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The Archipelago. Envisioning the Urban Revolution amid the Planetary Flood.

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Turin, January 18, 2024

Summary

This research defines and investigates the *Planetary Flood*, together with one among its possible becoming: the *Archipelago*. They constitute, at once, the abstract hypothesis I propose, and the new historically concrete object the enquiry put at the forefront. Guiding question has been: *how to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins at the time of Planetary Flood?*

Part One is theoretical. It disassembles, updates, and reassembles such Lefebvre’s formulation by confronting it with Negri and Hardt’s about the multitude and the Common, Morton’s around hyper-objects and Moore’s on metabolism. Firstly, the social architect, then the urbanistic and metabolic life of the multitude are offered as operative and living concepts. Secondly, Cacciari’s Archipelago is discussed and suggested as a new possible figure for the Urban Society. Instead, Part Two reports and analyses the gathered material during a period of fieldwork in the Netherlands. There, by means of navigation, I observed and lived through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. Specifically, the Room for The River Program (river courses management) and the work of Blue21 (floating urbanism) are considered. Finally, they are critically read to highlight (diagnosis), take care for, and orientate (prognosis) some embedded potentials of post-capitalist and post-statal ecologies.

Generally speaking, the research has been characterized by two major dimensions: a utopian momentum to break through into the possible and, consequently, a theoretical unbalance of the argument itself. That way, I aimed to show the urban-political alternatives currently existing Planetary Flood is in the grip of. The attempt has thus been made to draw the outline of a new urban critique. One which should be rooted on the becoming-architect of critical geography. Namely, on the endless and always to be renovated meta-philosophical gesture of taking seriously, engaging in and thinking through the Project in its urban-political materiality.

Acknowledgment

This research has found definitive light through the doctoral course which ends here. But it comes from afar, and has received strength from currents that exceed the most populous harbours and beaten academic routes. Therefore, it is first to them that I owe sincere thanks. To those winds which – only - can push (here just with the mind) to the forbidden navigation, from where only both catastrophe and the Common may arise - terrible ambivalence.

Nonetheless, the text proceeds with time. Such is its uncomfortable blackmail. The written page is so poor in autonomy. One cannot, instantly, know it. On the other hand, the picture neither appears at once. But to insist on the same is quite different from (even repeatedly) walking through. Therefore, it happens that one cannot but write in order. Inevitably, the line of the word lasts. Perhaps, this is why mysticism finds ecstasy in silence, out of what - by uttering, and thus enumerating, itself - necessarily divides. Not wanting to poetically "solve" the enigma, i.e. not wanting to leave this page blank, I bow myself to such a sad fate which I hope to decently resist at least until the end. There where the eminent - necessarily - will not refrain, returning to the beginning, from finding its place. Extroverted frame around which the oeuvre radiates, projecting itself into infinity.

So, here I thank a group of friends who have not been lost for 30 years. To always find each other again, by virtue of an explosive force that only seemingly unties: such is the lesson that our sea, sailed for years at random, never ceases to repeat me. To return to us by moving forward, that is the wave which marks together the thesis here proposed and the human experience that gives it hope. Our life, friends.

A hug and thanks to my dead, the only port from which departure is irreversible. In particular, to my uncle Vasco: I loved in you the boldness - which breathes here - of the ship heading for the pole. But not your despair. To my grandmother Maria, a school of elegance and tenderness: this thesis follows your blue gaze toward the beautiful, the true, the just. To my uncle Luciano, a solitary communist who taught me to become invisible. That is a vital tactic to escape the obvious and seek the potentials this research hopes to sing. To my grandparents Romano and Mario, gold diggers, partisans - with different weapons - of the same resistance. The Archipelago - impossible synthesis of freedom and revolution - is the gift I offer to your memory. If nothing else, at least, so that I can navigate, during this little life, to you and reassemble the table. Finally, a hug and thanks to my Italian and Latin professor Guglielmo Pesi. The disenchanted but proud ethic that blows through this work took strength many years ago, by studying Giacomo Leopardi with you.

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Thanks then to those colleagues or professors who, when met me, had a little thought or advice. To Marco Assennato, Ernesto Sferrazza, Franco Farinelli, Carola Hein, Jason Moore, and Philip Steinberg. In particular, to my master thesis advisor Emanuele Frixia, my PhD supervisors Marco Santangelo and Camillo Boano. I hope you can find here some echoes of your suggestions, especially you three who - albeit at different times - had to wear the cilice of my drafts.

A special hug goes to some 36th cycle doctoral students. Agostino, Lorenzo, Saskia, Nenna, Alle, Cate and Alio. I will hardly begin to believe that we learn more from books than from nightlife. Maybe we will no longer be colleagues, but we will remain friends. Let sailing one towards the other be, if not architectural and political proposal of this thesis, at least a caption to our moving pictures. Here we are Archipelago, an example for those who do not want to only suffer of PhD, and lie. Thanks then to Igor and Richard, to whom in a way the theories set forth here are opposed. Our backs are turned but attached, we found ourselves facing the same abyss. Necessity of the Archipelago, for us, is to remain friends without turning around.

Thanks then to the human multitude from where - more than a decade ago - the need began to flow for this research, for the ethics I hope to offer. Thousands of bodies, only a few names of whom I knew, to which I believed (and hoped) for years to speak and from whom I believed (and hoped) to learn. In Bologna, the

research I present here finds its origin. Storm and feast, pure ocean bursting far beyond the old walls. Atlantis buried in the alleys of the city centre and yet - that is the magic - still inhabited. Its living flesh, though from afar, remains here the bottom of trust. So many friends are connected to those long years of my life, so many now describe a diaspora that spreads across the world. If the prison comes, we will not have waited for - and wanted - it in vain. Point of the future that unites us. Certainly not the only one, since a command, a breath of life there remains by virtue of which we have set sail and to which we still navigate in our separate boats. Archipelago is this productive fleet, this project that we already manifest and that only exists since it is multiple, irreducible. Love and effort of the common. Thank you for giving me, by greeting us, the courage. In particular, a hug and thanks to Niccolò Cuppini. Colleagues, again, you might say. But from that long history, despite the storms, still friends. This thesis owes you the library, the patience, the time, the dedication, the care. His thinking, without your support, would have been impossible.

Some fellow travellers then deserve special attention.

Thanks, with open heart, to my friends Giaki, Giordi, and Tommy. The orbital of our adventure, which began as a reaction to some anxieties we suffered together, turned into a compelling friendship. But, and this is what remains special, also into years of philosophical and urban construction site. Archipelago was, before the Planetary Flood, our nomadic life. Despacito announced and celebrated the right to the city, a project to make humanity live on vacation.

Finally.

Some years ago, on a defaced and stony beach in my beloved Tuscany, I completely despaired that the crown of bridges just described would be possible. The courage of its plan had completely deserted me. There then occurred – Event - a kind of miracle. A new wind suddenly blew. And the word love again acquired its sense, at once the most immense and tragic. Get-away from death, *Entwurf* from the unquestionable certainty of nothingness. Rosa, my love, straight case in my soul, you saved this life (and with it the little thesis) and guided it beyond, toward the light. Thank you.

To my dead,

A multitude.

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Introduction

0.1 - General premises: *to the ships, geographers!*

This research defines and investigates the *Planetary Flood*, together with one among its possible becoming: the *Archipelago*. They constitute, at once, the abstract hypothesis I propose, and the new historically concrete object the enquiry put at the forefront¹. That way - in the context of the current capitalist world-ecology crisis (Moore, 2015, 2017) – I suggest fixing the encounter between climate change and planetary urbanization. Namely: topic of the work is to name, visualize and start discussing such a specific conjuncture, when rising sea levels, rain intensity and the growing in flood risks affect our urbanized planet. Instead, general aim is to show how such scenario is in the grip of the *possible*, i.e., of political alternatives to capitalism and the State. For that purpose, a suitable theoretical approach is provided, together with the figure of the *Archipelago*. Moreover, the

¹ Such a disorienting coincidence between the hypothesis and the object is derived from Lefebvre (1973b) and discussed throughout the methodological paragraph of this introduction.

lens of *ambivalence*² have been chosen to explore specific *metabolic fluxes*³ in the Netherlands. Guiding question of the research has been: *how to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins at the time of Planetary Flood?* It takes on a claim Keil (2018) advanced five years ago. Finally, urban and ocean studies are the main field the discussion develops through, while philosophy and political ecology broaden and deepen the gaze. That interdisciplinary perspective has entailed an adventurous job of connection between sometimes very far approaches. Thus, to make bridges walkable, an unbalance in the theoretical direction occurred.

Indeed, Part One consists of a series of close readings which engage with and combine Henri Lefebvre (urban philosopher), Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (political philosophers), Timothy Morton (philosopher), Jason Moore (environmental historian) and Massimo Cacciari (philosopher). Specific concepts are extracted from them and used to update the former’s idea of “urban revolution” (1973b) through the figure of the *Archipelago*. Instead, the Second Part is based on a period of fieldwork I did in the Netherlands between January and July 2022. Gathered materials are discussed for showing how the proposed theoretical

² Romano Alquati (1935-2010) developed his conception of ambivalence starting from his American colleague Robert K. Merton's studies (Giachetti, 2020). For Alquati – who has been one among the protagonists of Italian political *operaismo* - “ambivalence” does not simply indicate an internal alternative to the considered phenomenon. It does not point out the double direction it can take. Nor is this opportunity deterministically contained in the observed process. Rather, a phenomenon is “ambivalent” when, so to speak, there lies a “principle of possibility” (Bedani, Ioannilli, 2020, p. 63) to be activated subjectively (i.e. through collective political initiative). Therefore, Alquati's and Italian *operaismo*'s ambivalence is a revolutionary concept, it refers to the possibility of a radical transformation of society. The former is to be activated, to be invented. It opens a field of possibilities to be con-researched and to be actualized, rather than an objective region in which to search. Moreover, “ambivalence” relies on another concept: the un-solved residue. Capitalism cannot capture all human creative capacity – the activity (Ibid., p. 90) - so the latter always reproduces itself in excess, giving rise to a non-coincidence (an un-reduction, IT: *irriduzione* – see Alquati, 1989, vol. III, 1, p. 328) between command's desiderata and the world actually produced. For a general overview about Italian political *operaismo* see: Borio, Pozzi, Roggero (2002) and Tronti (2009).

