



UNIVERSITY  
OF TAMPERE



# **(Im)Possible Cities**

## **The First International Conference of the Association for Literary Urban Studies**

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# **ABSTRACTS**

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## KEYNOTE ABSTRACTS

*Ayona Datta*

### **The Future is the City or the future of the city? Speed, scale and territory in the postcolonial urban age**

The 'future', Appadurai notes, is a 'cultural fact' - a social construction that is borne from our knowledge of the past and present to become a time-space of certainty. In this lecture, I will explore how the future became the city – a 'fact' that is now widely accepted as a way out of the current global crises of rapid urbanization, migration and climate change. Using the context of the postcolonial state, I will argue that this fact upholds a utopian myth in the linearity of time, making the future a blank canvas to be imprinted with the tyranny of the urban, which obscures the prosaic transactions of the actually existing city. I will suggest that the future as the city has transformed the future of the city into a 'test-bed' of innovation in speed, scale and territorialisation seen in the new city-making exercises across the postcolonial world.

*Eric Prieto*

### **Literature and the Rhetorics of Urban Informality**

This talk approaches the phenomenon of urban informality in the developing world through the problematics of representation, rhetoric, and ideology, interweaving close readings of literary texts with critical analyses of sociological and urban planning studies. I emphasize the "performative" ability of literary texts to generate new ways of seeing, mediating between the phenomenological discourses of individual experience and the hegemonic discourses of power in ways that are able to subtly but meaningfully inflect the latter. My talk will be organized around two geographical centers: Lagos, Nigeria and Istanbul, Turkey, examining literary works (by Chris Abani, Wole Soyinka, Maïk Nwosu, Orhan Pamuk, and Latife Tekin) that push back against established sociological and urbanistic categories that make it difficult to see informal settlements as more than just emblems of economic injustice or symptoms of social dysfunction. Along the way, I reflect on the methodological tools I draw on, including the geocritical emphasis on multifocalization, Jameson's conception of cognitive mapping, Glissantian notions of place and relational identity, and World Literature's attempts to rethink literary studies in terms of interconnected global processes rather than national traditions.

## ABSTRACTS

### **Argiropolis: Utopia, Urban Planning, and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Argentina**

*Carla Almanza-Gálvez*, Independent Scholar

In a long essay entitled *Argiropolis* (1850), Argentine president and writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento devised an imaginary, utopian city called Argiropolis ('Silver City') as the capital of the Confederation of the states of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, which he proposed to establish on an island in the River Plate. Sarmiento saw in the creation of an insular capital that would not belong to any of these three states the opportunity to build a new, unified nation, as well as a place to defend the values of European and North American civilization from the forces of barbarism. The objective of this strategic alliance was to overcome the status of inferiority in which these countries found themselves, compared to their rival Brazil.

By having recourse to Sarmiento's geopolitical thought, this paper seeks to explore the impact of Argiropolis's discourse of modernity on the process of nation-building and construction of national identity in Argentina during the dictatorial government of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-52). The analysis will focus on the ideological confrontation of the concept of civilization as reflected in the insularity and urbanism of the capital city with the barbarism of the Argentine Pampas. Sarmiento conceives of his utopian island as an instrument in the destruction of geographical barriers that only foment ignorance and hinder innovation. According to Argiropolis's urban topographic model, territorial vastness needs to be controlled and domesticated through the imposition of culture and progress. An important point of discussion will be the controversial Europeanization of Argentine nationhood as a means of fighting the backwardness and underdevelopment that indigenous peoples represent. The paper will essentially examine how Sarmiento's politics of geographical interconnection transcended the boundaries of Argentine soil in order to pursue a utopian Hispanic American integration, in which Argiropolis would act as the organizing center of national unity.

### **Moving towards Possible Cities: Future Urban Waterfronts in Contemporary Fiction**

*Lieven Ameel*, University of Tampere

In my paper, I will examine post-industrial urban waterfronts in literature as complex border zones of friction and ontological uncertainty, spaces in which the literary protagonists as well as the readers have to negotiate between the present and the future, the real and the possible. I will focus on a selection of contemporary Finnish, Dutch/Flemish and American novels that depict the urban waterfront in crisis in an imagined near future, with particular reference to the effects of global upheaval and climate change. The literary sources include Nathaniel Rich's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013), Antti Tuomainen's *Parantaja* (*The Healer*; 2011) and Roderik Six's *Vloed* ("Deluge"; 2012) – novels in which rising sea levels threaten the city and in which global and personal calls to action converge. In these novels, the waterfront constitutes a "muddy margin" (Doody 1996), a space of passage outside of the everyday order and the normative urban fabric. It is also a space of possibilities with dormant transformative powers, where existing social and moral structures are questioned and new visions become possible, both on the broader scale of society and from the personal perspective of the literary character (cf. Ameel 2016).

In contemporary fictional texts describing the urban waterfront under threat, crossing urban borders is conditioned by competing pathways towards the future, which appears in early 21st century literature as a crucial conceptual and ontological border zone for understanding the present. Moving into this border zone thus also entails becoming aware of questions of agency and moral responsibility, as is exemplified by the trajectory of the protagonist in *Odds Against the Future*, who moves from the question "What was possible? What should we be afraid of?" (Rich 2013: 7) to asking: what would be "the right thing to do" (Rich 2013: 161)?

## **Shaykh and the City: Sufi Flâneurs in pursuit of utopia in Naguib Mahfouz's fictions**

*Nazry Bahrawi, Singapore University of Technology and Design*

This paper aims to explore the role through which Islamic tropes has been literarily employed to imagine the good city. It does so by focusing on the figure of the Sufi master, or shaykh (شيخ), in selected fictions of the Nobel-Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz. Within the discipline of Islamic studies, the shaykh is often taken to be allegorically synonymous with Neoplatonic theology. Put simply, the shaykh harbours a deep spiritual desire to transcend their corporeal self for the purpose of becoming one with God. This desire that they seek to cultivate for themselves and for others is borne from a more ancient time. Figured as the archetypal ascetic, the shaykh as the gatekeeper of tradition is incongruent with the city, the very representation of progress and constant change. This paper counter-argues against such a stereotype. It posits that the figure of the shaykh – in the expert hands of Mahfouz – shapes a form of alternative modernity of urban life that complicates the secular dichotomy between thisworldliness and otherworldliness. Through its critical appraisal of secularism, the shaykh in Mahfouz's prose can be theorised as the Islamicate flaneur of the city. To this end, the paper will consider the figure of the shaykh in three of his fictions: namely, *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma*, *Arabian Nights* and *Days* as well as the short story *Zaabalawi*. While Mahfouz's narratives may contain elements of magical realism, his shaykhs are re-constituted as active agents whose purpose is to reform the socio-cultural and political practices of their times. The paper thus posits that Mahfouz's shaykhs are better read as postsecularists in pursuit of utopia.

## **City vs. Nation: The Impossible Urban Cosmopolitics of Haifa**

*Chen Bar-Itzhak, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev*

In our cultural imagination, cities are often connected to the notion of cosmopolitanism – creating a microcosm, a space of interaction between individuals of various backgrounds. The idea of the city has also been linked throughout history to the notion of utopia – stimulating utopian thought and serving as a laboratory for experiments in utopianism. But what happens when these two modes of thought, linked in our imaginations to cities, intersect? This paper aims to explore this intersection through a revealing case study: the literary portrayal of the city of Haifa as a utopian cosmopolis.

In 1902, in an attempt to deal with the growing anti-Semitism in his home city of Vienna, Jewish intellectual Theodor Herzl wrote his utopian novel "Altneuland", depicting the return of the Jewish people to their historic homeland and the creation of an ideal society there. The utopian nature of this society is exemplified in the depiction of one ideal city – Haifa, portrayed as a futuristic utopian cosmopolis. The descriptions of urban space in the novel, including building styles, neighborhood plans and street life, construct the literary city as a synecdoche for the ideal society Herzl wishes to create.

The years since the publication of the novel have seen many changes in the region: Zionism, the utopianist movement of which Herzl was one of the founding fathers, has led to the foundation of the state of Israel, and the city of Haifa, although often regarded as a unique multicultural enclave within the Israeli space, has since become a provincial city, in a reality that is everything but utopian. But the idea of a cosmopolitan utopia in Haifa still persists in the Israeli social imaginary. In his 2010 play "Railway to Damascus", Israeli playwright Hillel Mittelpunkt recreates the utopian cosmopolitan Haifa, but locates it in the past rather than the future. This play makes use of spatial metaphors to depict British-Mandate Haifa as a cosmopolitan utopia, one tragically lost due to the triumph of nationalism (both Jewish and Palestinian).

