itself from traditional factions (as well as from more recently present fundamentalist groups), in furtherance of what they perceive to be a broader cause of liberation (Ag Assarid in NWE 2014a; Ag Assarid in Staal 2014d:31; Hlavajova 2014:16; Morgan 2014; NWE [sa]; Staal 2014a; Staal 2014b; Staal 2014e:21; Staal in NWE 2014a). Staal (2014b; 2014e:21; emphasis added) notes that "after four uprisings, the new liberation struggle is no longer defined in terms of a single ethnicity, but as a multiethnic coalition of peoples vowing to break with former racial and class divisions", and that, in fact, the MNLA was founded in 2011 as "the *first* multiethnic coalition for independence in the region". Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:33) similarly emphasises: "The MNLA represents the people of Azawad no matter their color, ethnicity, religion, or mode of life ... the MNLA does not simply represent a Tuareg rebellion, despite some people's attempts to frame it as such, but a multiethnic

²⁴ The Amazigh constitute the broader global Berber group of which the Tuareg are a subgroup. They are dispersed throughout North, West and Central Africa, as well as in diaspora in Europe and North America (Ben Khalifa in NWE 2014b).

revolution!".²⁵ The MNLA has also sought interaction with independence movements further afield, such as those in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Corsica, Somaliland, the Philippines, and "the larger Amazigh community ... and its many liberation movements throughout North Africa" (Staal 2014b).

For his part, Staal (2012b:20) dissociates himself from the burgeoning reactionary political groups in Europe and in The Netherlands, and from the Dutch Freedom Party of Geert Wilders in particular, which he describes as a racist movement. He specifically proscribes Wilders's "phantasmatic, conservative utopia of the 'homeland'" (Staal 2014a).

Thus whilst the Azawadian struggle for independence is embedded in a historical and geographical reality in which ethnicity has been a sociopolitical determinant, and continues to be, Ag Assarid, as spokesperson for the MNLA, emphasises the movement's commitment to inclusivity. Staal similarly distances himself from the exclusionary practices of party political factions, but also more broadly, from exclusion (often violent) as a staple strategy of Empire and of the deep state. Their utopia is thus explicitly predicated on the eradication of exclusion, and it can be interpreted as conducive to cultural pluralism.

Gender equality is not expressly mentioned by either Staal or Ag Assarid with regard to their utopia, although the MNLA does have at least one woman in its leadership structure (Nina Wallet Intallou). Tuareg communities, according to Morgan (2014), face the brunt of hostility by fundamentalist movements in Azawad because of the "relative freedom and social power that Tuareg women enjoy". Gender representation is, however, problematic in both the MNLA and in the project of the *New World Embassy*. At its inauguration, there was only one female keynote speaker, Jolle Demmers, among seven male speakers, one of whom acted as chair. (The welcoming address was given by Maria Hlavajova, artistic director of BAK). The gender imbalance reflects the reality of underrepresentation by and exclusion of women in the fields of politics, journalism, diplomacy, and management structures. (This list of fields from which women are still systemically excluded is not

²⁵ In an interview, Ag Assarid (in Maracci 2013) elaborates: "The MNLA includes not only the Tuareg, but also all the people who live in the northern part of Mali. From a cultural point of view, I am fighting for the ethnic recognition of the Tuareg people, while, from a political point of view, the MNLA includes several tribes living in the desert of Mali including Tuareg, Songhai, Fulani and Mauri. We aim to create a state where we can live peacefully in the desert territories of Azawad, free from the control by the Malian army".

exhaustive, but merely reflects the fields occupied by the male representatives involved in the project). The *New World Summit* is slightly more evenly representative in terms of gender.²⁶ This imbalanced representation, in the project of the *New World Embassy* and in the MNLA, reflects the lingering systemic patriarchal metanarrative in western societies and in Azawad, which is the field that Staal and Ag Assarid, as utopians, operate from, and in. It is possible to observe that, as creators of the specific utopias of the *New World Embassy* and of Azawad, structural patriarchy does not appear to be a central concern for them.

The last observation to be made here with regard to in / exclusion in relation to the same / other, is that Staal and Ag Assarid are themselves the male creators of their utopia, as were Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. Feminist utopias, and female-identifying utopians, emerged as a more broadly discernible phenomenon in the west only during the 1970s (see Chapter Two), a very late permutation in the long tradition of western utopianising endeavour. As artists too, Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys and Staal are privileged in terms of their gender, although the most overt methods of exclusion of women from the art world (still very much in place in Nieuwenhuys's era), have become less acceptable. It (the art world) cannot yet be regarded as fully inclusive in this regard, however. It is equally difficult to imagine the leadership of an organisation such as the MNLA as consisting predominantly of women. To summarise, the representation of women in the art world, in politics (even dissident politics), and in world-making utopian praxis, still reflects patriarchal exclusionary practices. Distopia, the utopia developed in this study, addresses this axis of exclusion, as it does exclusion on the basis of race, sexual orientation, age, class, and any other discernible minority position encountered in the sociopolitical field where the other confronts or subverts the same, with a clear understanding that 'feeling' excluded, marginalised or otherwise deprived, based on a foundation of lingering entitlement as projected by same, should be distinguished from structural, lived otherness.

²⁶ The programme of the *New World Summit* in Brussels (2014) lists the members of the organisation (four women and nine men) as follows: "The New World Summit is: Jonas Staal (artist and founder); Younes Bouadi (head of production and research); Renée In der Maur (project coordinator); Vincent WJ van Gerven Oei (editor, advisor); Remco van Bladel (visual identity); Paul Kuipers (architect); Robert Kluijver (advisor); Matteo Lucchetti (advisor); Imara Limon (communication); Urok Shirhan (program editor); Sjoerd Oudman (web development); Kasper Oostergetel (development and construction); Rob Schröder and Gabrielle Provaas (film documentation); Ernie Buts (photographic documentation) – [with] much gratitude to the project assistance of Suzie Hermán, Henry Procter, Ferdi Speelman and Manuel Beltrán" (NWS Brussels 2014a:59).