³ I derive this formula from Harvey (2011). To secure mobility, he writes, capitalism needs to produce immobile spaces (infrastructure, houses, factories, etc.) that it can then destroy to re-territorialize itself. A slightly different coinage is proposed in this research to critically describe some ecological works and infrastructures. Firstly, according with Moore's (2015, 2017) Marxist perspective, every product of human activity is considered a metabolism, a synthesis of human and non-human energies. Secondly, I advance the hypothesis that something of the considered spatial fixes could be preserved and developed against and beyond capitalism. Namely, that they are not exhausted by the will of neo-liberalism. On the contrary, the *potential* might emerge of alter-urbanizations. Therefore, I suggest it is more useful to speak of *metabolic fluxes*, or *metabolic ambivalences*.

framework may *orientate* research and social practice in unprecedented ways. Therefore, the formers do not verify an abstract concept or category. Final statement will not be “in the Dutch country *there is* the Archipelago”, nor “the Archipelago *well describes* the Dutch country”. Rather, a stronger, concrete immanence emerge of a possible urban-political⁴ alternative. It would be claimed this way: the Archipelago grasps and gains to both critique and practice those alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) the Dutch country *is in the grip of*. Thus, while I conclude the research, it is social practice which has to realize its claims (see Brenner, 2009).

Such a (generally speaking) methodological choice has been due to two factors. On the one hand, the hyper-objectual (Morton, 2018) magnitude of the object has required not to abdicate a holistic perspective in favour of focus-grounded standpoints. To flatten the topic onto a specific component, or to read it through just a corner would have meant to lose complexity. Therefore, there may appear an abstract precedence upon the concrete if – with the latter - one refers to the specific *locus* where the research takes place. Instead, there is not if theory itself is considered – as it is here - about the “context of the context” (Brenner, Schmidt, 2015) which is never historically abstract or autonomous. On the other, I felt the necessity of profiting from the technical university (Polytechnic of Turin) which provided my scholarship. Namely: the opportunity had to be seized to seriously put my 7-years background in Literature, Philosophy, and theoretical Geography at the “trial of space” – as Lefebvre would have said. Thus, more properly, the terrain the research developed through has been that one of *meta-philosophy*. Even though that sounds like a paradox, precisely because – according to the French philosopher (2014 [1968]) – the former should consist of the historical overcoming of the philosophy-praxis separation through *urbanisme*. Therefore, what the reader finds here below is an exploration of a grey and ambiguous zone. One where everything leans towards urban practice while remains stuck on a 300 pages document. Words should then be considered as bricks, and their syntax⁵ as the very infra-structure to be prolonged onto the historical construction site of time-space production. In fact,

⁴ How the Political and the Urban are challenged by currently existing neo-liberalism has been studied also by Enright, Rossi (2018), and Cuppini (2023). Here, as deeply discussed through Chapter 1, I offer the hyphenated form to highlight the coincidence between the two adjectives and/or names. In fact, according to Lefebvre, the space becomes “urban” (adjective) when it is “perfectly appropriated” (Lefebvre, 1973a, p. 156) by means of the socialization of urbanism (Lefebvre, 2014, [1968]). Thus, to him, the political finds its terrain and immanence through such a process of production. The “urban-political” points to that tendential overlapping to be pursued.

⁵ Syntax comes from the Greek σύν – which means “with” – and τάξις, that stands for “to organize”, “to arrange”. Therefore, it is the same word then “infra-structure”.

such a *becoming architect* of geography, philosophy and social practice is one among the core claims of the work, and thus a crucial reading key.

All that deeply marks my text, both in structure and style terms. Firstly, a robust set of notes is given when necessary to lighten the main argument. This way, it should be easier to read it, while at the bottom one can find insights and specifications which delve into a concept, a word, or a reference. Secondly, sometimes the tone may appear assertive (especially in Part One). Though I tried hard to file it down, some remains. Such an effect is due to the exegetic effort of developing a reasoning through the reading of various authors and – subsequently – by means of their combination. Therefore, key points and steps had to be affirmed stronger to let the argument appear clearly and in its novelty. Anyway, despite these expedients, the offered assemblage requires to be followed through the given chaining. It suggests a path, a *navigation*, where jumps may cause a loss of meaning. That is why small introductions and conclusions are given for each chapter. Before, they help in framing, and after in ending the route that the considered focus develops. Moreover – throughout Part One - I remained as close as possible to the selected authors and their chosen essays. Long citations stand beside small ones, that may consist also of a single word (because of its specific nuance of meaning). For example, it is the case of “approximation” (and derivates). In fact, it is used in the same wake than Lefebvre (2016 [1965]) and is crucial to describe what I call “built kinships”. Thus, structurally, Chapters 1-3 move by alternating quotes from and critical paraphrases of some theoretical or philosophical texts. The former and their paragraphs consist of specific *corings* in the latter, which choice is justified in the methodological section here below. Instead, Part Two is more descriptive. After an historical introduction to the Dutch delta urbanism, it reports what I read, seen, felt, and heard during the fieldwork period. The tone is less essayistic and lots of images support the text. Nevertheless, a substantial body of literature is offered to present and situate the materials.

Before entering the main topic of the research, a last general premise is needed. In fact, the proposed frame – together with the partially hypothetical nature of the object - may appear too huge and completely not congruent with the space of a thousand-day scholarship and its required output. While following pages show how it also may not, I clarify here the origin of that choice. Indeed, I offer such an arduous path for historical and political positioning reasons I could not resist. My PhD adventure started under lockdown, from within a climate-change induced (Quammen, 2014) pandemic which – at today (December 16, 2023) – has caused about 7 million deaths. It continued under the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Europe’s

hearth, that has pushed us to the brink of a nuclear war. Finally, not to soften the situation, I am writing this introduction while Israel is brutally bombing Gaza, after Hamas's terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, and in the frame of a 70-years long history of occupation. UN is talking about "apocalyptic conditions", before 16.000 people killed on the Palestinian side (Caitlin, S., H. *et alia*, 2023). Such a context has directly affected the research, in both organizational terms (see the methodological paragraph) and ethical. In fact, before that multiplicity of tragedies, which together make epoch, it has been impossible not to take operative part in them by offering a kind of help, or contribution, in the direction of a *better life in common*. Thus, as far as specifically climate change is concerned, my work develops not only a *diagnostic* approach but also a *prognostic* one. While in critical urban debates (see below) the second dimension is lacking, our historical conjuncture made it even more urgent to fill the gap, to make a swerve in such a research's habit. The cynical detachment between the subject and the object is thus here replaced with an operative engagement. We should *stay with the trouble* by conceiving of care as risk, nor to cheer catastrophe or languish in inaction, but envisioning and figuring a new world "livable and prosperous" (Haraway, 2019, p. 194).

That is why, on the one hand, theoretical materials are – *metaphilosophically* - put at the trial of time, of history to be made, of environmental production. The *metabolic life of the multitude* (her *becoming architect*) to be built and defended is the *operative concept* I suggest for taking subjectively charge of that historical and practice-oriented claim. Namely, it is *how* I propose to contribute to and revitalize the endless and always to be renovated meta-philosophical gesture of taking seriously, engaging in and thinking-through the Project in its urban-political materiality. Moreover, the concept emerges precisely by close reading Lefebvre, Hardt and Negri. Thus, it is academically pertinent and – at once – up to a more-than-work conjuncture (the PhD scholarship + climate change as both its epochal context and topic).

On the other hand, that move required the opening of an unprecedented dimension of research: the *possible*, the stirring alternatives, the shadow cone of things where they can be otherwise than they are. To make space – among hell (Calvino, 2016 [1972], p. 160) – to the immanent presence of those *other worlds and invisible metropolis* has been core effort of the whole enquiry. Therefore, because of such abstract-oriented horizon, the work is theory-based. The latter comes first and gets an overall primacy. Moreover, as far as the fieldwork is concerned, materials are not simply reported. Nor critique stopped at the detection of capitalism, neither

commonly conceived social struggles are observed. On the contrary, what stands – at once - *before and beside* the latter and *against* the former is gathered and put to the fore.

Hence (and finally), the research grounds on a kind of visionary afflatus beyond capitalism. Such a “post-“ is not dreamed out, nor imaginatively invented. On the contrary, a path is traced starting from material conditions. In fact, partially, my guiding questions entails Fisher’s one: “is it possible to retain some of the libidinal and technological infrastructures of capital and move beyond it? [...] can we start from the pleasures of capitalism and work on the pleasures of capitalism in addition to its oppression?” (Fisher, 2021, p. 52)⁶. I thus made my own a *utopian will* (Bloch, 2019 [1959], p. 232), more than a retro-utopical one (Bauman, 2017)⁷. Indeed, to the former, the man is “a ferment of utopia” (IT: *ribolle di utopia*, p. 230). But such an impetus is not about pure fantasy. Rather, it may draw on what is “really possible” (Ibid. p. 231) since reality is processual, moves, and can still become. Thus, the *Archipelago* I propose in Chapter 3 participates (also) in that species of stimulating, forward, open-eyes dreams (Ibid., p. 91) through which – according to the German philosopher - the project can be materialistically anticipated of a better life in common. After all, “essence is not the already-been; on the contrary, the essence of the world is itself at the front” (Ibid., p. 23). Such an ontology entails navigation and exploration as a constitutive component of critical thinking and research. The latter gains this way its *prognostic* momentum, its breakthrough into the possible. That is what I propose to call (and claim for) the “*becoming architect of critical geography*”. It consists of a heterogeneous and to be better investigated process to inhabit and act the end of the World Picture’s Epoch (Farinelli, 1989, 2003, 2009). Namely: it stands for the effort of crossing the thresholds of representation and techniques by operatively gaining the terrain of environmental production. It involves the *creation of concepts and conceives of philosophy as the laboratory, the workshop, the atelier where geography and architecture meet to think of and produce urban-political transformations*. In this research, that move

⁶ The reference goes immediately (and often throughout Fisher’s text) to Mason (2015). For Fisher, the concept was fruitful in several ways. It allowed "communism" not to be used (and thus to avoid the associated negative memories) and not to postulate a pure otherness, something completely separate, but a development *from* capitalism *beyond* it. See Fisher, 2021, pp. 45-94.

⁷ The author segments it into the will to return to territories, to tribes or in the womb. He also ties it to the concept of nostalgia, which is defined as “a feeling of loss and disorientation, but it is also a love affair with one’s imagination” (Bauman, 2017, Ibid., p. 7).

takes place disassembling, updating, and reassembling the Lefebvrian concept of “urban revolution” (see methodology, here below).