Through an examination of the complex relations between urban space, cosmopolitanism and utopia in these works, I will demonstrate how, confronted with the impossibility of a cosmopolitan utopia in a politically complex present, the cultural construct of utopian-cosmopolitan-Haifa has not been erased; Rather, it has traveled from the future to the past – from being an attainable ideal in a utopian novel to being a lost paradise to mourn in a tragic play.

## **The impossible Lower East Side in Patti Smith *Just Kids* memoir**

*Giacomo Bottà*, University of Helsinki

American singer and poet Patti Smith published her memoir *Just Kids* in 2010. The book portrays her life and the one of partner Robert Mapplethorpe as struggling artists living in NYC Lower East Side in the early 1970s.

The district in the memoir is instrumental to the self-realisation of the couple as bohemians; it is a performance space enabling the two to pursue art and eventually find success and stability and very much a space of the mind. It is also a district, which rose from poverty, segregation and social issues to a gentrified part of the city, within the last 40 years, also thanks to the reputation created by artists and musicians memoirs.

This paper would like to reveal the contradictions of living and performing art in a poor district. In many ways the attitude of Smith and many other musicians and artists living in the area was to retreat into a private creative micro-sphere, with little or no relation to the poor segregated majority. Moreover, their attention was focused on mid-town Manhattan, the place where art-interested millionaires and the cultural industries resided.

This paper would like to reflect upon the way the district is (not) represented in *Just Kids* and more general, how the relation between artists, poverty and place is often contradictory and complex. Furthermore it would like to examine the impossibility of enabling creative forces within a district, without affecting negatively its nature and composition.

## **Elusive Magical Middle Grounds: The Impossible Spaces of Brooklyn in Lethem's *The Fortress of Solitude***

*Eric C. Erbacher*, University of Muenster

In the past decade, the New York borough of Brooklyn has become a symbol of the successful revitalization of the American inner city and has been widely celebrated as emblematic of the good urban life. The rapid gentrification processes underpinning and driving this transformation in the socioeconomic and physical constitution of primarily the western parts of Brooklyn are usually regarded as necessary to make the borough attractive. In this logic, problematic effects of gentrification such as the marginalization and displacement of older population groups, often racial and ethnic minorities, by mainly white newcomers, are largely legitimized by the (economically) beneficial results for both newcomers and long-term residents alike.

This conception of gentrified Brooklyn as a place of progress is questioned and ultimately deconstructed in Jonathan Lethem's 2003 novel *The Fortress of Solitude*. Indeed, the novel, a Bildungsroman primarily focusing on the experiences of two unequal friends, the white Dylan Ebdus and the black Mingus Rude, growing up in slowly gentrifying Gowanus, presents the neighborhood as a place that is impossible to live in both before its gentrification as well as after. While the pre-gentrified Gowanus is shown as a segregated ghetto of crime and racial violence, the gentrified neighborhood, renamed Boerum Hill, is exclusionary and alienating due to its upper-middle-class artificiality. At the same time, however, the novel employs a magical realist mode and thereby opens up the (magical) possibility of a middle ground where the racial and class tensions and the destructive power of the forces of gentrification might be bridged.

In my paper, I will show how Lethem's novel constructs both pre-gentrification as well as gentrified Brooklyn as a space that makes it impossible for its long-term residents to lead a productive and self-determined life. Through an analysis of the literary function of the magical realist mode in parts of the novel, however, I will also point to the (fantastic) possibilities provided for a sustainable course of individual and neighborhood development which, however, is precluded by the deeply embedded structural forces of racism and postmodern capitalism.

## **In and Out of Time: Colson Whitehead's Speculative Cities**

*Anne-Marie Evans, York St John University*

This paper will explore representations of the city in three of Colson Whitehead's novels - *The Intuitionist* (1999), *Zone One* (2011), and *The Underground Railroad* (2016) - and consider how Whitehead uses the construction of a speculative city space as a way of engaging with history. In each text, American cities are re-imagined as 'new' versions of the original, allowing Whitehead to rebuild literary urban spaces and repurpose each as spaces for social criticism.

By examining three of his novels, this paper will seek to demonstrate how the reproduction of urban space is a crucial component in Whitehead's political engagement with contemporary America. In his most recent text, *The Underground Railroad*, runaway slave Cora escapes her plantation by boarding an underground train; the railroad is re-imagined as an actual train, complete with stations and a network of operators. This underground space allows Cora to travel throughout the country, where she comes into contact with multiple speculative versions of well-known US cities. The city is also an uncanny space in the New York of *The Intuitionist* in which Whitehead creates an alternative and unnamed Manhattan, where racial integration is a relatively new concept. In a city dominated by skyscrapers and vertical architecture, two competing schools of elevator inspectors wield incredible power, and Lila Mae Watson, the city's first black female elevator inspector, must navigate the city's dark and unknowable spaces. The city is Gotham-like, both familiar and forever unknowable, as Whitehead repurposes civic spaces to offer a scathing social critique of contemporary American race relations. Finally, in *Zone One*, Whitehead moves from an alternative vision of the contemporary city to a bleak construction of the future of city. After the outbreak of a zombie virus, the world has been devastated, and 'Zone One' is the area formally known as Manhattan. Mark Spitz and his team of volunteer soldiers must attempt to make the city space inhabitable once again.

In these three novels, Whitehead uses the city as a catalyst for his political polemic. From the historical spaces of *The Underground Railroad*, to the alternative contemporary vision of New York in *The Intuitionist*, to the bleak vision of the future offered by *Zone One*, the city is always a dynamic space and vital space.

## **Lada Lusina's Kiev and Volodymyr Danylenko's Kyiv: Architecture and Proper Names as an identity marker and a device for fantastika**

*Larisa Fialkova, University of Haifa*

The problem of opaque and blind formulated by Certaux, and the symbolic mechanisms, namely legend, memory and dream, which according to him organize the discourse on the cities are of special importance, when the same city is addressed from different angles. Thus in China Miéville's "The City and the City", where two peoples, supposedly a European and an Oriental, inhabiting the same city, are socialized in being blind to the other's part in it.

I will discuss two literary representations of the same city, created by two contemporary writers living in it: Lusina's serial novel "Kiev's Witches" (started in 2005), which is written in Russian and Danylenko's novel "Love in the Baroque's Style" (2009) - in Ukrainian. In the second case the city's name is Kyiv. All the texts belong to speculative fiction, which following Menzel and Clute I prefer to call with a Russian term *fanstastika*. The authors transform real places to *fanstastika* through activating local legends, e.g. the Bold Mountain or rather several Bold Mountans with their history of witches' Sabbath, as well as invented episodes in lives of memorable city dwellers, writers, painters and inventors. In some cases the places and the people are the same. Both authors invent "historical sources", animate buildings and such architectural details as atlantes, caryatides and chimeras. Both Kiev and Kyiv are connected to hell through caves and tunnels. However, in Lusina's books the supernatural is manifested by Modern, while in Danylenko's book Kyiv is the city of Baroque. Lusina's Modern encompasses both Russian and Ukrainian culture. However, Danylenko in order to accept a Modern building connects it with Baroque's culture.

**'A Lifelong State of Mind': Nuancing Cultural Representations of the UK Council Estate**  
*Jason Finch, Åbo Akademi University*

The UK zones of public housing known as council estates are built and experienced as portions of existing cities. The largest estates were built between the 1930s and the 1970s on urban peripheries. They were intended to be others of the city as much as parts of it. Drawing on political geographies of the estate, on ethnographic work in sociology and on urban cultural studies, this paper reassesses representations and constructions of council estates by examining concentrating on two large council estates in the West Midlands of England.

The council estate has an origin in utopian urbanism and the garden suburb movement but since the 1960s has most often been cast as a dystopia. In the arts, this dystopian image has been most marked in screen representations including films, television crime series, commercials and music videos shot in and around tower blocks in London (and occasionally other cities). Simultaneously, fictional and dramatic representations of estates produced since 1980 by writers as diverse as Andrea Dunbar, J.K. Rowling and Zadie Smith tend either to present the bleakest aspects of life there, or to view estates through the eyes of middle-class onlookers and educated escapees from them. Much of this writing could be seen as, in the words of Barbara Korte, 'poverty porn'.

The multiplicity of lives lived out on council estates are instead reclaimed here through readings of other genres in relation to the West Midlands urban region: *Estate* (1991), a book of photographs by Rob Clayton taken on the Lion's Farm Estate, west of Birmingham, and Lynsey Hanley's memoir of childhood and youth in the 1980s and 1990s on the Chelmsley Wood estate, eleven kilometres east of Birmingham city centre, *Estates: An Intimate History* (2007). As the titles of these works indicate, the word 'estate' itself has a totemic quality, denoting an area of territory with boundaries modelled on and sometimes directly transferred from the area owned by a landowner, and an evocative potency.