The last dynamic taken into consideration in the analysis of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is the role of agency they assign to its 'inhabitants'. Staal explicitly positions his praxis as conducive to agency. He positions the *New World Summit*, and by inference the *New World Embassy*, as part of an ideological project that enables the positioning of the agent as a political being (Staal 2012b:21-22). Ag Assarid (in Staal 2014d:35) similarly foregrounds the importance of agency when he observes that Azawadians need to "take their destiny into their own hands". Their utopia is thus interpreted to be predicated on and established through agency. Staal and Ag Assarid furthermore emphasise agency in terms of a broader sociopolitical framework. In other words, they do not position themselves as the sole agents in their utopia. Both the *Embassy* and the state of Azawad are collective agentic constructs in which they play a limited role. In their capacity as agents, Staal and Ag Assarid represent those hybrid inhabitants of third space that Bhabha (1994:164; 172) refers to as "colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities – wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse ... people who speak [an] encrypted discourse ... those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement". Deleuze and Guattari succinctly refer to this figure of the other as the nomad. As utopians who position themselves in furtherance of minority agency, they provide a platform for what van Gerven Oei and Staley Groves (2012:36) refer to as "voices from the state of exception". In this study, the minority agentic position that characterises the dystopian subject, is referred to as a position of queering, and Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is interpreted as a queering utopia.

The position Staal (2014e:22-25) envisages for himself and for Ag Assarid is that of the artist-soldier. As is the case with Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, Staal foregrounds his own subject position (and that of Ag Assarid) as significant in the establishment of their utopia. One could posit that it is indeed not existentially possible to foreground an agency not representative of one's own particular subject position. However, Staal and Ag Assarid can be interpreted firstly as positioning themselves as agents among other, crucial agents who differ from them. In other words, one could infer that an alliance of agents indexed by difference from each other, is part of their utopian vision. Secondly, Staal and Ag Assarid can be read as acting from a minority position, in contestation of the status quo, which is a crucial distinction between their positions and those of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys (interpreted as majoritarian in Chapters Six and Seven).

An overview of the tactical manoeuvres Staal and Ag Assarid employ throws light on the nature of their agency (and of their utopia). Firstly, Staal is cognisant of, and exploits, the exceptionality of art in terms of its ability to directly engage with central political constructs in a way that more 'overtly' political institutions are unable to (as discussed above).

Staal and Ag Assarid also seem to exploit their own liminal subject positions. Staal, in his capacity as representative of the same, makes use of his privilege to foreground sociopolitical malpractices that impact negatively on vulnerable communities. He thereby simultaneously represents the other, in so far as he is able to. Ag Assarid's sociopolitical subject position is more overtly liminal. As a Tuareg rebel involved in the geopolitical transformation of Azawad, and as the current vice-president of the World Amazigh Congress, which represents the rights of a global community of 60 million Amazigh, Ag Assarid's high level of involvement in the rights of Tuareg and broader Amazigh communities is clear.²⁷ Yet, Ag Assarid is aware that his position as an envoy is made possible by an education not afforded to many Tuareg, an education almost derailed by the 1990 rebellion (Maracci 2013). He thus occupies an exceptional position in the Tuareg community, whilst simultaneously representing it. (Ag Assarid's pursuit of education under chaotic circumstances is itself a tactical deployment of his agency). Ag Assarid furthermore moves *between* the spaces of the postcolony and those of the neocoloniser.²⁸ Residing in France since 1999 has made it possible for him to grapple more directly with the necessity of political representation of Azawad to and through influential western institutions. Maximising the political advantage that his in-betweenness has afforded him, he has managed to 'insert' himself into the terms of reference of his opponent, in exactly the tactical manner of a cultural and political agent acting from a third space position described by Bhabha.

Besides taking on liminal positions with regard to the communities they represent and the structures they oppose (being both inside and outside of these communities and structures), Staal and Ag Assarid's positions, as 'different' and dissident, signify a central dynamic of their utopia. Their outsider status in this regard has been conferred on them

²⁷ Ag Assarid tweeted on 29 July 2015: "Le Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) a tenu son congrès au Maroc à Agadir. Kamira Naït Sid est élue présidente. J'ai été élu Vice-président (The Amazigh World Congress [CMA] held its congress in Morocco in Agadir. Kamira Naït Sid was elected president. I was elected Vice President)" (MoussaAgAssarid 2015).

²⁸ Ag Assarid obtained dual citizenship in 2010 (Maracci 2013).

because of the ways in which they have chosen to assert their agency. Accused of making death threats against politician Geert Wilders (though exonerated in the Dutch Supreme Court), and charged under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act for hosting the *Kochi New World Summit* (2013), Staal has been tarred with the brush of criminality, notably by the authorities he challenges. Ag Assarid, similarly charged for sedition by the Malian state, and accused of terrorism, is an outsider to the structures he opposes (the state of Mali, and the global deep state that would prefer to maintain the current geopolitical status of the 'third' world). Staal (2014b) perspicaciously highlights the markers of the presence of unhomey political alterity, stating "when something is presented to us as a 'terrorist,' 'separatist,' or 'stateless' struggle, we ought to look carefully, listen, and learn". The position that Staal and Ag Assarid have been assigned by the systems they oppose, is interpreted here as an indication of the radicality of their utopia.

A further tactic has been the creation of images in furtherance of the concretisation of their utopia, and, in addition, the circulation of such images through engagement with international media and digital media. The creation of the *New World Embassy*, and of images of it, of the Azawadian flag, and of Azawadian graffiti (Figures 30-32 and 34-35), act as decentring discursive devices. Their circulation makes Staal's and Ag Assarid's subverting practice more widely destabilising. In creating and disseminating images of their utopia, Staal and Ag Assarid performatively establish it. As part of their utopian praxis, Staal and Ag Assarid furthermore build international alliances, and their utopia cannot be read as isolationist or escapist. The MNLA positions itself as an alliance of peoples, and also declares itself willing to assist, or more accurately, be assisted by, international peace keeping forces in confronting the jihadist organisations in the region. The global scope of organisations hosted by the *New World Summits* indicates an inclusive and strategically broadened engagement in critical and liberation praxis.

To summarise, the tactics that Staal and Ag Assarid avail themselves of as utopians include exploiting the exceptionality of art and their own sociopolitical liminal positions, which allows them to represent the other and has resulted in their representation as criminal by the same; the creation of the *New World Embassy* as a representation of their utopia, and of images relating to it and to the state of Azawad; engagement with global media, digital media, and international allies. These tactics foreground their positions as agents and the centrality of agency in their utopia as such.