Moreover, such a navigation profits from and goes partially out of metaphor thanks to the historical conjuncture we inhabit. That way, the French philosopher’s category is brought back to its revolutionary origins and put at the trial of time-space during the Planetary Flood. No maps are thus given, but urban-political projects are of environmental transformation. Here, *critical geography announces⁸ the future* to be realized. Therefore, the text you are going to read can be conceived as an open-to-time *thickness*. The former is not a linear progression on space through similar objects. Namely: it does not offer a series of the same thing but observed in different places. Nor it focuses only on a specific small topic trying to say everything about it. These specular kinds of impossible totality are both refused. Contrary, I offer a *mediation* to navigate the polarized field the former create without trapping oneself into their asymptotes. Such a movement, I hope, could open a *new way to do and conceive of urban critique*. One oriented to possible alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019). One which takes seriously Lefebvre’s claim (2014 [1968]) about the “socialization of urbanism”. One which does that when climate change increasingly and violently hits our urbanized life and makes radical democracy even more needed.

Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet - which passed a third of his life in jail - sang (*Angina Pectoris*, 1963 [1948], p. 199-200):

Guardo la notte attraverso le sbarre
e malgrado tutti questi muri che mi pesano sul petto
il mio cuore batte con la stella più lontana⁹.

My non-metaphoric ship brings that message on its bow. I believe it is crucial – when necessary - to get a big problem through a small opening (the PhD scholarship). And now, such a necessity appears (violently) historically given. I could not but start from the standpoint of this “state of the art”. And then to navigate

⁸ That might sound prophetic. Of course, partially it is. But it is also a keyword and approach widely used by Lefebvre (especially, 1973b). Indeed, to him – as I discuss in Chapter 1 and in the methodological section here below – the Urban and its involved revolution emerged from deployed planetary urbanization. But an effort of *transduction* was necessary *to see and orientate it*. Namely: a reflection was needed on the “possible object” (Ibid., p. 11). And that entails a nuance of prophecy, of forward and visionary thinking.

⁹ ENG (mine): “I look at the night through the bars/and despite all these walls weighing on the chest/my heart beats with the farthest star”.

and set sails towards that star, not to make the cell smaller and smaller, but to break it. From within the (ecological) capitalist crisis we are facing and the ontological tragedy hyper-objects (Morton, 2018) reveal, but against both: such is the effort I offer and try. *To the ships, geographers!*¹⁰.

0.2 - The Planetary Flood: what is going on.

Let us look at the globe, as it was the first time. The Earth is nothing else than a huge archipelago, which lands, waters, and air are crossed by the dense network of urbanization. We all face – more or less directly – the Ocean. Since 90% of global goods are shipped, it is highly probable that, in this moment, the sea affects human daily life also somewhere in central Asia. Rivers: entangled tentacles with which the common sea creeps into our lives. Rain: the “ocean of rain” we inhabit - da

¹⁰ Nietzsche (1977) concludes aphorism 289 (Ibid., p. 207) of *The Gay Science* in a similar vein: *to the ships, philosophers!* The image of the ship recurs elsewhere in the same work and in others, together with the metaphor of navigation to describe the (new) philosopher’s attitude and mission. Yu Wu has recently (2022) drawn attention on that. Instead, Caterina Resta (2002) defined the German philosopher an “oceanic thinker” since, to him, the open, limitless, ocean expanse well represents the horizon of philosophy. For Nietzsche, Resta continues, the journey is not – as it had been to Ulisse – *nostos* (a homecoming, a return), but *exodos*, a cutting-bridge adventure moved by an infinite desire of knowing. She has come back on the topic (2022), by opposing the Ocean to the Mediterranean. While the first is, to Resta, a vast, flat, plane at the will of power’s disposal, the second – *mesogeos* – is still measurable and has limits. Thus, thinking with the former entails the same, insane, hybris then Nietzsche. Then, it would be better to *remember* with the latter, and find there home. In the light of the emerging field of Ocean Studies, and specifically according with Steinberg and Peters (2015, 2019, see next paragraph of the introduction), I strongly disagree with Resta’s claim. In fact, it is to me crucial – especially in times of Planetary Flood – to think with the turbulent, limitless, multi-temporal materiality of the ocean. Indeed, I offer the hypothesis that only by re-entering back such a more-than-human, restless movement of waters into our planetary metropolis and urban *logos* it would be possible to envision, fight for and defend the Common. That is why “*to the ships, geographers*” seems to me a not only metaphorical motto to well start the journey. On the one hand, as I will show, living materially on/with exceeding water is a concrete scenario for lots of coastal and inland agglomerations. On the other, the former may stimulate a new urban *logos* where “nostalgia for the land” (Nietzsche, 1977, Aphorism 124, p. 162) and its cartographic rules are replaced by the urbanistic effort of the Archipelago, of urban-politically connect those who are distinct. Therefore, I would like to partially cherish the Nietzschean momentum “towards the horizon of the infinite” (Ibid.). If nothing else, it is what animates also the “will of utopia” Bloch talks about. As he writes: “the primal image of the ship indicates the will to go out, the dream of a wandering revenge and exotic victory. *Argo*...is a kind of ark for the most important desires of this age...the will breaks the house in which one is bored and where the best is forbidden” (Bloch, 2019, p. 32, trans. mine). *To the ships, geographers!*

Cunha (2018a) reminds us. Air: the same. Rocks: the same. Jungle: the same (da Cunha, 2018b). “There is no such thing as dry land” – the *Ocean of Wetness* platform reports - “wetness is everywhere to some degree. It is in the seas, clouds, rains, dew, air, soils, minerals, plants, animals”.

To imagine the world through and permeated by such a “ubiquitous wetness” (da Cunha, 2018a) is fascinating. Nevertheless - before historical actuality - there is something more. *What if water levels rose, flood risks increased and rain intensity as well?* What if that would involve a kind of *beingquake* (Morton, 2018), a seaquake which disrupts the overall, intertwined planetary infrastructure of life production and reproduction? Are we ready to surf the mountains, go out at night by boat, inhabit amphibious territories and feel the turbulent materiality of urban morphologies as characters in Kim Stanley Robinson’s (2017) *New York 2140* sci-fi novel do? *What would it entail for our desires of both freedom and good life in common?* Are we ready to defend, build and imagine suitable wet infrastructures?

Those questions seem to be on agenda. Indeed, such a *Planetary Flood* is not a metaphor, nor it is simply a scenario among others. Rather, it is probably already in progress.

This is Derna, north Libia. Figure 1 compares the city before and after typhoon Daniel, which arrived on September 10, 2023. Figure 2 is a view from the ground.



Figure 1: Planet Labs PBC, 2 Sep/12 Sep (Fleming, 2023).



Figure 2: Derna (Il Post, September 13, 2023, photo by Jamal Alkomaty, AP Photo).

I was then writing Chapter 3. Every day, I woke up and read newspapers. They were all talking about that hurricane, which suddenly replaced the Ukraine-Russia war. Especially Derna had been destroyed, because also of the breaking of two dams. It is estimated (Zaptia, 2023) that the city received about 115 million cubic metres of water in a day (the one-year amount), plus 20 million from the dikes breach. Almost 11.000 people died. As the images show, the agglomeration has been literally swept away. It has been dragged into the sea, like a word written onto the shoreline. The same cyclone moved then eastwards, hitting Bulgaria and Greece. The latter had just gone through weeks of violent fires due to extremely warm temperatures. The reportage by Faiola and Labropoulou (2023) well shows the degree of devastation. But, at the end of September, Daniel radically changed again the landscape, pouring to the ground the one-year amount of rain in 48 ours. Figure 3 is about Rhodes, whose surface burned for 10%. Instead, Figure 4 shows a plain in Thessaly after the storm.



Figure. 3: Ibid., photo by Nicole Tung.



Figure. 4: Thessaly (Smith, 2023, photo by Dimtiris Papamitsos/AP).

Such events are new for the Mediterranean *climate*. Of course, they fall under the name *Medicane* (Mediterranean + Hurricane, Agence France-Presse, 2023) and had already been observed. But their intensity and frequency are growing due to climate change. The Middle Sea appears no more the same lake which fostered our history of exchanges, encounters and sometimes wars, as Braudel (1987) – among others – has widely shown. Nor the wonderful Predrag Matvejević’s *Breviario Mediterraneo* seems written through the same waters. Winds, colours, foods, memories, habits and then cities, their ports, and mostly maps: the “new” Mediterranean may make them literally disappear or radically change. More turbulent ocean than an inner flat sea, it violently enters the land. Apparently, it is no longer given as measure, but as dis-measure and excess.

The country I come from, Italy, is a telling example in that regard. I report just four events which took place in the last 3 years (to look through the small window of my PhD).

Figure 5 is Catania, Sicily, October 26, 2021. *Medicane Apollo* turned the coastal city’s streets into rivers. Waves and currents took over them, without taking care for what they encountered.



Figure 5: Catania (Picheta *et alia*, 2021, photo by Sanne Derks/Getty Images).

The same went one year later further north, in the Marche region. A record-breaking storm hit the area, causing 12 deaths, and reaching local peaks of rain accumulation of 400mm (Molinari *et alia*, 2023) appeared far from the coast. It made infrastructures like to emerge from its seabed (Fig. 6) and created new kind of rough gulfs by violently hitting small inland villages (Fig. 7).



Figure 6: Marche Region (Fraïoli, 2022).



Figure 7: Sassoferrato, Marche Region (Povoledo, 2022, photo by Alessandro di Meo).

Nevertheless, all that seems nothing if compared with the series of flood which hit the Emilia-Romagna region during the first half of May 2023. It consisted of a

combination of two different weather fronts (one cold, one hot), a Mediane and a dry period which had made the soil more impermeable. 23 rivers overflowed, 280 landslides occurred, 41 towns have been variously submerged in mud, damage exceeded 5 billion euros, and 17 people died. It has been considered the worst flood in 100 years (Giuffrida, 2023a, 2023b). Due to climate change, unregulated urbanization, and inadequate prevention (Povoledo, 2023; Sabelli, 2023), Faenza, Cesena, Ravenna and other cities went through terrible days. Streets disappeared; fields were completely submerged. The same went for kitchens, garages, and ground floors of thousands of houses. Rivers violently permeated the land. Such a rough sea entered public and private spaces kilometres away from the coast. A kind of archipelago appeared (Fig. 8) but made of sludge and destruction. Old dikes were replaced by new, temporary ones, while objects to be thrown away were accumulated as other barriers along the streets (Fig. 9 and 10). A reversed world popped up: one where waterflows expanded all around dry and inhabited riverbeds. People gathered and helped each other. Fortunately, during the tragedy, a huge, collective, multitudinous supportive effort took place.