**The Impossible, Disconnected City of Paper in Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts***  
*Shawna Guenther, Dalhousie University*

As exemplified in many novels and movies, digitalisation and electronification of every aspect of life has led to eschatological (real and imagined) fears about destabilising our humanity through the disabling of such important human practices as social interaction, cultural production, and individualisation. Obsessed with the integration and separation of the digital and the human, Steven Hall's 2007 novel, *The Raw Shark Texts*, compels us to consider the ever-increasing (negative) impact of electronic encroachment on humanity, and even its destruction. As the narrator attempts to escape the assimilation of his own self into a powerful on-line collective consciousness, he discovers, in what he calls the "unspaces," a subterranean city built completely of paper that is impenetrable to the electronic menace. The paper city, with its many human voices attached to books, letters, and all types of (non-electronically) written communications, re-establishes the humanity that the electronically-driven city of the novel threatens. The human, therefore, expressing itself in low-tech communication and through its own computer (i.e. the brain), can reassert itself as a powerful, living, non-electronic entity, ready to re-establish social connections with other humans. This is only possible in the city of paper, a construction that is, itself, an impossibility, especially in the long-term, as electronic memory proves itself to be more efficient. In my paper, I will discuss how this disconnected, off-line, hidden city of paper functions as a literal fortress for the narrator, and as a metaphorical sanctuary from and weapon against the connected, on-line mainframe city in the novel. Further, I will show that the relationship between the two cities illuminates both the social anxiety about losing our humanity, and the individual's psychological inner battle about one's identity.



## **Performing Law**

*Naina Gupta*, Architectural Association, School of Architecture

Alan Read in his book, *Theatre and Law*, argues that law is a 'performative mode of practice'. He articulates 10 rules of engagement between legal process and theatre that structures the practice of law. The engagements he suggests not only structure the process of law but also are dialogically related to the spatial organisation of the trial, the architecture of the law court and its location in the city, implying an intimate and dynamically intertwined relationship between legal and spatial processes and performance.

*"But since this cause hath devolved on me, I will appoint judges of homicide bound by oath and establish a tribunal, a tribunal to endure for all time. Do ye call your witnesses and adduce your proofs, sworn evidence to support your cause; and I will return when I have singled out the best of my burghers, that they may decide this issue in accordance with the truth, having bound themselves by oath to pronounce no judgement contrary to justice."* – Athena in *Oresteia*

Beginning in 5th century BC Athens with *Oresteia* by Aeschylus written in recognition of the legal reforms of the period, the law court has forged an indestructible bond with civic life. Contemporaneously, international law courts have attempted to construct an international community – despite their jurisdictional ambiguity – using cinema, for example in the Nuremberg trials after World War II. The theatre and subsequently cinema have structured the space of the law court and its relationship with the city. I will use some paradigmatic theatrical and more contemporarily, cinematic work and their relationship with known trials to expand on the interrelation between performance and legal and spatial processes and consequently the construction of the juridical subject.

To end I will attempt to show how the ideas of performance have evolved in the International Criminal Court in Den Haag, in the architecture of the institution and the construction of Den Haag as the city of International Justice, provoking the idea that the mutual dependency between legal process, performance and spatial organisation suggests an agency for the role of architecture in the construction of justice.

## **New York City Outside the Window: John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer***

*Haddad Mordjana*, University of Larbi Ben M'Hidi Oum El-Bouaghi

In *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos portrays the changes that happened to New York City at the turn of the 20th century. In the novel, the architectural elements turn into symbols explaining the nature of this city and its impact on the characters. For instance, the window can unfold a range of symbols and images directly related to New York city and its urban space.

Indeed, there is a recurrent use of the window in the novel, particularly when most characters spend a good deal looking at the city out the window. For instance, when Ed Thatcher dreams about the ambitious future the city reserves for his family, he leans out the window and looking up and down the street. James Herf is charmed by the city; curiosity pushes him like a little child to happily watch the streets and spy on the people there. Ellen Thatcher escapes the fact that she is now married and avoids talking to her husband by looking via the train window at the brown marshes, factories and Bull Durham signs. In sum, the characters always move hurriedly to the window for the sake of either comfort, consolation, or beauty found in the streets and in different sounds such as the noise of L trains and the voice of boys playing.

In describing the city, the narrator often involves the window. For instance, he depicts the skyscrapers as white with black windows against the blue sky and white clouds. Also, this description gives cinematic impressions and allows the manifestation of other senses; for example, while hearing

the footsteps and sounds of men and women laughing, there comes a sourness of garbage into the air through the window.

As a result, for the readers the window becomes a vantage point to the city as well as to the inside of the characters. I will mainly show how the window reflects the city in *Manhattan Transfer* and analyze the impact of the city on the characters as watchers. I will additionally discuss the use of the window to refer to art in general as Zola describes it as far as it is related to vision, particularly when the window is associated with the realist theory.

### **Imagining a(nother) city: representations of gentrification in contemporary Berlin novels**

*Hanna Henryson, Uppsala University*

Despite, or possibly thanks to, its chaotic 20th century history and its poor financial state at the time, post-Wall Berlin rapidly became a projection surface for diverse fantasies, aspirations, and desires. 1990's Berlin attracted numerous artists, musicians, writers, film-makers, political visionaries and activists, students, and people who wished to pursue alternative lifestyles. The precarious situation of the city seemed to result in an openness and permissiveness that sparked creativity and imagination. As a consequence, Berlin became a frequent motif and a well-used setting for realist, pop, and dystopic cinematic and literary urban narratives.

With an improving economy and an intense city (re)construction, Berlin has become increasingly attractive to the middle class, tourists, startups, creative and IT companies, global players, and investors. A rapid process of gentrification has transformed several inner city districts such as Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg over the course of only a few years, and brought about increasing population rates and improved housing as well as displacement of lower-income inhabitants and smaller businesses. Representations of Berlin in literature, film and media have most likely played an important role in this development.

In this conference paper I will explore literary representations of the gentrification of Berlin by examining relevant novels published after 1989, such as *Irres Wetter* by Kathrin Röggla (Residenz Verlag, 2002), *Teil der Lösung* by Ulrich Peltzer (Rowohlt Verlag, 2007) and *Gehwegschäden* by Helmut Kuhn (Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt, 2012). The question of how the imagined city relates to its real-world counterpart will be central in this analysis. Political and idealist or utopic features of the novels will be taken into account. The paper will draw on theories of literature and space as well as of cultural geography and sociology.

### **Im/Possible Cities in the Independent “Shining City upon a Hill” — Literary Visions of Early US Cities between Anti-Urbanism and Urban Growth**

*Saskia Hertlein, University of Duisburg-Essen*

While some early settlers of the Northern part of the Americas had expected to build a “shining city upon a hill,” a “new Jerusalem” (Winthrop’s sermon on the *Arbella* referring to the biblical book of Revelation), this vision referred more to a model community than an actual city, and the settlers mostly lived in smaller communities. Around independence from Great Britain, however, some cities had developed, and others—Washington, DC even uniquely founded as the capital city of the USA—soon followed. At the same time, some contemporaneous thinkers (like Thomas Jefferson or the Transcendentalists) for various reasons resented certain aspects of cities, reflecting an ambivalent relationship between some Americans and their cities.

This paper seeks to explore selected 19th century literary visions of US cities, particularly New York and Boston as two former colonial, historical cities in the fairly recently founded USA oscillating between urban growth, positive visions, and various versions of anti-urbanism or other forms of resentment, both from an in- and outside perspective. Main foci are different literary visions of

im/possible cities for this newly independent country by authors like Walt Whitman, Lydia M. Child, Henry James (with both an in- and outside perspective), William Dean Howells, or Charles Dickens (especially in his travelogue *American Notes*). Moreover, the question to what extent the idea of the USA being a “city upon a hill” in a religious sense or otherwise being a role model (e.g. in Whitman’s celebration of the city and of democracy) was part of these visions, or which other visions had an impact on the development of ‘the American city’—and what the concept of ‘the American city’ might entail—in the 19th century will be discussed.