This section has interrogated the form(s) of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia, and the dynamics discernible in it. The complexity of the form of their utopia (as an 'actual' embassy, as a performative and visual artwork, as a *representation* of an alternative ecumene, as a space of contestation, and a technology of resistance in the form of a city within a city), mirrors its complex dynamic. Its spatiality was compared with that of smooth space (in a dialectical relationship with striated space), and third space and it was also interpreted as inhabiting digital space and the space of international media. These overlapping spatialities furthermore characterise their utopia as a heterotopia, as hybrid, and as a border region – geopolitically and discursively. Temporally, the *New World Embassy*, and the state of Azawad that it represents, is interpreted as a manifestation of *jetztzeit* that rearranges time, reactivates the future by redeeming a past. Staal and Ag Assarid are not interpreted to be interested in harmony, closure, stasis, or control. Their utopia, as a process and as a stance (of dissent and contestation) is thus read as (and is positioned by them as) a performative, continuously unfolding utopia, forgoing the coercive dynamic of classic utopias. The notions of freedom and mobility were considered, as well as the role of technology in the establishment of the utopia in question, and its envisaged immanence. It was interpreted to have already been established, a permutation that does not however render it a concluded project. Lastly, the centrality in their utopia of newness, cultural pluralism, productive difference, and agency was discussed. In the following section, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is compared with those of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and with distopia.

8.1.3 *New World Embassy and distopia: a comparative analysis*

This section summarises the differences and similarities that can be detected in the three utopias under discussion, namely the utopias of Mondrian, Nieuwenhuys, and of Staal and Ag Assarid, before comparing Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia with distopia. The utopias discussed have been scrutinised in terms of three broad aspects, namely their function, form, and dynamic. The dynamic detectable in each was in turn discussed in terms of the manifestation of finality, universality, control, harmony, movement, dynamism, spatiotemporality, newness, cultural pluralism, dissent, and agency.

Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia can be read as a reaction to problematic sociopolitical conditions in much the same way as can those of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. Mondrian attempted to counter the chaos and material brutality of his era with a utopia of harmony and control (not reflecting on the ruthless dynamic that control itself is predicated on), whilst Nieuwenhuys was troubled by the way in which capitalism was unfolding in the post-war period, and by what he perceived as stultifying social relations. In both cases the utopias created by these artists was positioned as a counter-proposition to what there 'was', in the form of what could be.

Staal and Ag Assarid also created their utopia in opposition to prevailing systemic problematics (whilst not referring to it as a utopia as such). The problematics highlighted by Staal include the practices of the deep state, that is, the state in collusion with globalised late capitalism, and he focusses particularly on the dynamic by which state malpractices and human rights violations are perpetrated in the name of democracy, a paradoxical dynamic that escalated after 9/11. In creating an embassy for a stateless state, Staal interrogates the suitability of the state as representative political form, and he proposes, instead, stateless democracy as a collectively created alternative system. His praxis thus appears to be firmly rooted in the sociopolitical problematics of his era, the era of the war on terror. In creating the *New World Embassy*, Ag Assarid similarly furthers his own world-making project, which takes the form of the creation of an independent state in defiance of lingering repression of the Tuareg by the state of Mali. Both Staal and Ag Assarid are involved in creating a counter-world to the one in which human rights are not addressed adequately.

Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is argued to take on not one but many, overlapping forms, including that of an *Embassy* for an unrecognised state, which they intend to function as a diplomatic institution; the form of an art installation and performance (the inauguration of which was covered by international media); the form of a representation of an alternative dispensation and of an alternative (independent) state; the form of a space of contestation, which makes it possible to interpret it as the kind of city described by Sassen, namely a counter-city embedded inside the coercive city, in which the oppression and destruction of the city as a space of order (and of peace in the form of war on terror), is smashed. In its manifestation as a counter-city, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia functions as the opposite to the city of order proposed by Mondrian, and also to Nieuwenhuys's city of universalised

anti-agency (or, sociopolitical agency endlessly and ineffectually directed toward interior landscaping). Its form as a (counter)city also makes it a technology of resistance. Lastly, neither Staal nor Ag Assarid seek to 'dominate' nature in the way described by Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and, in fact, Ag Assarid positions the desert as an agentic co-creator of his utopia (the state of Azawad). The various forms their utopia takes on, positions it as liminal in the subversive and productive sense described by Bhabha as the hybrid condition necessary for the renewal of culture and sociopolitical frameworks. Because it does not take on a single form (as the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys do), Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia functions as a between in several senses: it is a margin in the centre, a desert state within the city, a state within a state. This complexity is transferred to the equally liminal spatial and temporal frameworks it generates, and the dynamics at play within it.

The *Embassy* is interpreted as a heterotopia, characterised by a more radical contestation of spatiality, and the sociopolitical frameworks within it, than achieved by *New Babylon*. The state of Azawad itself is furthermore read as a region in which several kinds of smooth space coexist: the space of nomadic minority agency, as well as the hyperspace of the deep state and of extraterritorial criminal entrepreneurship (the similarity of which is not interpreted here as incidental). In its double form, Azawad is also subjected to the striation of the state of Azawad, and the striation of what Staal describes as the superstrate – the state instituted by totalising, proselytising ambition, and lastly by the striation inherent in declaring itself a state. The hybrid / border condition of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia also manifests in its location in digital space, again double (both disembodied and concrete).

The various permutations that the liminality of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia take on (that is, as a liminal form within various kinds of liminal space) are interpreted here to heighten its subversive potential: it destabilises as it infiltrates the master narrative and the geopolitical consequences of that narrative. Its liminality is furthermore prevalent in the temporal framework at play, that is, in the revolutionary mode of now-time in which history is re-inscribed by those excluded from history.

The dynamics discernible in the *New World Embassy* as a utopia, and in the region it represents, are discussed in terms of harmony, control, wholeness, abstraction, completion, newness, the role of technology, cultural pluralism, difference, and agency.

The lack of considerations of aspects such as harmony, control, wholeness, and finality in Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is linked to positioning it (the project of the *New World Embassy* and the creation of the state of Azawad) as an emerging process, and not in a final form. This aspect is regarded as a crucial determining factor in differentiating it from the utopias of both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. Staal and Ag Assarid do not seek to naturalise their utopia into a permanent solution, but to implement it as an instrument of dissidence and contestation. Their utopia is a performance in the mode of subversion rather than the outcome of contestation. Differences in the conceptualisation of freedom in the utopias of Nieuwenhuys and of Staal and Ag Assarid are ascribed to the modulations in the meaning of the term that occur when invoked by the same as against when invoked by the other. As a utopia of the other, the freedom Staal and Ag Assarid envisage is related to notions of minority sociopolitical agency, which renders it more productive in terms of redressing deficits in sociopolitical equity and human rights.

All three utopias discussed embrace technology, whether as an abstract force of progress and discipline (Mondrian), as a concretely constitutive element (Nieuwenhuys), or as the semi-abstract, semi-concrete technology of digital media strategically employed by Staal and Ag Assarid in the production of their utopia. The three utopias also emphasise collectivity, with the difference that the collective imagined by Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys (that is, the inhabitants of their utopias), are placed in a position of passive acceptance of the system created for them by the two utopians. Staal and Ag Assarid, by contrast, position themselves as agents among other agents, and relinquish control over the projects in which they are involved. Lastly, all three utopias foreground the importance of newness and are positioned by their creators as instrumental in constituting the new. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is read here as representative of newness as envisaged by Bhabha, and by Doreen Massey and David Harvey, that is, as openness toward a radically new future. Mondrian's and Nieuwenhuys's utopias are interpreted as the antithesis of historical newness / renewal, as there is a deficit of alternatives in their imagined societies.