Figure 8: Faenza, photo by Michele Lapini.



Figure 9: Faenza, photo by Michele Lapini.



Figure 10: Faenza, photo by Michele Lapini.

The same happened few weeks ago in the region I come from: Tuscany. Mediane Ciaran arrived the night of November 2, 2023. It hit with strong winds (more than 180km/h), heavy rains and 7 people died (Kirby, 2023; Reuters, 2023). Streets disappeared again and turned into rivers; another mudded archipelago popped up while waters replaced fields. Figure 11 shows Campi Bisenzio, close to Florence. Instead, Figure 12 is the main road of my hometown (Quarrata), and the photographer is a dear friend of mine which is fortunately still alive. Both cities are about 100 kilometres far from the coast. There, in Livorno for example, the Tyrrhenian Sea ominously arose and stirred. It entered the city producing the same new, oceanic image (Fig. 13 and 14) of the Mediterranean we saw before.



Figure 11: Campi Bisenzio, photo by Michele Lapini.



Figure 12: Quarrata, photo by Fabio Petracchi.



Figure 13: Livorno, photo by Francesco Luongo.



Figure 14: Livorno, photo by Andrea Dani.

I have remained in the Mediterranean area just because, to us, such medicanes were very rare events. But if one looks at monsoon areas the situation is even worst. Of course, the *ubiquitous wetness* does not appear there as an event. It is not something which one is forced to acknowledge *ex abrupto*, a condition that before was not observed. Rather – as da Cunha (2018) writes – the Indo region, for example, already lays in such a Sindu or “ocean of rain”. The latter – which “does not flow as rivers do” (Ibid., p. 10) – “is held for varying extents of time ranging from seconds and minutes to centuries and eons in soils, aquifers, glaciers, snowfields, tanks, building materials, agricultural fields, air, and even plants and animals” (Ibid). Therefore – differently from our country - it would be wrong to detach “a” flood from there, as it would be “to call out a river in a place of the monsoon” (Ibid., p.40). Nevertheless, an increase is anyway occurring in terms of intensity of rains. Punctual example can be the violent flood which hit Vietnam in October 2020. It has been considered the worst one since decades (Hollingsworth, 2020) and caused more than 100 deaths (Fig. 15). Otherwise, one can look at what happened in Pakistan one year ago. From June 2022 to October same year, a series of (climate change induced, see Zhong, 2022) heavy monsoon events caused a 4-months long flood. It literally made one-third (Sands, 2022) of the country go

underwater and created a 100km-wide lake in the region's heart (Miller *et alia*, 2022) – see Fig. 16 and 17. About 1800 people died.



UNICEF/UN0354393/Pham/AFP Services
Vue aérienne de maisons détruites et submergées par des inondations causées par un typhon au Vietnam

Figure 15: Flood in Vietnam, photo by UNICEF.

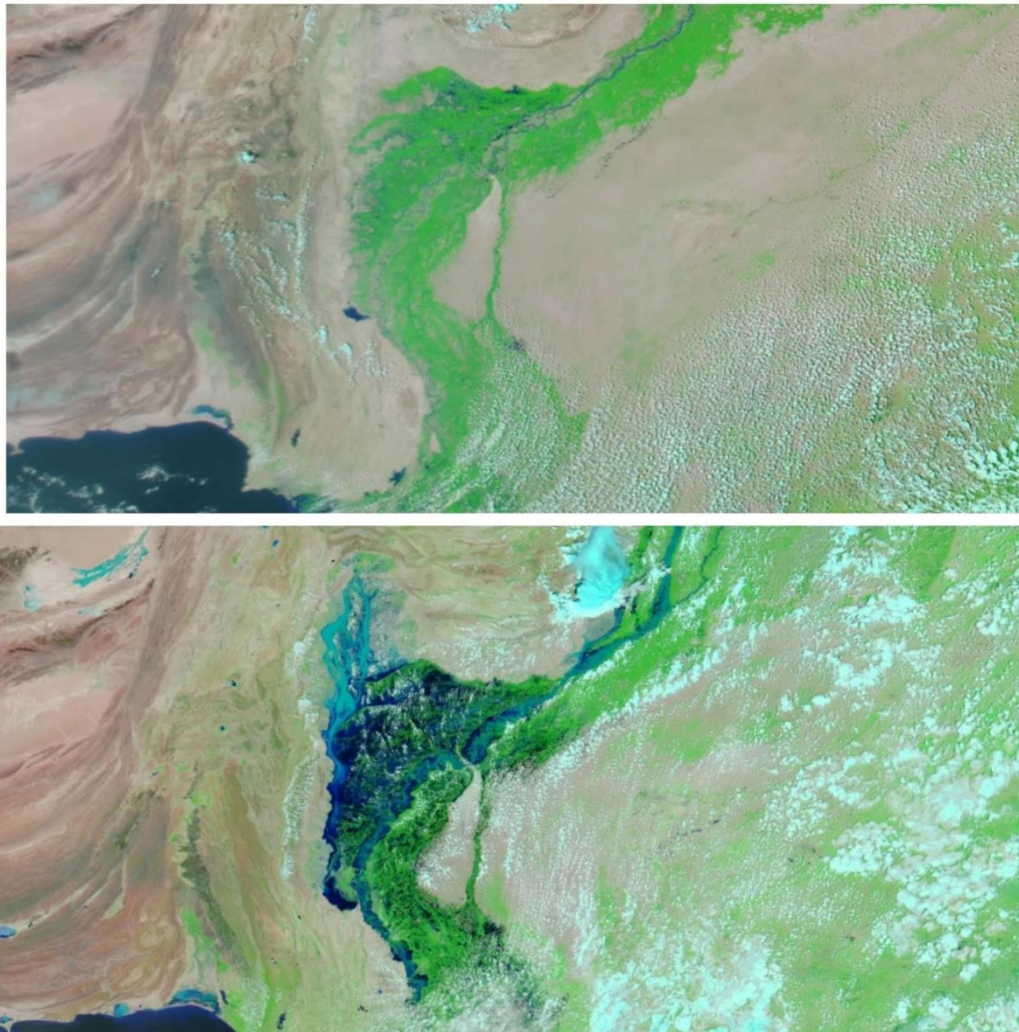


Figure 16: Satellite pictures from NASA Worldview, taken on August 2021 and 2022 (Miller *et alia*, 2022).



Figure 17: Jaffarabad, Pakistan, photo by Zahid Hussain.

Maybe, what I propose to call the “Planetary Flood” is beginning to emerge. *It is offered as the name to recognize an historical conjuncture: the epochal encounter between the ubiquitous wetness (considered in the process of its material revealing) and our urbanized planet and atmosphere.* Especially for the limited Middle Mediterranean Sea, some radical changes seem to take place: sometimes the former turns into a dis-measured, ocean-like turbulent materiality, whether it comes from the sky, rivers, or the horizon. Our experience of climate is going monsoonic, even though periods of dry land may obscure - at a first glance – such an *Hypersea* (Peters, Steinberg, 2019). The Indo region and some Italian cities appears to lay in a similar coming-and-going archipelago. However, how and why that flood should be considered “planetary” is to be clarified. For that purpose, some IPCC reports, UN documents, related scientific studies and open access databases can be considered. That way, a wider and more detailed perspective about specific flood-prone areas and global flooding events in general may be gained and then compared with urbanizations trends.

Let us look, for example, at these graphs (Fig. 18 and 19):

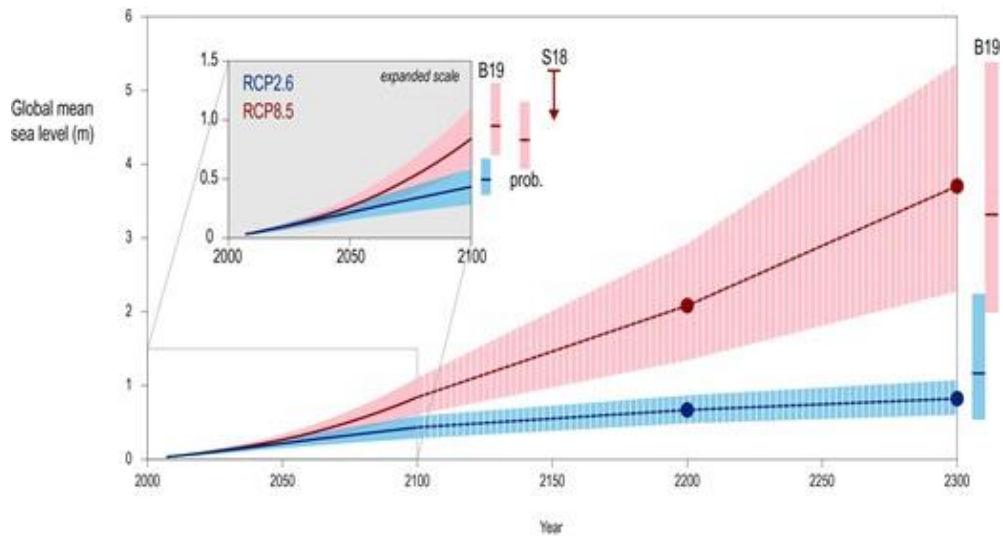


Figure 18: Anticipating Future Sea Levels (n.d.). *Earth Observatory*.

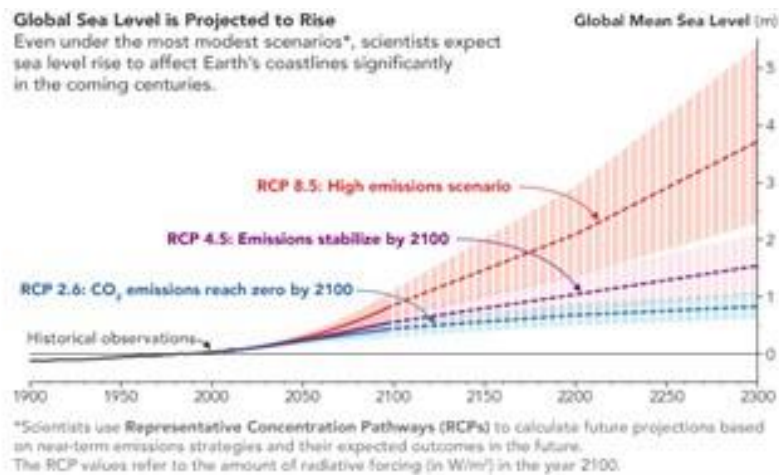


Figure 19: Sea Level Rise (Oppenheimer, M. *et alia*, 2019).