### **(Im)possible Maps of Hong Kong**

*Elizabeth Ho*, Lingnan University

The map – rather than film, photography, poetry, fiction – has emerged as the most appropriate genre to write the (im)possibilities of Hong Kong’s future. While unable and pragmatically unwilling, in some ways, to mobilize a national identity, crafting maps in Hong Kong serves multiple and related purposes: to trouble the boundaries of China that depict it as a homogenous entity and to address Hong Kong’s own hopes and anxieties, and spatial and economic disparities. This paper surveys current mapping practices deployed to explore contestations over cultural legitimacy and identity in post-reunification Hong Kong. I take my examples from the re-release of Dung Kai-Cheung’s *Atlas: An Archeology of an Imaginary City* in English in 2012; *Cities Without Ground* (2013), a sometimes imaginative re-mapping of Hong Kong’s spatial relationships via its network of elevated walkways; Ai Wei Wei’s recent map installation, “Baby Formula 2013”; and the protest maps that dotted the various occupation sites of the Umbrella Movement. Against these maps that celebrate the uncertainty of territorial claims, the new phenomenon in Hong Kong of inscribing permanent maps onto privatized public space -- HSBC’s map of the bank’s history chiseled into its plaza and the replicas of nineteenth-century nautical maps inset into the grounds of 1881:Heritage, one of the government’s commercial adaptive re-use projects designed to rehabilitate Hong Kong’s historical sites – can be read as an attempt to recapture space and eliminate narratives of possibility. Governed by the politics of claiming space and the poetics of lingering, these diverse mapping practices index the purposeful occupation of public space. Despite its incorporation into the geography of China, I argue, stakeholders in Hong Kong strategically use the power of maps to renegotiate the contours of the city’s geobody and shape alternative experiences of urban space. This paper ends a discussion of the art platform MAP Office’s recent installation, “HK Is Land” (2014, see below), a series of (im)possible maps of Hong Kong – consisting of eight new islands offshore of Hong Kong that cannot be mapped -- attempt a spatial analysis that is both not Hong Kong and another Hong Kong. The maps shift the boundaries between Hong Kong and China to mobile or unstable territories constructed out of metaphors, oyster shells, trash, data or ships, offering a diverse range of ecologies. No longer waxing nostalgic about “love at last sight”, the city seems more invested in emplotment and visibility – map or be mapped – than it ever was at its period of greatest transition. Hong Kong maps challenge the fantasy of a smooth topography and emphasize the edges and margins of Chineseness where control and contestation are prominent.

### **Language of Utopia: Narratives of “Socialist Cities” and their Symbolic Transformation**

*Mikhail Ilchenko*, Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Russian Academy of Sciences

The Soviet urban planning experience of 1920-1930s gives a unique example of how symbolic representations of urban areas can be no less important than settlements themselves. Narratives and discourses of the new emerging “ideal” Soviet cities proved to be not just a symbolic “supplement” to the building process, but actually determined their special form of existence. Those narratives shaped an image of “ideal” cities, determined their general perception, outlined their symbolic contours and, in fact, played a role of real regulating mechanisms. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say, that early Soviet urbanism was dependent on a “word” to the same extent as on engineering technologies.

The aim of this paper is to trace how narratives of the Soviet “ideal” cities changed and transformed over time starting from 1920s up to the present period. This could explain not only logic of their symbolic transformation but also reveal how these areas of the former “ideal settlements” are represented today. What are the ways of speaking on them? And how these new discourses and symbolic meanings affect their development and public perception?

The study is focused on the example of so-called “socialist cities” (sotsgorods) – experimental areas of public housing which embodied the concept of an ideal social living and “cities of tomorrow” in the Soviet context of 1920-1930s. The given paper is a result of a two-year research devoted to the symbolic transformation of “socialist cities” throughout Soviet history and in the post-Soviet period as well (several cases from Russia, Ukraine and Republic of Belarus are viewed). The study examines various types of discourses of the Soviet urban planning, including “official”, “informal”, “literary” and “artistic”. Research is based on the analysis of various materials: official declarations, speeches of architects, different literary sources, including novels and essays which reflect Soviet city-building process, memories and notes by architects and ordinary workers, national and local press, public debates on architectural issues in the periodicals and newspapers, catalogues of artistic projects and other.

### **Airy entanglements: Un-grounding the City**

*Verónica Jiménez Borja*, University of Toronto / Universidad San Francisco de Quito

Air is that ubiquitous but elusive substance that is so often taken for granted in representation, and theory. This paper considers the stakes of focusing on air and its materiality, by asking, how might a theory of the city evolve from atmospheric materialities?

Air refuses to fit neatly into either side of the nature/culture taxonomy. As a substance, it is fundamentally excluded from pervasively territorial and sedentary notions of place. Even when the city is theorized as a nodule in a web of flows and mobilities, the modernist spatiality that understands nature as fundamentally “staying put” is rarely challenged. Thinking through our human entanglements in airy matters disrupts divisions between the local and the global, humans and their environment, nature and the urban.

In as much as the urban concentrates human beings in ever-increasing proximity, the urban is also a process of becoming intimately and inextricably attached to a panoply of actors: microbes, viruses and polluted particles also inhabit the urban air in ever-more concentrated manners. Ongoing encounters and cross-contaminations are not amenable to the kind of “summing up” so often expected in narratives of place and belonging. Air is inescapable and inevitably trans-corporeal: the sight of entanglements enacted in more-than-human socialities.

In particular I examine Julianna Spahr’s poems *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* in which the urban is always co-implicated with non-human materiality: from spores, to skin, to pulverized glass, as always already enmeshed in webs of bodily practices. The city becomes an ideally resonant place for questioning the imagined opposition between nature and cities and helps reconsider the way we think of the makeup of our places and ourselves. I also consider Pinar Yoldas’ *Distilling the Sky*, a 2015 Guggenheim winning proposal to compress polluted air particles into an ink for writing imagined urban stories and futures. His proposal provides new ways of writing and imagining the city, all the more fruitful for their non-innocent origins. Might the trans-corporeal material flows of air position us to think differently about a material recirculation into the city’s body?

## **The Politics of Utopian Cityscapes in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain***

*Pekka Kilpeläinen, University of Eastern Finland*

Different urban sites of New York have central functions in James Baldwin's novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953). In this paper, I will discuss a utopian urban spatiality, which the novel constructs as a response and imaginary solution to its central antinomy. The protagonist, John, an African American adolescent, occupies a position of multilayered oppression in his poverty-stricken home in Harlem, dominated by his stepfather's tyrannical rule. John's home is a bounded place, defined by his stepfather's ideologies of inclusion and exclusion based on race and religion. This ideological closure of home generates a utopian impulse, which is conceptualized in the text in terms of spatiality, as John's imaginary solutions to his oppressed domestic position. He could become one of the 'sinners' who loiter along the avenue, or he could join the church and become a preacher like his stepfather, but what most appeals to him is the dream of succeeding in the 'white world,' for example as a famous poet or actor. Each of these options for escape is connected to a specific site in the city: the avenue, the storefront church, and a hill in Central Park. Through John's imagined routes of escape, these mundane sites are produced as imaginary utopian spaces that have political functions, as they address the issues of racism, economic hardship, and heteronormativity in the novel. This politically invested production of cityscapes may be understood in terms of Foucault's heterotopia and Fredric Jameson's utopian enclaves. In other words, these mundane, urban sites, which John inhabits, are transformed, firstly, into places of otherness where real social problems are simultaneously represented and challenged. These heterotopias are, in turn, turned into utopian enclaves where imaginary solutions are generated.

## **Learning from the impossible city**

*Xenia Kokoula, TU Berlin*

"Learning from everything" (Venturi et.al., 1977) has a long tradition in architecture; a discipline that is mostly defined from its output rather than a theoretical and methodological canon. Learning from, a common phrase since the 1970s, is often employed to describe forays into unknown realms, be it unexplored real spaces or unrelated disciplinary discourses. Learning from the literary text and other fictional spaces with or without a real-life counterpart is by no means new; however such attempts have remained fragmentary and marginalized, partly due to a lack of methodological clarity and argumentative cohesion.

A review of the methods and arguments employed in the emerging fields of literary geography, literary urban studies and other discourses on urban complexity and utopianism offers a variety of starting points in order to address this issue. Two approaches are particularly fruitful: The first considers the literary text as an abstracted but not reductionist view of urban complexity (Gurr, 2014) and the second is based on the notion of 'possible worlds', whose exploration can reveal both theoretical insights and possibilities for transformative action (Harvey, 1996). After discussing these approaches I argue for taking the literary text neither as a possible world, nor as a mere abstraction, however plausible, of the 'real world', but as a world in its own merit; one that allows in its fixed, written form, for recurrent, multiple readings or learning forays. This approach may be most suitable for exploring (im)possible fictional spaces that have no direct real-life equivalent; more specifically cities in which the established order - including its physical form - dissolves, collapses and is transgressed, contradicting the common lived experience of relatively stable socio-spatial orderings. Such an approach expands upon Judith Butler's call for considering "the literary text as a space where theory takes place" (Butler, 1992, p. 182). Beyond envisioning alternatives that challenge political and architectural orthodoxies, these impossible, shape-shifting cities can yield insights for a process-oriented, dynamic conceptualization of space.