With regard to the envisaged immanence of the three utopias discussed, Mondrian positioned his utopia in the distant future, and Nieuwenhuys, although he professed the practicability of his vision, nonetheless had no recourse but to imagine it as a future possibility. By contrast, whilst Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is partially expressed as a longed for state (that is, in the form of politically reformed and socially just stateless

democracy as a collective construct), this study interprets Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia in some respects as already established: it already exists in its form as a performance of alterity and Ag Assarid also regards the state of Azawad as already extant. The praxis of both Staal and Ag Assarid has already constituted "a different real" (Staal in NWE 2014b), and their utopia is hence interpreted here as the most concretely immanent of the three utopias (without thereby implying that immanence is a normative value with regard to utopia *per se*).

The last aspects discussed as part of the dynamic of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia are difference (which includes aspects of exclusion), and agency. Ag Assarid is seen as heir to a complex legacy of exclusion in which the Tuareg have been both advantaged (in a precolonial era in which they were sociopolitically privileged), and repressed, whilst Staal can be argued to be in voluntary exile from the dominant political and cultural framework in which he lives. Both Staal and Ag Assarid are thus interpreted to embody positions of exteriority and alterity, which impacts on the dynamic of their utopia. Mondrian's and Nieuwenhuys's utopias are interpreted as representative of efforts to eradicate difference, whereas Staal and Ag Assarid emphasise inclusion and the importance of cultural difference. The *New World Summits* are predicated on the idea of challenging sociopolitical exclusion and on the representation of those excluded. Staal furthermore openly dissociates himself from reactionary right wing politics, and Ag Assarid emphasises that neither he nor the MNLA propose ethnic exclusion or marginalisation on religious or other grounds. The utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid can thus be interpreted to be conducive to cultural pluralism. The dearth of gender representation in both the *New World Embassy* as a project, and in the broader project of establishing the state of Azawad, is, however, problematic, and in accordance with lingering structural patriarchy. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is not interpreted as a productive engagement with this particular aspect of the sociopolitical *milieu* of which they are part, and from which they benefit.

In contrast with the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, the utopia that Staal and Ag Assarid have created is, lastly, interpreted as highly agentic, referring to their own agency as utopians, and that of their fellow collective agents. They are furthermore understood as highly *tactical* insurgents who make use of numerous methods that heighten the productiveness and subversion of their utopia. These include harnessing the exceptionality of art in its ability to directly engage with the politically abject; exploiting their own liminal

subject positions (as half-inside and half-outside the structures they oppose); increasing the visibility of their project by engaging with digital technology and the media; and positioning their utopia as part of an international collective of minority politics.

Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is interpreted as very similar to dystopia. A utopia that is *enacted* as and from a minority perspective, rather than envisaged as a project directed toward a final end, manages to evade the excesses that utopian schemes have, rightly, come to be associated with: that is, as systems in which diverse subject positions are disregarded, human rights are violated and people are harassed, tortured, executed, silenced, and disappear. The utopia as a permanently finalised project can perhaps take no other form than that of a dystopia. The utopias of both Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys are interpreted as such dystopias that function as utopias of isolation, escapism, and othering. It is in order to contradict and subvert the utopia as dystopia that dystopia is formed. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is interpreted as similarly positioned to concretely destabilise both the dystopian given and the utopia as finalised dystopia. This contestation is enacted from the perspective of the dissidence of the minority position – the conscious countering of the same by the other, with one exception. Neither Staal nor Ag Assarid address the subject position of women in their utopia.

Nevertheless, their utopia is regarded as an essential engagement with an untenable sociopolitical order. Fournier's (2002:192) description of utopianism as "critical, transgressive and transformative", predicated on its function rather than on its form, is applicable to their utopia (and to dystopia). Furthermore, Staal and Ag Assarid can be seen to subvert the binary according to which Grey and Garsten (2002:9) describe utopias as either perfectly organised (a description that can be applied to Mondrian's utopia), or perfectly disorganised (reminiscent of Nieuwenhuys's utopia). By taking a liminal position (half abstract, half concrete; situated in the present as well as in the past and future; both inside and outside the dominant narratives they contest, etc.), the *New World Embassy* operates from a third space position, and is interpreted accordingly as productive of newness in a way not applicable to the utopias of Mondrian or Nieuwenhuys. Dystopia is similarly positioned as indexed by paradox, representing the subject position of the denizen of third space which is in almost every case double: simultaneously that of the other and of the same, depending on the

subject she is addressing, or being addressed by. (In other words, a denizen of third space, and of distopia, has to take cognisance of her class, gender, race, sexuality and so forth, in terms of which she can be majoritarian or minoritarian in relation to her interlocutor, in any given exchange). The distopian is thus mindful of her sociopolitical liminality, applying it as deemed appropriate to the situation at hand in order to address sociopolitical equity, particularly with regard to cultural pluralism. Lastly, Staal and Ag Assarid, through their utopian praxis, expose the normal as outrageous, which is what distopia aims to do.²⁹ To conclude, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is regarded as a productive, dissident distopia conducive to cultural pluralism and difference.

8.2 Conclusion

This chapter has interrogated the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid in its manifestation as the *New World Embassy*, and of the state of Azawad that it represents. Its function was determined as an attempt to redress current sociopolitical hazards as identified by Staal and Ag Assarid, namely the undemocratic practices of self-identified democracies, and the sociopolitical legacy of colonialism for the Tuareg. In this regard, it is similar to the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, and to distopia, as a response to the sociohistorical challenges of their respective eras.

In terms of its form, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is liminally multi-form: a political institution, an art work and performance, an image / representation, a dissident (counter)city. This complexity is mirrored in the liminality of its spatiotemporal frameworks, which include heterotopia, smooth, third, and border space, as well as the unhomey and explosive temporal zone of *jetztzeit*. Its dominant dynamic, that of emergence, precludes the aspects regarded as inimical in the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys, namely particularly finality, coercion, and exclusion. Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is regarded as maximally conducive to cultural pluralism and to sociopolitical and geopolitical newness. As a performance of alterity, the utopia of Staal and Ag Assarid is lastly regarded as already existent, and as a distopia of dissident and difference.