They show the findings of the second IPCC Special Report on Oceans and the Cryosphere (Portner *et alia*, 2019). As one can see and they write, global sea level rise (G.lobal M.ean S.ea L.evel) - caused by thermal expansion, melting glaciers and changes in terrestrial water storage - is not only virtually certain, but accelerating. The three curves (blue, purple, and red) indicate the three considered emission scenarios (Representative Concentration Pathway - RCP). RCP 8.5 refers to the case in which CO₂ production continues at today's rates; RCP 4.5, instead, identifies an average scenario in which the presence of greenhouse gases in the

atmosphere is mitigated but still increasing. RCP 2.6, finally, shows the trend (still increasing) of the GMSL if Paris Accords are globally kept and GHG emissions are reduced to zero by 2040. None of the three scenarios, however, excludes the inevitable rise in mean sea level by the end of the century. At the same time, related extreme events (ESL) - such as floods and other weather phenomena - will also increase. Coastal inhabited areas, islands, and low-lying countries are particularly at risk. Protection and adaptation measures, apart from being necessary, will in any case not be able to ensure safety: the expected damage will increase by two to three orders of magnitude (Executive Summary) by 2100 and will weigh more heavily on poor contexts (The World Bank, 2016). In fact, in a well-attested article based, among others, on the IPCC report preceding the one considered here - Hinkel et al. (2014) estimate that by the end of the century the annual cost of maintaining protective systems will vary between USD 12 and 71 billion. In the absence of initiatives in this direction, they speculate that the overall impact on global GDP of SLR in 2100 will lie in a range between 0.3% and 9.3% (See also Asuncion, Lee, 2017).

Until 2050, the uncertainty about future sea level determined by climate change is relatively low. GMSL will increase between 0.24 m (0.17-0.32 m) with RCP2.6 and 0.32 m (0.23-0.40 m) with RCP8.5. Beyond 2050, uncertainty increases significantly due to variability in emission scenarios and associated climate change. Sea level mean is expected to increase globally between 0.43 m (0.29-0.59 m, likely range) with RCP 2.6 and 0.84 m (0.61-1.10 m, likely range) with RCP 8.5 by 2100. Moreover, there is a 17% probability that it will exceed 0.59 m with RCP2.6 and 1.10 m with RCP8.5 in 2100. Studies based on process models cannot yet provide this information, but elicitation experts show that a GMSL of 2 m in 2100 cannot be excluded. As the report (IPCC, 2019) points out, disciplines and actors related to urban planning and policy are first called upon to act according to these projections. After 2100, sea levels will continue to rise for centuries and remain high for thousands of years. The few available studies agree that the difference in GMSL between RCP2.6 and RCP8.5 increases substantially on multi-century and millennial time scales. A probable range of 2.3-5.4 m is assumed by 2300. However, confidence in this scenario is low, due to the high margin of uncertainty and the large number of factors that are currently incalculable.

The possible arriving of a properly planetary flood is thus strengthening. What is almost certain is that sea level is rising, what is not are the material proportion such a change will assume. Therefore, while a clear scenario is emerging and taking already materially place, a huge margin of uncertainty remains which concerns both

human action and extra-human factors. Hence, such a context is, at once, partially concrete, and partially abstract. The situation reveals even more complicated (in terms of risks and organisational needs) if one cross-references above-mentioned projections with global demographic trends, urban development, and the concentration and location of the most inhabited and built-up areas on the planet.

In the *World Population Prospects 2022*, UN (2022) reports that the world population has reached 8 billion on November 15, 2022. Projections also indicate that it could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100. Where will it be (and already is) concentrated? Again, the United Nations (2018), in the *World Urbanization Prospects 2018*, confirm that by mid-century (p. 1) 70% of the world's population will live in cities or areas with more than 300,000 inhabitants. Moreover, already at the date of publication, about 1.4 billion people (Ibid., p. 4) were at risk of natural disasters, including floods, especially in South-East Asia. In fact, the largest megacities are in coastal areas. However, the projection does not consider agglomerations with less than 300,000 inhabitants. The valuable study by Barragán and Andrés (2015) fruitfully supplements the former by cross-referencing different databases and sources. The authors show that as of 2015, 53% of the global population already lived in coastal areas, i.e., less than 100 km from the sea (see also Setiadi *et alia*, 2020). It is therefore more useful to refer to the latter survey, rather than to the *2020 World Cities Report* by UN-Habitat (2020), where the number of inhabitants living near coastlines is estimated to amount to 40% of the planetary total (Ibid., p. 27). These percentages can be further unpacked to better visualise the quality and quantity of the problem. Merckens *et alia* (2016) show that about 11% of the world's population as of 2010 lived in Low Elevation Coastal Zones (LECZ), i.e. coastal areas that are below 10 metres above sea level. As they write, if there were 638 million inhabitants in those zones in 2000, this number is set to increase between 58% and 71% by 2050. In all SSPs (Shared Socioeconomic Pathways), the population of LECZs will exceed 1 billion by mid-century, then decline to just below (900 million) or remain slightly above (1.2 billion) by 2100. As McMichael *et alia* (2020) have shown in their review of 33 relevant papers on the topic, making projections on these scenarios is highly difficult and the results change depending on the calculation methods used, as well as on largely unpredictable phenomena such as migration and societal response capacities. However, staying with the present, sea-level rise - as Barragán and Andrés (2015) argue - already threatens half of all humans directly, and the trend is growing.

Finally, let us look at rain. The *IPCC Fifth Assessment Report* (2014), in fact, already 10 years ago announced (Ibid. pp. 56-74) a very likely planet-wide increase in the number and intensity of extreme precipitation. The subsequent report (Seneviratne *et alia*, 2021) confirms this projection in light of a large body of scientific literature. Predictions of extreme precipitation¹¹ follow a non-linear probability trend and show larger increases for rarer events. Some simulations suggest that the 20-year frequency of extreme precipitation is expected to increase by 10% for 1.5°C global warming and 22% for 2.0°C. Within 100 years (2121), the same simulations predict an increase of 20% and more than 45% at 1.5°C and 2.0°C warming levels, respectively. Other projections, however, show that the frequency of 10-year and 50-year events will - respectively - roughly double and triple in the extreme case of a 4°C increase (Ibid. p. 1564, see also Myhre *et alia*, 2019). As the same report shows, the probability of floods is closely linked to the increase in extreme weather events (Ibid., p. 1567). In summary, global hydrological models predict that a larger fraction of land areas will be affected by increased river flooding (medium confidence), especially in western Amazonia, the Andean area, and south-eastern and northern Asia. However, lots of projective studies about future floods do not consider aspects like prevention measures, control policies, and changes in land cover (Seneviratne *et alia*, 2021, pp. 1569-1570). Therefore, there is a great uncertainty regarding the impact of phenomena such as urban flash floods, and a constant monitoring work is ongoing.

To that regard, for example, 4 years ago de Bruijn *et alia* (2019) developed an algorithm to track and get real-time knowledge of floods taking place around the world. The formula was developed using 88 million tweets, from which they derived more than 10,000 flood events in 176 countries in four years. When the data was validated, 90% proved to be correct. With that valuable tool, it would have been possible - as they write - to learn about floods in perhaps remote areas and, above all, it would have been useful for strengthening forecasts for years to come. Unfortunately, Twitter has recently changed policies about data usage. Thus, the algorithm cannot work anymore till new funds will be found. Nevertheless, the historic database can still be downloaded and all registered flood geo-localised. They have been 26.553, between 2014 and March 2023 (Global Flood Monitor). Another similar project was carried out by a collaboration between Cloud to Street and The Flood Observatory (DFO). The flood maps of the *Global Flood Database* (available online) were created using NASA's Modis and Terra satellites; the number of people exposed has been calculated by intersecting the observed flooded

¹¹ Represented by the number of days with daily precipitation exceeding 50 mm (Ibid. p. 1566).

area with population data. The pool of events considered (913) is much smaller than in the previous study, despite the observation period was four times longer (2000-2015). However, the Cloud to Street study is precious for several reasons. Firstly because, despite the small sample, it shows that in fifteen years there has been an increase of almost 90 million in the number of people affected by floods. This population is concentrated in the coastal areas of South-East Asia, where there is the highest density of megacities and human inhabitants on the planet. In addition, it is possible - for each recorded flooding event - to observe some maps which show its extent. This way, it is also possible to get a visual idea of the magnitude of the problem. In January 2004, for example, a flood in Kazakhstan caused the inundation of an area slightly smaller than the whole Tuscany (19,000 square kilometres compared to the 22,000 of the Italian region).

I suggest that all these studies contribute to visualize a *historical conjuncture*: there are no local extreme events, but a Planetary Flood to come. Images from our devastated cities, together with daily news substantiate it and vice versa: such a flood is already here. Therefore, it can be conceived as *double*: it is partially concrete, partially abstract. It is – at once – a open scenario to different directions and an historically given turbulent materiality.

I propose to fix it as the historical context of the present research. Next paragraph shows the academic debates I start from to ask: *how to think of a good life in common during and through such a Planetary Flood?* Moreover, a suitable methodology is provided.

0.3 - Planetary Urbanization and Ocean Studies: a possible bridge to be put at the trial of space.

Assennato (2018, p. 97, trans. mine) writes - in a similar vein than Magnusson (2011):

“The megalopolis is a condition of being, a plane of immanence without externals or possible escapes. The *Bigness*, the *delirious* character of the urban machine, is essential and determines every social or architectural form. The contemporary megalopolis is behind every form: as *naturing nature* that

determines *naturate nature*, it is a potential that precedes and anticipates the power of ordered composition. In other words: the megalopolis is understood more than as a set of objects and spaces, as a real social ontology”.