## **Many possible pasts: the creation of 'York' in the eighteenth-century**

*Kaley Kramer, York St John University*

In 1730, Thomas Gent, a printer of York, published his 'history of York' – announcing himself the 'collector' on the title page rather than 'author'. Gent's efforts, he hoped, would 'promot[e] a nobler Design, and further[...] a more diligent Enquiry' (preface iv). Only six years later, Francis Drake's *Eboracum* (1796) appeared: a folio-sized book, paid for by over 500 subscribers, with full-colour plates and a detailed 'plan of the City'. Taking influence from Stow's *Survey of London, Eboracum* made York the first town to be given 'such an extensive history' (Rosemary Sweet). Drake's work, like Gent's, provided (to give Drake's full subtitle) 'the history and antiquities of the City of York, from its Original to the Present Time; together with the History of the Cathedral Church of York and the Lives of the Archbishops'. An antiquarian, Drake's interest – like Gent's – lay more in collecting and presenting York, rather than interpreting and narrating the history of the development of the city.

Gent and Drake's texts predate the great national histories of the 18th century by some decades (David Hume's *The History of England* began publication in 1754; Catharine Macaulay's work of the same name appeared in 1763). Both texts offer themselves to readers as 'collections' – as archives that memorialise rather than narrate or explain the history of the city. Nonetheless, each text participates clearly in the consolidation of 'York' and its promotion in the 18th-century as a city of culture in the North. The presentation of the past as present, in the careful collection and transcription of memorial stones, graveyards, and monuments in Drake, and of cheerful, local 'colour' in Gent offer different but related negotiations of 'historiography'. In the creation of the city-as-archive, Drake and Gent negotiate approaches to history that incorporate social, political, economic, and geographic 'narratives'. This paper will explore the representation of York in the 18th-century through these two 'histories', exploring the origins and intentions, as well as the city that emerged from the circulation of these particular urban histories.

## **Soviet Urban Space in Contemporary Russian Prose**

*Anni Lappela, University of Helsinki*

In my paper, I focus on Soviet urban space in post-Soviet Russian prose of the 2000s and the 2010s. The paper investigates how intertextuality, history, legends and myths affect protagonists' experience of city space. It contributes to an understanding of how referentiality and the (meta)textuality of Russian cities are problematized in contemporary prose. I am interested in the real-and-imagined nature of city space seen from the geocritical point of view and Bertrand Westphal's ideas about the referentiality and the spatiotemporality are important for my approach. Besides geocriticism, the main methodologies include also feminist geography. Research questions include: How can we conceptualize the relationship between urban experience and gender in contemporary Russian prose? Can we read the city as itself gendered in some way in certain works? In Dmitry Korzhov's novel trilogy (written between 2008-2015), which I will analyze, the milieu is the city of Murmansk, during the Soviet period, until the 1960s. I am also interested in how the protagonists experience the city space in temporal terms, between the past and the present. How they vision their future and the future of the city while moving in the urban space? These questions are especially interesting when analyzing novels which depict a long period of Soviet history from the point of view of one city.

## **'Giving Life the Slip' – The Potentiality of Modernist London and Woolf as Psychogeographer**

*Heidi Liedke, Koblenz-Landau*

To walk means to miss a place. In order to shed light on this claim made by Michel de Certeau and ask what can be gained from this kind of missing, I will think about the connection between mobility, spatiality and Virginia Woolf's idling through the city of London. The walker often finds him- or herself at the fringes of society and this is especially the case with Woolf's walker or Woolf as walker: her

spaces are transitory, they represent everyday urban potentialities and oscillate between a more and less immediate kind of referentiality. They are subject to a continuous contestation orchestrated by the gaze of the walking observer, or rather traveller-narrator. They are 'idle' in the sense that they only come into being by being moved through – and it is Woolf's agenda to be (in) several minds and places at the same time. Focusing on her London essays "Street Haunting" (1930) and "Portrait of a Londoner" (1931), this paper will make the claim for Woolf's explorations of spaces as psychogeographic endeavors that take on the shape of an asymptote because they enable the 'escapee' to 'give life the slip'. Using de Certeau's "Walking in the City" as a point of departure, I will read both texts against the background of the spatial practice of idling that combines them. I will intertwine De Certeau's structuralist approach with the psychogeographic concept of the *dérive* as an aimless drifting through a city and Michel Foucault's idea of heterotopia and show that Woolf's essays represent different versions of the effects of practiced idleness on the individual and her experience with the surrounding social and cultural space.

**Translocal Mapping in Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician***  
*Lena Mattheis, University of Duisburg-Essen*

Contemporary Anglophone novels are increasingly characterized by a global quality that becomes particularly tangible in their spatial settings. This reflects not only a more and more translocal world, but also presents us with questions of narratability: How do novels like *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – set in Lagos, London and Princeton and relying heavily on the mapping of cityscapes and the mutual permeation of cultures – create mental maps for readers that have no relation to any of their settings? How can a person who has possibly never heard of Igbo culture use it as a textual key to the unfamiliar streets of a run-down suburb of Princeton? Are we not only 'translated men', as Rushdie puts it, but also 'translated readers'?

In order to explore the ways in which narrated urban spaces transcend and layer each other, as well as their physical counterparts, a reading of Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician* (2015) will serve as an example. One central tool for this analysis will be a more literal mapping of urban performance, movement and trajectories. While the rather metaphorical mapping lexicon is used extensively in urban, postcolonial, gender and queer studies, the physical locations and trajectories referenced by a text – and thus, as it were, the text's implied mental map – can provide further insight into how translocally perceived urban spaces and places are layered over memories and immediate walking experiences. My analysis will be informed by Ayona Datta and Katherine Brickell's use of the term 'translocal', Avtar Brah's insights on diasporic spaces, but also by Saskia Sassen's notion of the 'global city', Edward Soja's postmetropolis and Lefebvre's and De Certeau's reflections on space and place.

**Impossible Moscow of Andrey Bely (Mythopoetic and Empiric Moscow in Moscow and Masks by Andrey Bely)**

*Vladimir Paperni, University of Haifa*

In the Russian cultural tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries, we find a constant opposition between Moscow as a historically and empirically real city and St. Petersburg as a mythological and, in its essence, unreal ("fantastic") one. In his novels *Moscow and Masks*, Bely elaborated empiric images of Moscow in the framework of his version of the mythology of Petersburg, as it was represented in his novel *Petersburg*.

Like his *Petersburg*, Bely's *Moscow* is a city, which exists under eschatological threats, rots, collapses and "turns into dust". In this city, the Last Judgment takes place, and the entire Russia with all the people, who influenced Bely's life and thought (his father, Briusov, Block, Doctor Steiner), are brought before the Court. This city is "under stroke": one of its residents, Professor Korobkin, invented an "electronic" (atomic) bomb that will blow up Moscow and the entire world, destroy the

culture, and sweep into power irrational, inhuman, and archaic forces of Chaos. Moreover, these evil forces are already present in Moscow. They live in the soul of the main villain of the novels - "the ancient reptile" Mandro and his doubles, which are identified with the lower stages of biological evolution (Octopus, Snake, Spider, etc.) and with the "prehistoric bleak era" of cruelty and tortures (people from Atlantis, ancient Mexico, Polynesia, etc.).

In the analyzed novels, Bely created and mixed into a general mythopoetic context two different images of Moscow: (1) a nostalgic and empirically reliable and consistent image of pre-Soviet Moscow with its real toponymy and topography; (2) a fuzzy, fearful, fantastic, and mythologized image of early-Soviet Moscow of the novels' adventure plot: this Moscow is inhabited by phantoms of mythological creatures, foreign spies and agents of GPU, and its toponymy and topography are partly fictional and include such geographical phantoms as "Polynesia in Moscow" or "Mesoamerica in Moscow".