²⁹ Fournier (2002:194) regards this re-positioning of the 'normal' as the function of utopia.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises the preceding chapters in order to clarify the scope of the study, the trajectory of the main arguments, and the relevant conclusions reached upon completion. The contribution made by the study is highlighted and suggestions for further study offered. Before providing a more comprehensive summary of chapters below, a brief outline of the study is presented. The study aimed to develop a particular utopia, named distopia – that is, the utopia of dissidence and cultural pluralism. Distopia was formulated to address the broad sociopolitical and institutional marginalisation of the other, a designation conferred along the vectors of race, class, gender, sexuality, and so forth. In order to contextualise the nature of this utopia, the following steps were implemented:

- a) The choice of topic and specific selected artists was substantiated (Chapter One);
- b) An overview of modern and late modern utopian discourses was provided, as well as a framework by means of which to sort and analyse what constitutes the vast field of theoretical and practical utopias (Chapter Two);
- c) Utopian discourse was shown to be embedded in spatial discourses (Chapter Three);
- d) The relevant texts and strands of thought of eight selected theorists were clarified in order to extract aspects relating to space, time, agency (which includes dissidence), and cultural pluralism (also referred to as difference), central to the framework of distopia (Chapters Three and Four);
- e) The concept of distopia itself was clarified, focusing on its function and content in terms of four broad rubrics established in the study, namely space, time, newness, and dynamic (which includes agency and cultural pluralism) (Chapter Five);
- f) The utopias of three Dutch visual artists, namely Piet Mondrian, Constant Nieuwenhuys, and Jonas Staal (in collaboration with Moussa Ag Assarid), spanning a century, were analysed through the lens of distopia in order to critically juxtapose the tangible manifestation in the respective utopias of aspects such as newness, agency, and cultural pluralism, with the articulated aims of the artists concerned (Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight).

The following section summarises the chapters and delineates the main trajectory of the study.

9.1 Summary of chapters

Chapter Two provided an overview of utopian discourses from the inception of *Utopia* by name in the sixteenth century, when Sir Thomas More invented the term to describe his conception of a perfect society, and / or to critique the society of which he was part. Utopian thought and endeavours in the west precedes this date, but the chapter focused on the development of utopian discourses during the modern period. Utopianism is not regarded as a purely western phenomenon, but this study seeks to embed the formulation of distopia within an understanding of, and in reaction to, specific western sociopolitical systems and processes, such as capitalism, neocolonialism, and othering. Accordingly, the overview provided in Chapter Two focuses on western utopian discourses from the early modern period onward, as the sociopolitical processes in question began to coalesce during this time.

In order to structure the vast range of utopian thought and practical utopian efforts, Ruth Levitas's ordering of utopias according to function, form, and content was implemented. The function of utopias ranges broadly from attempts to escape unacceptable social conditions by creating alternative if 'unrealistic' visions, to constructive engagement with those aspects of society deemed problematic, which includes the establishment of alternative communities. Regardless of such variables in the *function* of utopia, it emerges that a sense of discomfort with, alienation from, or complete proscription of society forms the basis of utopias. This generalisation is demonstrated to be applicable to a reading of the three selected artists' utopias, as well as to distopia. With regard to the form and content of utopia, this study adopts Levitas's definition of the content of utopias as constituting the detail of the social arrangements of a given alternative society, but adapts this aspect of utopia to focus on the *dynamic* that can be discerned in its sociocultural structure. The dynamic of a utopia is related to its form and content, but analysis thereof necessitates a critical reading of its deep structure. Aspects relating to the dynamic of a utopia include whether it is envisaged as a final form or in terms of ongoing processes, the level of agency of its inhabitants, and its conduciveness to cultural pluralism. A secondary framework by means of which utopias can be categorised emerges when dissecting a given utopia's deep-structural dynamic: a utopia can be shown to represent the interests of either the same, or of the marginalised other. This distinction comprises the original contribution of this study to utopian discourses, and makes it possible to distinguish between excluding

and coercive utopias that seek to maintain structural oppression, and utopias that agentically oppose sociocultural disenfranchisement. It is this specific analysis of what a dissenting utopia of the other might entail that guides the conceptualisation and performance of dystopia (in Chapter Five), and the subsequent analysis of the three chosen utopias (in Chapters Six to Eight).

Chapter Two provides an overview of theoretical and practical utopias in the modern period. However, in this study, the designation of utopias as 'merely' theoretical, abstract, or fantastical, versus the classification of utopia as constructively practical and concrete, is avoided, as formulating the concept of an alternative society already constitutes utopian praxis. Sociocultural change begins with thinking about alternatives to given sociopolitical systems.

Over the course of development of utopian thought and practical projects since the sixteenth century, utopians have addressed broad themes embedded in the project of modernity, such as science, increasing 'discovery' of the 'new' world and its consequent colonisation, and the unfolding of capitalism. In this way, a genre of utopias from Francis Bacon's early-seventeenth-century scientifically oriented and ordered society, to Sir Julian Huxley's mid-twentieth-century adaptation of Darwinism to the notion of the evolution of human consciousness, demonstrates confidence in science and rationality. Besides this main theme, More's sixteenth-century imaginary island, and Swift's eighteenth-century *Gulliver's travels* demonstrate a growing consciousness of 'other' continents and regions. The literature review of utopias of discovery did not highlight any postcolonial counter-utopias, although the work of subaltern theorist Homi K Bhabha (discussed in Chapter Four), is read as utopian counter-discourse of the 'other', in defiance of colonial utopian constructs and processes. A third theme emerges as utopias formulated in reaction to capitalism from the time of its inception up the present: More critiqued the greed he identified in his fellow Tudors; Marx's *Communist manifesto* and the vast number of socialist communities established during the nineteenth century focussed on the increasingly negative social effects of capitalism; and the twentieth and twenty-first-century theorists selected for discussion in Chapters Three and Four are unanimously critical of late-capitalism. These themes (science, colonialism, and capitalism), are thus consistently prevalent over the course of the unfolding of modernity. Patriarchy and ecological

deterioration are only addressed on a broader scale during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Chapter Two lastly addresses the relationship between utopia and dystopia, and clarifies that these constructs are not opposites but dialectically interwoven, and in certain cases indistinguishable. Utopia and dystopia can be shown to have the same function (reacting to perceived harmful social constructs), and impulse – namely longing for a better society. Both utopias and dystopias can also be categorised in terms of their respective form, content and dynamic. In this way, More's *Utopia* can be understood as a utopia, and simultaneously as a dystopia: it is regarded as a critique of More's society in either case. Steven Duncombe interprets *Utopia* as a *conscious* manifestation of both (that is, of utopia as an earnest engagement with change, and of dystopia as a darkly satirical foregrounding of sociocultural absurdities). For Duncombe, this combination of utopian and dystopian aspects increases the criticality and subversive impact of More's *Utopia*. This concept of the dialectical relationship between utopia and dystopia provides a framework for the articulation of distopia, positioned as both utopian – proposing a sociocultural counter-praxis – and as dystopian: highlighting the absurdity of given, often normalised, othering socioeconomic practices, *and* the professed antidotes to such othering.