Famously, if today there is a debate around such a Planetary Urbanization, credit is particularly due to Neil Brenner's studies. Indeed, in 2014, he edited the volume *Implosions/Explosions. Towards a study of Planetary Urbanization* (Brenner, 2014). There, three types of contributions are gathered - as the editor himself specifies in the Introduction (Ibid., p. 23): classic and background texts (thus also much earlier than 2014), recent texts (but already appeared then elsewhere) and others commissioned for the occasion. The former include: the English translation of *Quand la ville se perd dans sa métamorphose planétaire* (Lefebvre, 1989) - originally published on *Le Monde* - and a brief excerpt from *The Urban Revolution* (Lefebvre, 1973). Indeed, it is equally well known that the formula "planetary urbanization" dates to the French philosopher and urban scholar. This "in-between" location of the volume is worth to notice. Not only, on the one hand, Brenner himself and other authors had already addressed - though not always directly - the “planetary” problem in Lefebvre's (Brenner, Elden, 2009; Brenner, 2009; Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009; Merrifield, 2002, 2006, 2013; Wachsmuth, 2012). More importantly, it is after 2014 that those studies have been re-read and the debate has continued in a more engaged way. This also occurred thanks to the foundation (2015) of the Urban Theory Lab (Harvard) by Brenner himself. The planetary urbanization argument proposed by the American urban theorist and his colleague Schmidt was then set out in the lengthy 2015 paper (Brenner and Schmidt, 2015) *Towards a new epistemology of the urban?*

Authors argue that the usual categories for understanding today's geographical processes and configurations are insufficient. Rather, what is needed is an urban theory without an outside, which goes beyond the city-countryside, urban-non-urban, center-periphery etc binary. In sum, they suggest that the urban is not a specific type of settlement but a process; it is not homogeneous, but irregular and path dependent (Peck, Theodore & Brenner, 2009). Moreover, it is articulated through and shaped by dialectical moments of implosion and explosion. The latter includes operational landscapes, i.e. - for example - areas of intensive agriculture or mining and logistical infrastructures. Consequently, it is no longer possible to define the urban through its outside (the countryside). Therefore, areal models of the city appear to be ideological. That is what Wachsmuth (2014) and Wachsmuth and Angelo (2015) called the “methodological citysm” in analysis. While a re-scaling process is thus historically given, it is also epistemologically needed as far

as critical geography is concerned (Brenner, 1999; 2016). Finally, Brenner and Schmidt (2015) argue, those processes are not linear but contested and continually negotiated. They appear as the vibratory and ephemeral outcome of clashes between multiple actors. Hence, the Planetary Urbanization argument falls within the realm of critical theory (Brenner, 2009). Indeed, it seeks to "excavate the emancipatory possibilities that are embedded within, yet simultaneously suppressed by, this very system" (Ibid. p. 203).

Important critiques have been moved from some feminist perspectives, particularly by Oswin (2018), Buckley and Strauss (2016), Ruddick (2017) e Peake (2015). All the authors take a critical-constructive approach with the planetary urbanization topic. On the one hand, they appreciate its important openness to plurality and the consideration of longstanding claims brought forward by feminist and decolonial struggles. On the other, they detect the danger of generalization and of building a totalizing theory unable to situate itself. Some other interventions have focused on that problem. Loftus (2018), for example, shows how the opposition between the planetary urbanization argument and everyday life is not useful. Rather, he offers a philosophy of practice which considers the planetary a productive abstraction. Angelo e Goh (2020), on the other hand - from the perspective of two queer researchers - argue that, according to their experience, the planetary urbanization framework, though general, can still be useful in studying local phenomena. Finally, Goonewardena (2018) vigorously argues that thinking totality does not imply to be totalitarian. Rather, from a Marxist perspective, it is necessary in order to have insight into the process, i.e. the context of the context (Brenner and Schmidt, 2015) which a particular fact is a part of. Brenner himself re-confronted all the debate in his *"Debating planetary urbanization: For an engaged pluralism"* (2018). There, the author tries to wade through critiques which often are – he says - "inclined to present our core arguments in such polemical, simplified, or superficial ways. In some cases, denunciatory references to our writings appear to serve mainly as a rhetorical foil against which to highlight the contributions of other (important) research projects" (Ibid.). At the same time, Brenner gets there back to the heart of the topic and specifies how and why it is not a Eurocentric, homogenizing theory that ignores contexts.

In the meanwhile, the planetary metamorphosis of the city as a historical phenomenon - and the planetary urbanization argument that tries to be (one among) its critical theory(s) - have reached and influenced many studies, knowledge fields and research.

The *Urban Political Ecology* (UPE) is one of them. It seeks to critically hold together urban and ecological issues. Heynen (2014) makes a genealogy: as a name, it was introduced by Swyngedouw (1996), as a debate it is rooted in Marxist thought (Harvey, 1997; Foster, 1999; Smith, 2008). In fact, Foster (1999, 2000) has been the first one who re-took up and put at the forefront the Marxian formula "metabolic rift" to indicate the unstable ecological relationship between social infrastructures and non-human natures. In his *Three ecologies: Urban Metabolism and the Society-Nature Opposition* (2012), Wachsmuth identifies as many periods in the intellectual history of the metabolic problem. The last and more recent one is exactly UPE which tries – the author argue - to rethink Society and Nature outside a binary and mutually exclusive framework. In this context, a few years ago, some scholars recalled this debate to its Lefebvrian origins and to the field of critical theory (Angelo, Wachsmuth, 2014). They argue that its premises have been betrayed by the fixation of “the city” as place and model of inquiry (the “*methodological citysm*”). Namely: as a concept, a category (of analysis) and therefore an ideology (Wachsmuth, 2014). This provoked the society-nature opposition to slowly reproduce itself – both in theory and in practice – and not being challenged and dissolved (Moore, 2015, 2017). This is what Tzaninis, Mandler, Kaika and Keil (2020) have recently argued in their *Moving urban political ecology beyond the 'urbanization of nature'*. In light of the planetary urbanization framework and of some postcolonial perspectives (Roy, 2011; Roy et alia, 2015), authors' proposal is about overcoming the frictions between the latter and that methodological citysm mentioned above. They suggest looking towards a more-than-urban political ecology, that deals with urban constellations (Gandy, 2011) determined within and through differential and plural, irregular processes. In that regard, also Brenner and Katsikis (2020) have more recently proposed a critical and generative interpretation of today's planetary landscapes. It is a matter, they argue, of understanding the urban as an ecological process in the *Capitalocene* (Moore, 2017), with a focus on those operational landscapes that exist for the needs of agglomerations and in turn reconfigure both the latter's extent and metabolism. This way, they produce multiple and differentiated metabolic rifts, as well as spatial practices and conflicts that transcend the city-periphery dichotomy.

Alongside UPE - although these labels are elastic and often overlapping - the planetary urbanization argument has also reached the sphere of infrastructures, and the so called “infrastructural turn” (Graham, Marvin, 2001, 2022). It has, for instance, provided a matrix and a framework to study the multi-scalar field of forces that sets the hyper-objectual machine “city” in action (Amin, Thrift, 2016). It has made it possible to better observe the financial, logistical (and otherwise) operations

by which capital “hits the ground” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2019; Esterling, 2014) intertwining with, exceeding and re-scaling State power. The planetary urbanization argument then helped to shed light on the value (and labour) chain that links the extraction of raw materials to the smart transformation plans of our cities (Arboleda, 2020). It has been also fruitful in advancing studies about the relationship between cities and the sea. In that regard, Hein's works in particular are worth to notice. They concern port cities (2011), the urbanization of the sea (Hein and Couling, 2020) and the emerging framework of the 'portcity-scape' (Hein, 2021). The latter refers to the “networked space that extends from land to sea, including ships and pipelines, port facilities and warehouses, industrial and logistic structures, headquarters and retail buildings, but also housing and leisure facilities” (Ibid.).

Finally, the broader link between planetary urbanization, industrialization, extractivism (Arboleda, 2020) and climate change has been emphasized. Moore (2015, 2017) has showed how capitalistic ecology entails the production of manifold *metabolic rifts* which depend on the alienated and geographically inscribed city-countryside divide. Thus, to him, such a “crisis of nature-as-external” is precisely rooted in the way environment has been transformed and produced throughout modernity. Malm (2016, 2021), instead, has reduced the time frame. He proposes to find the origins of climate change in the second industrial revolution. Therefore, as the namesake (2021) essay provocatively argues, to fight against capitalist ecology would entail remove and hit all those planetary infrastructures through which it reproduces. Goh (2020) has focused directly on the relation between planetary urbanization and the ecological crisis. She argues that a multiscalar perspective is needed to recognize how climate change hits unevenly the human population on the planet. Also, Brenner and Ghosh have recently intervened (2022) on the issue. To them, the linkage has to be put at the forefront which relates infectious disease, agribusiness and extended urbanization. In the same wake then Wallace (2016) and following the work of Connolly *et alia* (2020), the authors show how capitalist-oriented planetary production of space is strongly related with the emergence of new viruses. Moreover, the latter reproduce exactly through the same global system of connections and infrastructures. A partially different perspective has been given by Bratton (2019). To him, before the artificially induced climate change, equally artificial and planetary solutions are needed to face the coming catastrophe. Thus, he argues, automation, technological development and radical transformation of the environment are crucial allies and not enemies for living better through and overcoming the ecological disaster.

Almost in parallel with respect to this amount of – largely speaking – critical urban studies ecological oriented, a new field of research has emerged. Indeed, in last decade, *Ocean Studies* have gained attention. It is a huge box, which may include almost every study which – to some extents – puts the sea at the centre. Disciplines involved range from oceanography to biology, from human and critical geography to history and engineering. On 6-7 June 2023, a conference has been held in Milan (Italy) as a contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030). Even though the overall domain was “geography”, manifold perspectives were considered: history of ocean and seas, biodiversity, livelihoods in and on the imaginaries of seas, heritage, culture, tourism in coastal areas, but also planning, governance, adaptability, and resilience. As far as the international debate is concerned, and focusing specifically on geographical thought, themes range from islands, archipelagos and relational geographies (DeLoughrey, 2007; Stratford *et alia*, 2011; Pugh, 2013, 2016) to ships, ports, routes, and life at sea (Sampson, 2003; Hodson, Vannini, 2007; Sacchetto, 2009; Vannini, 2012; Spence, 2014; Hein, Couling, 2020), from juridical and political focuses on governance (Peters, Steinberg, Stratford, 2018) to critical perspective about the society-ocean relation (Steinberg, 2001; Featherstone, 2005; Lambert, Martins, Ogborn, 2006; Campling, Colàs, 2021; Rodenbiker, 2022). Finally, a huge volume of studies has been developed as far as materialistic ontologies of seas and water are concerned (Steinberg, 2011, 2013; Steinberg, Peters, 2015; Peters, Steinberg, 2019). In that regard, mostly de-colonial and feminist perspectives have been adopted (Glissant, 2007; Neimanis, 2017; da Cunha, 2018).