### **Tourists' Heterotopian Dreams and Nightmarish Maps in Ian McEwan's Venice**

*Tijana Parezanović, Alfa BK University*

Venice does not cease to be an inexhaustible source of inspiration for writers, film-makers and artists, but also for tourists who pour into the city from various parts of the world all year round. It is frequently this perspective of tourists – foreigners – that is assumed in fiction about Venice. More recently, Peter Ackroyd describes it in his 2009 *Venice: A Pure City* as secret and unseen, claiming that one cannot see it or appreciate its identity from the outside, but only by delving into the maze of its alleys and canals. A similar approach is adopted by Ian McEwan in his 1981 novella *The Comfort of Strangers*, which is analyzed in this paper with a view to addressing the question of whether appreciating the identity (or identities) of a city is ever possible for tourists. The analysis is contextualized within the theoretical framework of the 'pierced map', developed in a recent study by Patricia García, and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. As observed in *The Comfort of Strangers*, the city eludes representation, since not a single of the numerous maps can capture every alley, courtyard or dock. One of such uncharted, hidden sites in McEwan's novella is the house of Venetians Robert and Caroline, to which British tourists Colin and Mary become, once they discover it, inexplicably attracted. The house, a mere blank space on the map, is described in terms of Foucault's heterotopias – which are essentially every tourist's dream – and entering the house becomes for Colin and Mary transgression to the "other side of the mirror." As the analysis shows, locating and entering these heterotopian uncharted spaces (which in the tourists' view equals capturing of the identity and authenticity of the city) necessitates personal sacrifice and ultimately leads only to a form of self-knowledge, while the city remains impossible to comprehend or map in entirety.

### **"Double Vision": Viennese exiles in New York and Back Home Again**

*Joshua Parker, University of Salzburg*

The United States gave asylum to some ten thousand Austrians fleeing Europe between 1938 and the Second World War's end, among them many of the 1,200 writers who fled Vienna during those years. Most passed first through New York, and many remained in Manhattan throughout the war and long after, with mixed feelings of longing for their home city, as well as mixed feelings of gratitude, amazement and repulsion for America's largest metropolis.

For Vienna-born refugee Lore Segal, Times Square was like nothing more than an over-animated Viennese Christmas market, yet going back to Vienna, she found remembering to be a no less "complicated act" than in New York: "The often-documented alteration of the size of the object, because of the viewer's altered size, is its simplest aspect. There is, besides, that coincidence of the ghostly, transparent, unstable stuff memory is made of, with the hard-edged material object, which, as often as not, is, in fact, altered [...] And there is the degree of history the viewer shares with the view." Meanwhile, a tissue of new memories associated with places, she imagined, is "the way our



histories become charged thus upon the air, the streets, the very houses of New York, that makes the alien into a citizen.”

The proposed paper examines Viennese authors from the 1930s to the 1980s’ experience of what Walter Abish described as a “double vision” of two cities, as they imagined visual traces of their home town in their city of exile, then again as many returned to Vienna after the war to experience the “double vision” of the city of their past and of the present. It focuses on a group of Viennese poets working in Manhattan during the 1930s and 1940s, whose writings on New York are a current translation project.

### **How to co-write urban communities in a dystopian story world – An introduction to a co-creative writing tool**

*Sofi Perikangas, Aalto University*

We are introducing a co-creative writing methodology and platform. Through the platform, we apply and create different design methods to produce meaningful fiction. We believe that through a designed writing process, it is possible to inspire and guide professional writers. Even for them, it may be challenging to imagine a foreign living environment. The platform works as a design tool and it can be helpful in co-imagining and empathising with the so-called wicked problems (Rittel&Webber 1973) of the future, such as living in, forming and maintaining urban communities in an environment hostile to people.

In the proposed paper we will open up the process of creating a fictional city state. We have asked the writers to create fiction that handles a set theme and works as an artistic result of the process. We will also propose sentiments on how the design tool created by us can support the invited writers in speculating on dystopic scenarios for humans. As a platform, the tool invites writers to take part in societal discussion. To a reader, fictionality works as an immersive but safe way to empathise with the wicked problems and topics alien to her.

An urban dystopia is a key element of the research. How will the writers handle a question of urban environment where pre-designed instructions offer them only limited resources for building up a literary city and planning its core functionalities. Whilst creating a methodological tool, we test the writers’ abilities to achieve new kinds of visionaries through limitations which we presume to scaffold their creative abilities.

We will be referring to studies about science fiction prototyping (Johnson 2011; Kymäläinen 2015) and speculative design research, especially the area of value fiction production (Dunne&Raby 2013).

### **A Guide to Ancient Milan for the Use of Demons**

#### **Sketch for a Psychogeographical Reading of Saint Augustine’s *Confessions V–IX***

*Hannu Poutiainen, University of Eastern Finland*

The problem with the distant past is how much of it is ephemeral and essentially unknowable. This problem is further compounded when the unknowable ephemera consists of phantasms, mere spectres of being, lingering about places that no longer exist, ruins that can no longer be found, memories that have passed into a netherworld of absolute oblivion. With any luck, something of these spectres may yet be glimpsed in documents that survive; but even then, however profoundly these remnants are sounded, the only traces they may yield are of contiguous things, things to which they comport an identifiable and recognisable reference, while an infinity of other connections, once living threads in a web of sympathies, wither away like pruned synapses. For this reason, as there can be no epistemology for such unbridgeable gaps, the only way to retrace these connections and reanimate their sympathies is to proceed experimentally, unmethodically, by wandering in a phantom city with no other map than the one being formed with every taken step. The purpose of this paper

will be to engage in such an experiment. Focusing on Books V–IX of Saint Augustine’s Confessions, its intention is to identify a number of emotionally charged references to Milan, the city where the great sinner converted to Christianity and became a great saint, and then to situate these references, with the help of Dayna S. Kallares’s book *City of Demons*, onto what may be called a demonological map of the ancient city. Thus situated, the references will then be refracted through Augustine’s own writings concerning the nature of demons, thereby broaching the path for a psychogeographical retroambulation through an ephemeral and unknowable terrain of personalised demons and their singular haunts.

### **When the capital fell apart. Guatemala City: urban changes, dictators, and earthquakes through traveler’s eyes, 1870-1920**

*Florencia Quesada Avendaño*, University of Helsinki

The urban geography of Latin America was transformed during the second half of the nineteenth century. Latin American capital cities were at the epicenter of selective urban transformations thanks to their successful agroexport economies. In pursuit of the modernization of the cities, the State and urban elites changed the appearance of the cities. The Liberal positivist elite’s project was to transform the post-colonial capital into a modern city.

In this paper the city is examined as a seat of social power, and as the embodiment of a political and cultural transformation that took shape in the new urban spaces. It analyzes and characterizes Guatemala City’s imaginaries built around the “modern” city, from the end of the 1890s century until the 1920s, through the eyes of European and North American travelers. Guatemala City was partially transformed in a localized process of urban change, especially under three main dictators from the 1870s onwards. However, in 1917-18 a series of major earthquakes abruptly interrupted the urban growth with urban and socio-political implications for the development of the capital. Some of the main questions analyzed in this paper are: How does travelers’ perceived the urban transformations? How were the imaginaries they created of the city before and after the earthquake? Was Guatemala City an (im)possible city in the first period of modern urban change? The relationship between the city, space, and their imaginaries constitutes a rich analytical theoretical framework for understanding urbanarchitectural and socio-political processes – how cities are conceptualized in the ethos of modernity and modernization.

### **Modernist Dickens: Railway Dreaming and the Imaginary City**

*Johannes Riquet*, University of Tampere

This paper discusses the connection between two spatial figures that are often linked to the emergence of a distinctly modern form of perception: the train and the city. In 1878, Friedrich Nietzsche used the train as a trope for the general experience of modern life as marked by fleeting and transitory perceptions: “[W]ith the tremendous acceleration of life, mind and eye have become accustomed to seeing and judging partially or inaccurately, and everyone is like the traveller who gets to know a land and its people from a railway carriage” (132). Scholars like Wolfgang Schivelbusch and George Revill have shown that the advent of the train in the nineteenth century created new perceptions of space and time. Meanwhile, scholars of literary modernism have discussed how the experience of the city as a multisensory realm played a central role in the shaping of modernist sensibilities.

My paper will elaborate this connection between the city and the railroad by discussing a short story by Charles Dickens: “Railway Dreaming” (1856). The story uses a train journey from London to Paris to develop an extravagant dream of a city on the moon, an oneiric version of Paris. Significantly, the description of this city substitutes for the actual journey, structurally aligning the perceptual experiences of the city and the railroad. In this and in other railway texts, Dickens develops literary techniques that anticipate those of literary modernism and that Alf Seegert playfully refers to as

“steam of consciousness.” In these texts, Dickens’s own writing becomes a challenging perceptual field for the reader, whose cognitive difficulties in making sense of a fast-paced overload of information align him or her with the railway passenger. As such, these texts point forward to the modernist phenomenologies of both the train and the city in the writings of high modernist authors like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

### **Donald Barthelme’s Impossible Cities**

*Markku Salmela, University of Tampere*

The ironic postmodernist textuality of Donald Barthelme’s short stories may easily conceal the fact that many of the stories are also thought-experiments on cities. In an oft-quoted phrase uttered by a character in “City Life”, the chaotic but creative metropolis is a “most exquisite mysterious muck . . . [that] heaves and palpitates”. This metaphor serves as a kind of foundation for the more fantastical urban conceptions in some of Barthelme’s best-known stories, such as “The Balloon” and “The Glass Mountain”, both of which place an enormous, mysterious object within or above Manhattan’s street grid. But the author’s urban visions are far from limited to such superimpositions and interpolations. Several stories play with more directly political scenarios. For example, the allegorical story “The Indian Uprising” represents a postindustrial city under siege; “I Bought a Little City” engages humorously but directly with problems of urban governance and planning; and “A City of Churches” introduces what the title promises, a town called Prester whose every building is a church, a rather bizarre variant of the notion of the ‘specialized city’.