Chapter Three begins by foregrounding the links between utopian and spatial discourses, with particular reference to Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias as sociopolitical counter-spaces. Heterotopias (thus conceived) emphasise dissidence and difference, as well as agency, central concerns of distopia. Subsequently, relevant stands of thought in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Louis Marin and Michel de Certeau are interrogated in order to identify links between space as conceived by them, and distopia as an agentic site of dissident sociocultural counter-praxis.

Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the space of the nomad, also referred to as smooth and rhizomatic space, or the plane of consistency, as constituted by the actions of the nomad, who is designated such (as nomadic), by her sociocultural exteriority. Nomad space is hence, for them, sociopolitically other as well as necessarily immanent, that is: not an abstract concept, but materially and discursively constituted space impacting tangibly on lived experience. Smooth space is constructed in contradiction to striated space – the systemised, sedentarised space of the State apparatus. Nomad or smooth space is

furthermore continually under construction, preventing its re-stratification. As such, smooth space is characterised by processes of de-and reterritorialisation, and by dynamism, effected by the lines of flight.

As the plane of consistency, smooth space is constituted of radical heterogeneity: it is spatialised difference. As the rhizosphere, nomad space is a continuous margin that emerges as adventitious growth *from* the centre, but is simultaneously inimical to centring (normalisation). Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the agency of the other, defined in contradistinction to the same (that is, the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language), is adopted as a crucial consideration in determining the dynamic of distopia as the counter-discourse of the other, or, minoritarian discourse.

Louis Marin defines the 'utopic' as critique of the dominant discourse, and equates utopia with resistance to systemic capture, ascribed to utopia's ontological neutrality, and with newness, that is, the socioculturally unprecedented. Utopia's extraordinary position entails being simultaneously a bridging zone between opposing positions, as well as outside of the opposites it bridges – inassimilable, and evading synthesis. Utopia is thus the paradoxical zone of simultaneous interiority and exteriority, a double position which is what, for Marin, constitutes its productive potential. The concept of newness (also addressed by Bhabha), and of utopia as a critical position resistant to systemic appropriation is important for the conceptualisation of distopia.

The last theorist discussed in Chapter Three, Michel de Certeau, emphasises agentic appropriation and deconstruction of majoritarian discourses and sociopolitical systems by the other. Both agency as conceived by de Certeau and his focus on cultural pluralism are important for distopia. De Certeau rejects the conception of a single, superior culture or discourse, as well as the notion of the politically minoritarian as a passive entity. Walkers, for instance, activate space unpredictably to suit them and might undermine the ways in which spaces are 'supposed' to be used. Consumers are similarly repositioned as agentic secondary producers. These ordinary practices are the tactics of everyday life, customarily ignored or dismissed as inconsequential. Distopian praxis is similarly conceived in terms of subversive sociocultural counter-praxis, destabilising of majoritarian frameworks without necessarily being overtly oppositional (although it can be). Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari,

Marin and de Certeau have in common the concept of spatialisation as subversive, agentic performativity.

The theorists discussed in Chapter Four (namely Doreen Massey, Homi K Bhabha, and David Harvey), address cultural pluralism more directly. All three theorists address the deleterious effects of post- and neocolonial processes and capitalist systems on space and the lived experience of minoritarian neighbourhoods, societies and regions. They furthermore attempt to reconceptualise the given, and propose alternative possible futures. All three theorists thus also emphasise newness, and an 'activation' of the future. Massey's emphasis on the dynamic according to which claims to space can be judged (that is, whether made from a position of privilege and entitlement, or from a position of sociopolitical vulnerability), is related to the dystopian dynamic of discerning, in each interaction, the varying positions of sameness and otherness that one might simultaneously hold, depending on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, etcetera. In other words, the same gesture of disrespect is interpreted (in the current study) as dissenting when enacted by the other with regard to the same, and as merely othering, when enacted by the same. Massey explains that spatial discourse cannot be essentialised. Dystopia, similarly, is conceived as a disposition of criticality regarding the structure of same / other that informs every social interaction, and that necessitates a case by case analysis of the power relation in question. It is the varying degrees to which any one subject is rendered both same and other in relation to her interlocutor that renders minority discourses intersectional, but never identical.

Homi Bhabha's formulation of third space as a liminal zone in which to decentre cultural mainstream positions is adopted for dystopia. Cultural liminality is not an abstract concept, but an agentially and consciously held hybrid position, tactically engaged in subversion of essentialised cultural tropes. For instance, to reject selected aspects of the culture to which is one is assigned by birth, because they are regarded as inimical to social justice, is to take a third space position, and to negate the given. This is not merely an exercise in mental acuity, but necessitates cultural work, and impacts concretely on personal relationships and sociocultural tropes. The term cultural pluralism used in this study is furthermore also adopted from Bhabha, who rejects the terms multiculturalism and diversity as employed to camouflage continuing sociopolitical disparity. Bhabha invokes Benjaminian *jetztzeit* (shown

to be identical to Bloch's now-time), as the agentic matrix of renewal that positions third space as the engine of culture.

David Harvey takes an overtly Marxist position in his critique of the negative effects of capitalism on the segregation (by class and race) of cities and of geographical zones. He clarifies the concrete dynamic by which such segregation is effected, which renders capitalism a concrete, controvertible system, as opposed to an ephemeral, inevitable process. Aspects of Harvey's notion of a dialectical utopia are applied to distopia. Harvey positions dialectical utopia as a combination of the dynamism of utopias of time, or process (such as capitalism), with aspects of finality and closure that characterise utopias of space. Closure is, for Harvey, an inescapable consequence of making choices, a process that forecloses other possibilities. This dynamic is not conceived by Harvey in terms of permanent resolution of social conflict however, but as part of ongoing negotiation. Utopia as a resistance to closure is adopted as a principle characteristic of distopia, and the notion of distopia as both concrete and abstract is furthermore similar to Harvey's notion of the dialectical nature of utopia.