Of course, the subdivision I have outlined is for purely illustrative purposes. The debate develops cutting across and melting together all of these themes. Nevertheless, the latter group of research specifically is to me worthy of attention.

Steinberg and Peters’ argument (2015) starts by challenging the Schmidtian perspective about the sea which he developed in his *Il nomos della Terra* (1991 [1950]). Indeed, the German philosopher built his idea of nomos from a land-oriented perspective. He bounds the former to the fixed, telluric, measurable ground where clear boundaries are traceable. Hence, he can write – authors argue - that on the waves of the sea there is nothing but waves. Instead, Steinberg and Peters propose to shed light on the voluminosity, mobility, and fluidity of water to unearth its “political” force, i.e., to determine possible politics which take seriously such a materiality. As they write (2015):

“On the waves there may indeed be ‘nothing but waves’. But if waves are understood in all their complexity— as forces, as vectors, as assemblages of molecules and meanings, as spaces of periodicity, randomness, instability and transformation, and as volumes (depths) and areas (surfaces)— then waves, and *the wet ontology they exemplify, may be exceptionally well suited for understanding the politics of our watery planet*” (emphasis added).

Their theoretical movement is thus twofold. Firstly, they propose to take seriously the wet materiality of water in all its material consequences. To that extent, they offer an ontology. Secondly, they suggest that – to take care for such a “being” – different politics are needed which are not telluric-based. However, this latter passage is not banal. It “requires us to go beyond considering matter as static substance and leads us to consider the various ways in which matter changes physical state” (p. 252). Indeed, differently from land and land-based flat ontologies, the sea involves a turbulent volume which deeply changes in time according to currents and other factors. Therefore, to “bring the geophysical into relation with the geopolitical” as far as the sea is concerned, thinking has to open itself to *multiple temporalities*. In fact, the “chaotic movement and reformation of matter” of the ocean “suggests that we think with a different, nonlinear, non-measurable notion of time” (p. 252). Steinberg and Peters want thus to ground the new politics of the ocean on such a turbulent materiality, which opens “new territories of control and conflict” (Ibid.). Starting from a similar wet, volumetric, and moving ontology our political geographies – through which we read and hit it – cannot but radically change. That is why – challenging Castells’ argument around the “space of flows” – they argue that it does not lay, abstractly, in pure circulation. Rather, it crosses real matters and volumes, such as water. As Steinberg writes elsewhere (2011, 2013): the ocean is not a metaphor, its turbulent materiality matters and must matter in our political thinking! From that ontologically non-telluric base – which “intersects with global political economies and territories” (Steinberg, Peters, 2015, p. 257) - our *new* politics and understandings should emerge, authors claim. In their 2019 contribution, they come back on the argument adding a crucial element. There, they use the concept of *Hypersea* to get closer to politics and show how the ocean is always more-than-wet. Indeed, it permeates – by going also beyond its wet materiality itself - different territories and dimensions of reality. Authors identify three: how the sea bathes and infiltrates the bodies that inhabit, constitute, and transcend it; how it is a universal force that goes beyond the liquid; and finally, how its representational power works, that is, how it reaches stories, dreams and imagination. Therefore, Peters and Steinberg argue (2019), *politics* of the ocean must take care for both its wetness and its more-than-wetness.

Not only the sea is always given in excess, but also our *logos* should be, if it wanted to think-with such a turbulent materiality.

Even though Steinberg and Peters' argument does not engage directly with urban issues and related critical epistemologies, a kind of potential bridge emerges.

Common points are at least two. On the one hand, theirs seems to me an *ocean theory without an outside*. In fact, to them, the sea permeates – to some extent – the whole planetary life, but not as a unique blue towel on Earth. The same went for Brenner and Schmidt's (2015) "planetary urbanization", which is not a big concrete pour on the globe. Very differently, Steinberg and Peter's Hypersea seem to move through the same dialectics of *implosion and explosion*. The former affects wetly and more-than-wetly humans, territories, non-humans, and imaginaries. It implodes in the turbulent materiality of seas, and explodes in literature, international law, shipping infrastructures etc. That multiscale configuration is also multi-temporal: there are currents', tide's, and biological rhythms which interacts and co-produce with societal ones. On the other hand, one can say that the authors offer an epistemology of the ocean devoid of the methodological citysm Angelo and Wachsmuth (2014) claim against. In fact, Steinberg and Peters stand in opposition to that cartographic knowledge of the Sea which makes it a flat, smooth plane. Their argument moves precisely beyond such production of the oceans (see also Steinberg, 2001) by suggesting non-areally bounded or telluric-like ways for thinking of the Hypersea. Therefore, a productive bridge seems possible between Brenner and Schmidt's and others' critical epistemology of planetary urbanization and Steinberg and Peter's one about the ocean. If worked together, they could be useful for advancing critical perspective in ecology in the wake of Tzaninis *et alia* (2020). Namely: they could help in moving beyond the concept of "urbanization of nature" by showing how non-humans' relative autonomy and excess is not a passive ground but works co-productively in the creation of environments.

Beside that gap, another one is to me crucial as far as the "planetary urbanization" debate specifically is concerned. In fact, an affirmative perspective is lacking which assumes the former as *a project to be realized*. One, I mean, that does not only use its epistemology to read capitalism but, in addition, which is also able to visualize what alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) are emerging from within the latter. In my opinion, such a move should focus on the emancipatory, immanent potentials that currently existing urban configurations are in the grip of. During the debate, many claims have been advanced in that direction. But they have yet to be picked up and faced directly, at a planetary and holistic scale.

Keil, for example, has been clear 5 years ago (2018). According to the author, it was indeed necessary not to let “planetary urbanization” become a mere academic box. Rather, it was urgent that “the concept, its propositions and the critique” were debated and confronted “before a horizon of liberation and possibility”. “In order for this to happen” – he continues - “the concept... must be politicized again and linked to its revolutionary origins” (Ibid., p. 3). “Planetary urbanization” – he argued (p. 5) – “can/must work as a generative theory: *planetary urbanism* [emphasis added] is the conversation humanity will have to have if we want to stand a chance of survival. It needs to lead to an open horizon of liberation, not a teleologically closed future”. Moreover, such statements and claims match those expressed by Madden (2012, in Brenner, 2014, p. 518): “Lefebvre's conception of urban society must always emphasize his insistence on urban revolution that transforms the global urbia rather than merely reveling in it”. And the same need appears powerfully also to Goonewardena (2018). He recognizes in the concept of planetary urbanization a great potential to pick up. The author argues that it flows from the unfinished project *The Production of Space*, where Lefebvre “explicated the role played by the production of space in not only the survival of capitalism, *but also in the making of other possible worlds*” (emphasis mine). This productive, transformative, and creative reading of Lefebvre - which, moreover, is consistent with the emancipatory ethos already there in Brenner (2009, see above) - has also been the focus of Merrifield's studies on the French philosopher in general (2002, 2006) and the urban revolution in particular (2013). Indeed, the author writes (2013, p. 80) that - for Lefebvre - the urban revolution marked a new beginning. It was the perspective he used to imagine a new humanism. It consisted of, at once, a meta-philosophical terrain, and the contorted arena to reinvent Marxist practice¹².

Nevertheless, it remains to me underdiscussed how the urban revolution is built and produced *before and besides* struggle events. Namely: I believe it is necessary to deepen knowledge (and methodology) about those “traces of alter-urbanizations” which Brenner (2019, p. 333) refers to. Indeed, as he writes (Ibid., p. 394), “despite the brutal injustices and the devastating social and ecological violence with which they are indelibly intertwined, the potentials unleashed through the capitalist form

¹² At the same time, Merrifield specifies (2002, p. 96) that such a revolution remains to be realized and that it will not look like the storming of the Winter Palace. Rather, as he discusses in his *The politics of the encounter* (2013), it would appear as a kind of “monsoon season” (Ibid., p. 63) as it has been the *Occupy Wall Street* movement. To the author, in fact, the social organization which developed in 2011 through a mixture of social platforms and street demonstrations represented a good image of how the urban revolution could take place nowadays. The Occupy Movement has hence been a decisive act of political acceleration in such direction.

of urbanization may also contain the traces of radically different modes of urbanizations”. *How* can we see such traces? *Where* are there appearing? *How* climate change in general – and rising sea levels in particular – matter and must be taken into account? *How* to debate planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation? *What* does it entail going back to its revolutionary origins? And – in such a movement – *what* about the ecological emergency?

Therefore, in light of those claims, the gaps (1) they emerge from, and the still existing distance (2) between Ocean Studies and the Planetary Urbanization argument, my work consists of an attempt to fulfil both.

Specifically, I offer the research hypothesis that the *Planetary Flood* – as itself a concrete-abstraction, a partially hypothetical object – may be a good *historical conjuncture* to be seized for that double purpose. There, the “urban revolution” argument may be put at the trial of space and work revolutionarily. It might contribute to give us “a chance of survival” (Keil, 2018) beyond capitalism and the State and imagine a better life in common. Moreover, since the Planetary Flood reveals turbulently and tragically the ubiquitous wetness we inhabit through, the ocean theory without an outside Steinberg and Peter advance could help in doing such an effort. Even, the former would be necessary to really take care for the concept’s revolutionary afflatus.

Thus, my guiding question has become: *how to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins amid the Planetary Flood?* The Archipelago is the *figure* I will offer as a possible answer, i.e., as a mean of *orientation* for both social and research practice. It will consist of a project for a common oeuvre to be realized and built, to which the turbulent materiality of both the ocean and the urban are necessary.

Brenner writes (2019, p. 331):

“The challenge is precisely to find ways to combine epistemic multiplicity, conceptual adventurousness, methodological heterodoxy, and post-disciplinary sensibilities with a rigorously focused, logically consistent, globally oriented, and contextually grounded analytical orientation that will productively illuminate emergent patterns, pathways, contradictions, and contestations of urban restructuring”.

In the following pages, I try to take care for and fulfil as much as possible all these ethical, theoretical, and methodological components. Specifically, next paragraph provides the methodology I chose.

0.4 - Methodology: close reading ↔ figuring ↔ navigating.