My paper investigates the improbable city visions of Barthelme’s short stories from the viewpoint of literary urban studies, taking into account both the cultural moment of the stories’ composition and the debates concerning the social-world commitments of postmodernist fiction. Barthelme’s cities conform to Edward Soja’s notion of ‘simcity’ in that they are thoroughly permeated by forms of media, principles of storytelling, and various manipulations of perception. Yet, as I will argue, an image of the city as a community is discernible in these texts. As such, showing some appreciation for the materiality and corporeality of everyday urbanism, Barthelme’s stories maintain their connections with the possible.

### **Players Reimagining Cities**

*Olli Sotamaa, University of Tampere*

Video game design is often conceptualized as an act of word-building and compared to other design practices like architecture. Architects are no authors though. If we want the analogy between architecture and game design to hold, we need to focus on the collaborative processes of engagement and interaction that take place in the spaces set by designers (Sicart 2014). This paper takes a closer look at *Cities Skylines* (Colossal Order, 2015), a single-player open-ended city-building game. Special focus is put on how players utilize the game for re-creating, re-imagining and re-purposing existing real-world cities.

As the overall conceptualizations of cities have shifted towards open, self-organizing and complex systems, the idea of utilizing video games in urban planning has been raised (Devish 2008). At the same time, prior research has raised concerns about commercial city-building games being too constrained by the developers’ assumptions and biases (Lauwaert 2007, Bereitschaft 2016). *Cities Skylines* has been used both in city planning workshops (Stockholm, Sweden) and in collecting citizen’s concepts for new districts (Hämeenlinna, Finland). The discourses around these initiatives provide a rich source of study, allowing us to analyze the ways in which the game is believed to contribute to the future of these cities.

Beside the “serious” uses of the game, we also need to explore the diverse narratives that spawn from the everyday player activities (player-made scenarios, let’s play videos, stories posted to

community forums). Player stories actively blur the boundaries between impossible and possible worlds, challenging the conception of the game as a simple tool for urban development. Bugs and glitches in the code reveal cracks in the virtual towns, reminding us how no city space is impeccable. Furthermore, add-ons and modifications created and actively shared by players constantly transform the very nature of the game-world, allowing players to envision diverse urban utopias and dystopias.

### **Capitalising upon hope: ethical and phenomenological considerations on India's utopian 'smart cities'**

*Enid Still*, Savitribai Phule Pune University

Hope has a complex and multifaceted relationship with the concept of utopia. Some would assume that hope is a necessary factor within utopian narratives, designs and dreams but as many theorists on the anthropology of hope have demonstrated, hope cannot be simply reduced to 'desire's passive counterpart' (Crapanzano, 2004) and is not always orientated towards a future utopian ideal (Zigon, 2009). Rather, ethnographic accounts which address the lived experience of hope demonstrate that it is a dynamic temporal and spatial process of 'being-in-the-world,' one that involves "the continuous recycling of past and future ecstasies in the constitution of multiple presences, rather than a liner flow out of a past into a future" (Zigon, 2009:256).

In an exploration of this complex relationship my paper will discuss the utopian futures depicted through India's smart cities, focusing on the case of Lavasa in Maharashtra. Within the conceptual paradigms of ecological anthropology (Ingold, 1992) and the anthropocene (Moore, 2015; Moore, J.W., 2016), as well as Marxist theory on nature, urban development and space (Harvey, 2005; Lefebvre, 1998; Smith, 1984), I will discuss the ethical and phenomenological aspects of hope, which highlight how political and corporate narratives about the urban environment relate to and conflict with an everyday understanding of being in the world.

Like nations and ethnicity, utopias may be imagined but they are certainly not imaginary (Jenkins, 2002). They are made real by the lived experiences of such powerful rhetorics and visioning as occur in the Lavasa case. It is through the lens of hope therefore, that I argue we can elucidate the very real imaginaries of urban utopias and further investigate their impacts upon both human and non-human life.

### **"Chernobyl" real/unreal within ecocritical studies: the transformation of a soviet city into a digital zone**

*Inna Sukhenko*, Dnipropetrovsk National University  
Shevchenko Scientific Society

30-year experience of studying "Chernobyl narration" as a literary response to the explosion at Chernobyl nuclear energy plant (26 April, 1986) reveals that Chernobyl as a real urban Soviet City transferred into the amalgamation of its symbolic images such as a symbol of "Human-Nature" battle, an huge piece of abundant urban area, a Nature's domination, a protector from "peaceful atom", a tomb of the Soviet regime, a lost paradise, self-destroying science, a part of "private historical memory", an unhealthy fascination (by A. Korzeniowska-Bihun), and even as a litmus test that shows the attitude of the authorities towards their own society both in the 1980s and even in the time before Ukrainian Maydan 2013/2014, followed by the military events.

Nowadays shaped by the unique human-environment relationships, the digital society determines the transmedial transformations of "Chernobyl" perception within the convergent media culture (creating on/off-line activities – computer games S.T.A.L.K.E.R., ZONE; Chernobyl VR Project; Zone-tourism). "Chernobyl" extended the limits of real (and even literary) city and changed into a digital city, where the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. universe hosts virtual characters-players wearing Exoskeletons

or classic Monolith suits with gas masks and equipped with powerful weapons and aiming to reach Chernobyl Sarcophagus and refuse Common Consciousness”

Such aspect of the research is focused on studying the transformations of “Chernobyl” image within literary urban studies in the aspect of distinguishing local/global dimensions of “nuclear narration” while stressing its implementation in “provincializing” ecocritical studies. This vision involves finding out the ways of ecocritical vision on the concept “Soviet industrial city” against the literary background of studying “lost paradise” and “science-nature battle”. Studying the transformations of “Chernobyl” in “nuclear humanities” gives an opportunity to distinguish the local/global features of the ecocritical aspect of literary urban studies in the context of researching ecological memory and ecological identity in the post-traumatic societies.

### **The Malleable City-Character in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Unconsoled* (1995)**

*Aleksejs Taube*, University of Latvia

The unnamed city that is the setting of Ishiguro’s fourth novel appears to be located somewhere in Central Europe, yet its precise location remains undisclosed. Ishiguro’s imaginary city is characterized by a high degree of malleability: to a great extent, it is shaped by the often unconscious needs, fears and desires of the novel’s characters. The paper argues that the fantastic city in the novel can also be regarded as another character, possessing a certain degree of agency and thus interacting with the novel’s human characters. Thus, the city in the novel is a highly original literary creation, both shaped by the characters’ psyches and affecting their lives in a variety of ways. In other words, the city in Ishiguro’s novel is both a screen onto which the novel’s characters project their fears and desires and an active agent capable of influencing the course of the characters’ lives. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the literary chronotope and on Steve Pile’s theorization of urban imaginaries, the paper explores the ways in which Ishiguro’s city defamiliarizes our visions of the city and of its interaction with its inhabitants. The city in the novel is not only a geographical site with a great variety of material spaces and structures but also an entity in a state of constant transformation. Thus, the city in the novel is represented as a process rather than a fixed material environment. Moreover, the novel demonstrates that the city plays a very important role in creating its inhabitants’ moods and in facilitating or incapacitating their projects and relationships. Paradoxically, thanks precisely to its fantastic properties, Ishiguro’s unnamed city provides an important insight into urban realities.