The nature of distopia – the focus of this study – is clarified in Chapter Five. This is done by summarising those aspects adopted from the theorists discussed in Chapters Three and Four, pertinent to distopia, under four main rubrics, namely space, time, newness and dynamic (which includes aspects such as agency and difference). These aspects of spatial and utopian thought (gleaned from the chosen theorists), are furthermore correlated with Ernst Bloch's seminal texts on utopia, which preceded them, in a performative re-enactment of the reactivation of history made possible by revolutionary now-time – invoked by both Bloch and Bhabha. Revolutionary and dissenting praxis is argued here (and by Bloch and Bhabha) to activate the past as well as the future, and informs the dynamic of distopia. Distopia is positioned as a utopia of agency, dissidence and cultural pluralism (difference), and as the enunciation of minoritarian discourse. Distopia is furthermore envisaged as multi-locational – instituted wherever minority agency asserts itself. The function of distopia is to serve as a zone of sociopolitical and sociocultural disruption, and it takes the form deemed necessary in order to effect such disruption. Distopia is accordingly not conceived in terms of permanence or closure, but as ongoing cultural work. A demeanour of *subversion* towards majoritarian othering praxis is essential for distopia.

Chapter Six describes and analyses Neoplasticism as formulated by Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. Mondrian's utopia is described in terms of its function (that is, as a reaction to the effects of war and of sociocultural chaos), and form (as abstract compositions embodying balance and harmony), and then analysed in terms of its dynamic, focusing on the key aspects of Neoplasticism as detailed by Mondrian. These include Mondrian's emphasis on rationality, abstraction, universality, wholeness, unity and harmony, and denunciation of subjectivity, naturalism, the material world, individualism, the fragmented and particular, and disorder. These aspects of Neoplasticism can all be related to Mondrian's adoption of the Hegelian dialectic which annuls difference as it synthesises opposites and terminates in a balanced, harmonious whole – a dialectical nirvana. This dynamic informs the finality and abstractly ideological nature of Mondrian's utopia as well as its sociocultural homogeneity. Lastly, an emphasis on control and what is interpreted as a dynamic of eradication of the other makes it possible to relate Mondrian's utopia to the first utopia as identified by Lewis Mumford, that is, the orderly, ordering and othering city. Spatially, Mondrian's utopia is relegated to the ethereal fourth dimension in which change, and hence time, are obliterated. The fourth dimension is furthermore abstract to the point of annulling space itself, along with time. Taking these aspects of Mondrian's utopia into consideration, it is possible to classify it as a traditional utopia – transcendent in terms of both space and time, and coercive in terms of its social dynamic. Mondrian did not regard his utopia as imminent, even when attempting to apply his vision to his personal workspaces. The conclusion reached is that Mondrian's utopia differs from dystopia in that it takes on a final form; negates agency and cultural pluralism; suppresses dissent; and represents the interests and propensities of the same in collusion with the broader project of modernity. Mondrian's utopia is interpreted as an othering, colonising endeavour. It is incommensurate with dystopia which is conceptualised as the dissenting sociocultural counter-praxis of the other.

In Chapter Seven, Dutch visual artist Constant Nieuwenhuys's utopia, *New Babylon*, is similarly described in terms of function and form, before analysing its dynamic and comparing it with Mondrian's utopia and with dystopia. *New Babylon*, created several decades after Mondrian developed his idea of a perfect society, is interpreted as an attempt to address the problematic sociocultural aspects of the post-World War II period. These included (for Nieuwenhuys), the burgeoning phenomenon of the spectacle, related to capitalism and consumerism, utilitarianism of the urban environment, and the effects of full automation on society. In terms of form, *New Babylon* is described by Nieuwenhuys as a

global camp for nomads, and he details its structural elements and the means by which its internal structure is to be manipulated by a permanently roaming population.

Nieuwenhuys's vision is formulated as an overtly urban phenomenon, and *New Babylon* is, accordingly, a vision of a single, interconnected, global city. Thus both Mondrian's utopia and that of Nieuwenhuys are related to the form of a city, with the difference between the two utopias manifesting only in terms of envisioned stasis versus (ostensible) dynamism. Despite this apparent discrepancy, the dynamic of the two utopias is interpreted to be similar in essential ways, namely in terms of envisioning utopia as a concluded and unified system, and in terms of the lack of agency for its inhabitants: although Nieuwenhuys describes his utopia in terms of autonomy and personal freedom and choice, a critical analysis of *New Babylon* foregrounds its final and static form, inhibitive of agency and dissent. Nieuwenhuys's conceptualisation of freedom is shown to be predicated on an uncritical elaboration of his subject position as the same into a universal sociocultural norm. One demonstrable difference between these utopias is that Nieuwenhuys, as a Marxist, endeavoured to address urban and social problematics in a concrete way, whereas Mondrian is interpreted as having attempted to escape concrete reality with his ideological and abstract utopia. Both Nieuwenhuys and Mondrian, however, dismiss nature in their utopias.

Spatially, Nieuwenhuys conceives of *New Babylon* as a manifestation of unitary urbanism, which can be understood as spatialised social processes (thus spatialised time). Both Mondrian's utopia and *New Babylon* are interpreted as annulling time. In the former, history comes to a standstill (both in terms of the timelessness of the fourth dimension, and as a Hegelian terminal absolute), and in the latter, the inexorability and endlessness of the dynamic culminates in a similarly changeless milieu, despite its appearance of dynamism. Lastly, Nieuwenhuys can, like Mondrian, be seen to dismiss cultural pluralism in his utopia, envisioning the formation of an homogeneous world culture predicated on a consumerist, appropriating, and touristic mentality, despite Nieuwenhuys's proscription of the dominant capitalist system. In terms of their deep structures, the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys are thus both interpreted as classical / tradition utopias similar to the first utopias of modernity, and as reflecting and furthering sociopolitically majoritarian interests despite being conceived as alternatives to such interests. Hence, neither Neoplasticism nor *New Babylon* engender sociopolitical newness. Nieuwenhuys's utopian vision can, like that

of Mondrian, be interpreted as a colonising enterprise, though more explicitly spatially and ideologically globalising in its scope. As systemically othering, neither of these two utopias are compatible with distopia.

Chapter Eight analyses the last of the three chosen artists' utopias, created by Jonas Staal and Moussa Ag Assarid. The *New World Embassy* is read as a utopia, and accordingly analysed in terms of its function, form, and dynamic. Staal explicitly positions his artistic (and, from the perspective of this study, utopianising) praxis as a reaction to the deterioration of democratic practices in western states and of global human rights in the wake of 9/11. The creation of the *New World Embassy* is an overt critique of the collusion between neoliberal ideology and the State apparatus, a system Staal refers to as the deep state. The function of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is to liberate democracy from the State.