### **Master and Disciple in “the Capital of the World”: Paris and Imaginary Cities in Saul Bellow’s *Ravelstein***

*Aristi Trendel*, Université du Maine

Saul Bellow in his roman à clé, *Ravelstein* builds up a colossus of a master, “a Homeric prodigy,” the last man “to capture modernity in its full complexity and to assess its human costs.” Abe Ravelstein, the elitist professor who wrote an intellectual blockbuster, is a literary expansion of Allan Bloom’s deeds and ideas steeped in the pathos of disease. In this narrative universe of high-brow male bonding that takes the ancient form of master and disciple, Chick accompanies AIDS-stricken Ravelstein on a celebratory trip to the City of Light. However, the professor’s Paris has nothing to do with the literary and artistic city of the myth. Curiously, it is the glamour of luxury hotels, restaurants and brands that Ravelstein seems to be after. This showbiz Paris is both highly appreciated and mocked. In fact, the cult cities of Ravelstein’s mind are Athens and Jerusalem and unlike prestigious predecessors it is in no Père Lachaise Cemetery that he wants to rest for ever but in Jerusalem as he asks his disciple to write his biography to preserve the master’s *logos* and affirm his Jewishness. This paper examines Bellow’s contribution to the image of Paris in literature.

## **The Photographer-Flâneur as Facilitator of Urban Connection in John Edgar Wideman's *Two Cities***

Tuire Valkeakari, Providence College

While some African American literary works celebrate the urban experience, others depict cities either as racially stratified and discriminatory spaces or as complex combinations of oppressive and liberating forces. Many African American novels set in the twentieth century—including and beyond the Great Migration era—point, as a matter of course, to systemic racism as the *prima causa* of the existence of racially separate, *de facto* segregated urban spheres, such as primarily black or white neighborhoods. Many of these novels also depict urban alienation's negative intraracial consequences by reimagining the erosion of close interpersonal relationships among African American individuals, families, and communities under the pressures of urban decay. In *Two Cities*, a 1998 novel of black urban disillusionment and estrangement, John Edgar Wideman continues the tradition of highlighting both interracial discrimination and its intraracial ramifications, but he at the same time turns away from the sternest and most pessimistic varieties of urban realism: he peoples his seemingly bleak Pittsburgh and Philadelphia cityscapes with protagonists who, despite their urban isolation and existential disenchantment, still pursue interpersonal connection.

*Two Cities* oscillates dialectically between loss and hope, or between urban dystopianism and more optimistic perspectives. Dystopianism is represented in *Two Cities* by urban decay, black ghettoization, and African American gang violence, as well as by the troubling memory of a specific historical incident, namely, the police bombing of the residential headquarters of the black radical revolutionary group MOVE on 6221 Osage Avenue in Philadelphia on May 13, 1985. Hope, in turn, is represented in the novel, first, by a love story, which is set in Pittsburgh and told in stylized cadences of the black urban vernacular; second, by the narrative's reflections on how to archive the unwritten experiences of the traumatized and its act of serving as such an archive itself through fictionalized storytelling that reimagines the lives of disadvantaged black working-class urbanites; third, by the text's fascination with bridges, such as the Spring Garden Street Bridge in Philadelphia, whose ability to bring people together physically comes to symbolize the human potential for existentially meaningful connections; and, fourth, by the multifaceted role that Martin Mallory—a physically and emotionally traumatized African American World War II veteran who is the focus of this presentation—plays in the novel. *Two Cities* modifies the Baudelairian/Benjaminian trope of the well-off, gentlemanly, and leisurely writer-flâneur by casting the indigent and marginalized Mallory as an invisible agent of peace, reconciliation, and reconnection in a Pittsburgh neighborhood whose residents he primarily views through the lens of a camera. My treatment of Mallory as a photographer-flâneur is partly indebted to the foundational 2006 essay, by Tyrone R. Simpson II, on what he terms "Black Flanerie and Traumatic Photorealism" in *Two Cities*. However, I place a stronger emphasis than Simpson does on Mallory as a figure whose presence points to the importance of the themes of human connectivity and hope in Wideman's multilayered narrative and who, despite witnessing and embodying trauma, on the level of plot occasionally succeeds in facilitating such connection.

## **Paper Covers Rock: Urban Archaeology in Michael Redhill's Toronto Novel *Consolation***

Meeria Vesala, University of Tampere

Heritage is a hard sell in any great metropolis, as urban planning, city-building and construction sites promote a cityscape that screams innovation, development and rebirth. Toronto, an old frontier village established as a town in 1793, promotes itself as a sophisticated, cosmopolitan city, yet it is also "overwhelmed by the fantasy of creative redevelopment from both the top down and the bottom up," Laura Levin and Kim Solga argue. Often accused of neglecting and trying to conceal its past, the modern day Toronto has moved towards embracing the city's many stories by turning attention to heritage preservation and local archeology. Nevertheless, urban archaeology, which is the key notion in understanding Michael Redhill's novel *Consolation* (2006), proposes a problem to city officials, to the city as a corporation and citizens as shareholders since its discoveries and finds are

often priceless and immeasurably valuable. Who gets to decide on the fate of Toronto's most precious social document lying in the bed of dirt under the construction site of the new sports arena? What is forensic geology? Why is contemporary Toronto fiction dedicated to the late Jane Jacobs? These are some of the questions I will address in my discussion of the city novel *Consolation* which, as its author states on the book's last page, is a "work of fiction based on fact."

In addition to exploring my topic through relevant theories in literary urban studies, I employ a practice called Deep Locational Criticism which embraces the use of techniques from disciplines which share a grounding in empirical study. This method and activity, developed by Jason Finch (2016), mixes local history, cultural geography, industrial-age archaeology and photography, making a deeper understanding of the novel's intra- and extra-textual world possible. By placing *location* at the centre of my analysis I wish to offer a glimpse into Toronto's fascinating urban past – accessible to us through texts, physical experience and a little imagination – and to the city's promising future.

### **The Teenager and the City: An Impossible Combination?**

*Lydia Wistisen*, Stockholm University

During the 20th century the city has become the most common setting in literature for young adults. Young adult literature has chiefly utilised contemporary urban youth subcultures to communicate dreams and fears to its young readers, to amuse and educate them. There is, however, a problem imbedded in this. On the one hand, writes of YA want to reach out to the teenager by depicting subversive culture, on the other conflicts between teenagers and urban spaces and/or social authorities are used to visualise the limits of what is allowed.

This dualistic nature of young adult literature has been widely debated in the field of research on children's and young adult literature, with scholars such as Roberta Seelinger Trites describing YA as an arena for social experiments. However, previous research has not adequately addressed the issue of the complicated relationship between teenagers, literature, urban space and power.

This paper examines how controversial youth movements as the car culture of the 1950's, the drug culture of the 1970's, and the rave scene of the 1990's, are represented in Swedish young adult literature. Specifically, I will be looking at Swedish YA-novels such as Harry Kullman's *Den svarta fläcken* (1949), Börje Isaksson's "*Fixa nåt...*" "*Vaddå?*" (1974), and Malin Isaksson's *Rör vid mig!* (2008). I will invoke the phenomena moral panic and its effect on representations of urban teenagers and juxtapose it against critical discussions on cities, power relations and appropriation, such as Michel de Certeau's theory of urban space and movement and Hakim Bey's temporary autonomous zone. By closely examining the correlations between the use of urban space in subcultures as well as in young adult literature, my paper sheds new light on the city and the teenager as an (im)possible combination.

### **Reflections of the future: Design fiction as a tool in designing cities**

*Johanna Ylipulli*, University of Oulu

The presentation focuses on a specific genre, *design fiction*, and its possibilities in the design of future cities and technologies. Design fiction is a relatively new concept, first used by science fiction author Bruce Sterling in 2005. It can be defined as science fiction which is concerned with the realities of design (Bleecker 2009). Dourish & Bell (2014) note that instead of merely offering fictional stories about tomorrow, science fiction has the ability to affect the collective imagination. This effect makes it a powerful tool for shaping our (technological) futures; visions turn into expectations, fictions turn into sketches and prototypes in labs. When used consciously, science fiction can be valuable for design: it does not only describe imaginary technological devices but allows picturing complete environments and worlds where future gadgets are used. It enables discussing and exploring future technologies *in a context*, we can imagine everyday life with these technologies, and the discussions,

practices, meanings, feelings and values surrounding them. Thus, using science fiction as a tool in design processes can be highly useful. It can highlight social, cultural and ethical questions connected to potential futures.

To study the possibilities of design fiction, we recently wrote a paper (Ylipulli & al. 2016) connected to an ongoing interdisciplinary research program on hybrid reality conducted in Oulu, Finland. The aim of the program is to explore the possibilities of 3D virtual city models, specifically the coupling of the virtual city with the real world into a *hybrid urban space*. The paper contains a design fiction envisioning a future hybrid city, written by a professional writer, and a theoretical section analyzing the writing process and potential uses. During the spring and summer 2017, we conduct a set of group discussion with stakeholders connected to urban planning, architecture and future cities in general. We ask them to read our story and to ponder its potentials in different planning and design processes. The aim of this presentation is to discuss the concept of design fiction and present results of our empirical studies.