This project determines the form(s) of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia which manifests as, amongst other permutations, the outline of an embassy for the newly declared independent state of Azawad; an art installation and performance; a media representation of a stateless state and of stateless democracy; an arena for the realisation of sociopolitical newness; a city as described by Sassen, as the locus of the production of other histories; a bi-location that telescopes the discursive and geopolitical margin and centre.

Spatially, the *New World Embassy* is comparable with heterotopia conceived as sociopolitical critique of majoritarian space, and also with smooth space and third space, as the medium of agency as enunciated and performed by the other. The multiple nature of smooth space (as the region of, alternately, the sociopolitical other, of hypercapitalism, and of jihadist universalism), mirrors the polyvalence of the *New World Embassy* in terms of its form, as well as in terms of its sociocultural dynamic and geopolitical complexity: the *Embassy* represents a region in which the interests of the same and of the other are materially contested. As such, the *Embassy* is the unhomely site of a proxy war, constituting quintessential third space. The *Embassy* is furthermore simultaneously abstract and concrete, as it manifests in spaces both materially real and digitally abstract (where abstraction nevertheless is embedded in concrete infrastructure and human activities). Digital space, like smooth space, is a region of minority agency as much as of striated majoritarian – and dystopian – systemic human rights violations. Staal and Ag Assarid, through their tactical engagement with it (digital space) render it contestatory. Its multivalent

and hybrid position furthermore makes it a border region, in accordance with Marin's description of utopia as a necessarily paradoxical location – culturally, discursively, symbolically, semiotically, and concretely simultaneously extraterritorial and structurally embedded. As a space in which history is interrupted and renewed, *The New World Embassy* is temporally inscribed as a zone in which *jetztzeit* jostles the majoritarian historical narrative.

The dynamic of Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is, accordingly, not predicated on notions of control, unity and wholeness, universality, completion, or finality, as are the utopias of Mondrian and Nieuwenhuys. It is envisaged, by contrast, as necessarily emergent; as a permanent revolution indexed by openness and ongoing processes of political articulation. The three utopias analysed do converge around four different themes, namely freedom, collectivity, technology, and newness. Nieuwenhuys invokes the notion of freedom in his utopia, and Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is positioned as part of a freedom struggle (the sociopolitical position taken by the respective protagonists is, however, shown to significantly modulate their respective notions of freedom). All three utopias are furthermore envisioned in terms of collectivity. Technology is also prevalent to varying degrees in the three utopias: as abstractly conducive to collective discipline for Mondrian, as a precondition for the society Nieuwenhuys envisioned, and as a tactical medium for the creation of an alternative 'world' by Staal and Ag Assarid. Lastly, all three utopias overtly position themselves as representative of the new. In as much as Mondrian's and Nieuwenhuys's utopias are representative of the same, their constructs are not interpreted here to be new. As instrumental in challenging the socio- and geopolitical status quo in relevant and radical ways, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is, by contrast, interpreted here as fundamentally new. In terms of immanence, Mondrian's vision was professed by him as not immediately attainable, whereas Nieuwenhuys believed his to be realisable. Its true attainability remains arguable. Conversely, again, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is already constituted as political counter-praxis.

To summarise, Staal and Ag Assarid's utopia is read as open, new, dissenting, as constructively engaging cultural pluralism, and as conducive to the performance of agency. None of the three utopias analysed constructively engage patriarchy, however.

9.2 Contribution of study

This study contributes to utopian studies by analysing utopia in terms of the sociopolitical framework of the same in relation to the other. This position negates the interpretation of utopia as necessarily coercive, or escapist, or, for that matter, as necessarily constructive and favourable. Interpreting the deep structure of utopia in terms of this framework (namely the interpersonal dialectic of the same in relation to the other), makes it possible to avoid essentialising utopia either in terms of its benefits or its deficits. Emphasising intersectionality (in terms of minoritarian discourses from the perspective of gender, race, class, sexual identity, age, etcetera), is regarded as conducive to politicising utopia in a constructive way, and in a way deemed (by the author) to be adequate to the task of addressing the abuse of human rights, sociopolitical inequality, and othering as perpetrated on a range of scales (household to global), in the current late modern period.

Furthermore, this study made it possible to review utopian artistic praxis across three successive generations of Dutch visual artists, and to extrapolate broad trends in utopian discourse from the discernible similarities and differences between the utopias in question. For instance, while agency and cultural pluralism can be seen to have been more productively engaged in the most recent utopia created by Staal and Ag Assarid, gender equality is still a neglected concern. This does not imply that no utopian discourses address gender equality, but simply that utopian, world-making praxis in the visual arts is still underrepresented when it comes to female artists, and gender as a thematic concern in artistic world-making is still insufficiently addressed.

Lastly, the current study interrogated the notion of utopia in a way that imbricates spatial discourse, world-making as praxis in the visual arts, and cultural pluralism. The study thereby addressed the effects of increasingly globalised processes on space and on human rights, specifically in terms of cultural pluralism, and the way in which visual artists respond to these effects.

9.3 Suggestions for further research

Further research related to the themes addressed in the current study include the following: Having formulated a specific utopia positioned to address cultural pluralism and dissidence (that, is, distopia), it could be compared to identified anarchic utopias by visual artists. Anarchy (a broad sociopolitical concept), when defined as resistance to political representation by sociopolitical leaders, and hence as resistance to political authority *per se*, is commensurable with a distopian position. For instance, Patrick Reedy's (2002) description of anarchist utopias can be related to Bloch's conception of utopia, which foregrounds the significance of an alternative temporality in the subversion of the dominant system. Reedy (2002:175) explains: "Anarchist conceptions of utopia ... display a more complex temporal character with the amalgam of past, present and future strategically deployed in their critique of current arrangements". In this way distopia can be positioned as anarchist praxis, similarly to the way in which it has been related to Marxist praxis in the current study.

Secondly, artistic utopias that foreground queerness (if queerness is defined as sociopolitically destabilising praxis), can be interrogated more directly. This study links dissident praxis to queering praxis, but a more comprehensive correlation between queering and the distopian framework established here, can be undertaken.

Thirdly, the influence of the sociopolitical intersection(s) of space and time on agency in the work of political theorist Hannah Arendt can be read from a distopian perspective. Her works *The origins of totalitarianism* (1951), *The human condition* (1958), and *Between past and future* (1961), can be correlated in order to analyse the time / space matrix and role of agency in Arendt's sociopolitical utopia.

Lastly, research that focusses more directly on gender politics in artistic utopias than the current study does, can be conducted in order to foreground what is still an under-researched discourse. Such a study might commence with a survey of utopias created by male- and female-identifying artists, as well as the dynamic of their utopias with regard to gender discourses generally. The notion of gender itself (when positioned as a binary), could also be critiqued in such a study.

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