The research has developed by pursuing two dimensions in parallel. On the one hand, I carried out a process of disassembling, updating, and reassembling as far as the category of “urban revolution” is concerned. That path (which is given in Part One) has consisted of close reading some essays and letting them communicate through specific concepts. On the other, a period of fieldwork has been conducted in the Netherlands. Navigating this second path (which is given in Part Two), I have directly observed some environmental productions made of, by or through turbulent and exceeding waters. Both dimensions contribute – even though in partially different ways – to *figuring* the urban revolution during the Planetary Flood. Such a methodological choice – i.e., to organize the enquiry as a *figure-constructing*¹³

¹³ As Lury, Viney and Wark (2022) write, thinking with figures or invoking a figure always implies the work of figuring. “It can involve” – they argue (Ibid., p. 6) – “giving shape to something or, alternatively, to apprehend the shape that something already has”. Thus, such a methodology strongly emphasizes activity and work. The authors focus in particular on how figures have been used in feminist literature and knowledge production (Haraway, 1985, 2000, 2007, 2019; Braidotti, 2002). There, figuring is a metaphysical strategy of critical thinking. That is: *it interweaves the abstract and the material towards emancipatory directions*, they are *diagnostic and prognostic* (Lury, Viney and Wark, 2022, p. 10). For Dawney (2022), figures “make meaning”, they create worlds and are exposed to and involve the transformation of social and political structures. To her, “as critical scholars, we too can work with figures to bring about change, to question and to amplify other ways of being and living” (Ibid. p. 23). Such figures, Dawney (2022, p. 33) writes, have a vital, creative power and a “grip”, a capacity to “captivate” that marks their will to “sculpting worlds” and which lead us towards new “political architectures”. They are able to gather a potential, indicate where it might go and simultaneously begin this journey. In short: they cannot but work on the construction of new forms of life. They should invent, pre-figure, activate futures and “bring them into the present” (Lury, in Lury *et alia*, 2018, p. 12). Neimanis, in her *Bodies of Water* (2017), implements and moves within the same kind of figuring process. She argues that it “makes radical change possible and enables our own becoming-other” (Ibid., p. 5). To her, figures are not “virtualities of matter” but embodied concepts. *Their materiality matters!* “Never conceptual fantasy or metaphor” - she writes (Ibid:) - “these imaginative ‘interventions’ (Braidotti 2011, p. 14) describe what we already are, but amplified”. Therefore, Neimanis writes (Ibid., p. 17), they are crucial for be responsible, even as we stay with the trouble” (emphasis added). In sum, for these feminist philosophers and scholars, the process of figuring contains a strong prognostic and *project*

process - has itself consisted of a going back to the origins. Indeed, to Lefebvre, the urban (and the revolution it entailed) was more an illuminating virtuality, an orienting and productive project, than a completely present and defined object the research has totally in front.

As he writes in *The Urban Revolution* (1973b, p. 9, trans. mine):

“Epistemology and methodology. Knowledge is not necessarily copy or reflection, simulacrum or simulation from an *already* real object. Inversely, it does not necessarily construct its object in the name of a prior theory of knowledge, of the object or of "models." For us, here, the object fits into the hypothesis, and the hypothesis is about the object. If this "object" lies beyond the ascertainable (empirical), it does not mean it is fictitious. We posit a *virtual object*, urban society, that is, a *possible object*, whose emergence and development it will be our task to show, in relation to a *process* and a *praxis* (a practical action).” (emphasis in original)

A bit after (p. 11), Lefebvre calls “transduction” such a reflection “upon a possible object”. On the one hand, it entails a critique of the “defined object ‘city’” (p. 23). On the other, it does not emerge from nothing. Rather, it grounds on “what currently exists, the real” (Ibid.). Indeed – the author says - the urban is not situated “behind the present in time, but on the contrary [it is] a horizon, an illuminating virtuality. It is the possible, defined by a direction, at the end of the path towards it” (Ibid.)¹⁴. The *urban society* is thus a *project* and a *material process* which exceeds the author’s gaze¹⁵. It is not only an historical, political virtuality. Rather, it works as such also methodologically as far as Lefebvre’s enquiry about it is concerned. Namely: the French philosopher’s research is not conducted as a hypothesis about an object. Instead, his object fades in the hypothesis till they partially coincide. The object is not completely hypothetical, and the hypothesis preserves a material base. *Transduction* is the methodological gesture he adopts to investigate such a partially blurred thing, which – historically speaking – has to be

dimension. One which, in turn, is rooted in material reality and *semioticity* (Haraway, 2007) and activates its latent potentialities. To me, Lefebvre’s methodological approach to planetary urbanization - his *transduction* (1973b, p. 11) – can be conceived as a prototypical figuring process.

¹⁴ Such assumption has been pivotal for Elden (2004) and Merrifield (2006) in their general reading of the author.

¹⁵ To that extent, the urban appears as a hyper-object already in Lefebvre. Morton (2018) says that they are objects which “always partially retreat”, which are given in excess with respect to the experience we do of them. For we observers, hyper-objects remain opaque and stranger. Here below, Paragraph 1 of Chapter 2 delves into them.

realized (Ibid., p. 11) starting from a *project* (Ibid.). Thus, the research movement is double. It consists of, firstly, positing an immanent virtuality in the real Lefebvre faces - “urban society” is such a theoretical hypothesis, a tendency (p. 8). Secondly, aim of the investigation is to consider how to realize it. Then, the theoretical hypothesis is assumed – at once – as “to come”, and “already here”. The project from where to begin is that virtuality, it is a starting point even though it is not historically accomplished yet. With Neimanis’ word (2017, p. 15, see note above), the urban is – to Lefebvre – “what we already are, but amplified”.

That circularity – which may appear unusual – is crucial. Indeed, it is not by chance that the very first words of the essay are: “we start from a hypothesis” (p. 7). To Lefebvre, there is not a methodological separation between the latter and the object it should insist on. They are enveloped each other. If such a virtuality is not empirically observable it is no less fictitious or no less worthy of attention and of being posited. As he says (p. 8): “[urban society, planetary urbanization] is a theoretical hypothesis that scientific thought *has the right to formulate and take as its starting point*” (emphasis added). The author is even more direct and clear two pages after (p. 11): “against empiricism that notices, against extrapolations that venture, finally against knowledge in edible crumbs, it is a *theory that announces itself from a theoretical hypothesis*” [emphasis added]. The statement is crucial: to Lefebvre, to figuring, to let theory anticipate empiricism is neither a swerve towards purely abstract ideas, nor a way to provide an “empirical recipe” (p. 11). Rather, he offers a *mediation* between such poles. He looks for the concretely *possible* which society is in the grip of. Of course, “a threshold will have to be crossed” (Ibid) before entering the concrete, i.e. “the social practice theoretically understood” (Ibid.). Nonetheless, Lefebvre’s theory is no less oriented to that moment, to that trial. Such an approach is what Goonewardena (2018) calls – in a Marxian vein – the Lefebvrian’s “holistically thinking”, his very different idea of totality from totalization or homogenization. And that is also why Elden defines Lefebvre “a philosopher of the possible” (2004), and Keil (2018), Brenner (2018) and Merrifield (2006, 2013) strive to maintain the same future-oriented, emancipatory potential not only in history, but also in the interpretation of the Lefebvrian argument itself.

Therefore, one can say that Lefebvre – when built the urban revolution concept – did not work customary. Namely: he did not make a hypothesis about an object to be investigated by means of a theory. Very differently, his object was a holistic hypothesis around an *historical conjuncture* he faced (the urbanization of society): the latter *may become* Urban Society. The present was, to him, in the grip of such a *possible becoming*. Hence, the “theory which is announced starting from a

theoretical hypothesis” (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 11) is the attempt to grab that concrete possibility. An intervention Lefebvre did at the Faculty of Architecture, Lima, in 1972 (in Brenner, Elden, 2009, pp. 196-209), is very clear in that regard. It offers another interesting “keyword”, and clarify the importance of the materialistic, transformative, and *creative* dimension of the French philosopher’s approach. The statement with which the speech starts echoes the beginning of *The Urban Revolution*:

“These propositions present a project, that of a simultaneously descriptive, analytical, and global understanding that would positively and negatively be linked to social practice. [...] Some *propositions* do more than enunciate: they pose and propose. They pose an actual “object” and propose an “objective.” This implies the use of classical deduction and induction, but also of *transduction*, which targets a virtual “object” and its realization on a path heading toward a “pro-posed” horizon. These *propositions* are abstract, but in the sense of conceptual abstraction, which, more and better than signaling the concrete, incorporates it. *Proposing* does not amount to *producing*, but *propositions* open the way for those who will produce.” (2009, p. 196, emphasis in original).

The *project* Lefebvre is talking about is that one of Urban Society, of a planetary common oeuvre. As he puts it at the end of the speech (p. 207): “It will be a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called art”. Nevertheless, it is at the beginning that the figuring approach appears clearly. The use of “transduction” he points out is again telling. Indeed, the theory the author (or researcher, or philosopher) proposes entails a mixture of abstraction and production, of materiality and virtuality. It pro-poses. Firstly, far from pure invention, it starts from urban reality’s *material semioticity* (Haraway, 2000), by assuming an historical conjuncture as *problematique* (Lefebvre, in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 197). Then, it visualizes and incorporates a concrete objective to be produced within the latter. Theory is not – immediately – the recipe to realize it. Nevertheless, it leans, strongly protrudes towards that historically and practically possible horizon. While it foreseen the Urban Society, it offers the latter as project, as something to be chosen and make become world. Lefebvre claims strongly against “pure knowledge” or theory. As he writes (Ibid. 198): “the question of space, taken outside of practice, and on the plane of a ‘pure’ knowledge that imagines itself ‘productive’, even this highly philosophical question can degenerate”.

As anticipated, a new keyword is introduced at the end of the speech. It clarifies again Lefebvre's approach. His perspective – he says (Ibid., p. 207) – should work as an “orientation”. The all passage – together with the suggestion about the planetary oeuvre – echoes almost directly the very last lines of *The Production of Space* (2018). There, the author puts himself on the same wavelength than great masters such as Fourier and Marx. In their wake, Lefebvre says that – with his work – he wants to contribute (2018, p. 401, trans. mine):

“To create (to produce) the planetary space as the social support of a transformed daily life, open to various possibilities as the east opens to the horizon [...] [to give] An *orientation*. Nothing more and nothing less. What is called: a sense. That is, a sensing organ, a thought direction, a lived movement that opens a way to the horizon. Nothing that can resemble a system”. (Emphasis in original).

Those lines are crucial for fixing the French Philosopher's transductive methodology, i.e., his way of thinking and working at the intersection between philosophy and practice. He puts a hypothesis - around what is concretely *possible* in a given historical context - as his own object of research. Thus, the latter consists of understand how the former can become world, real. An explorative, navigational dimension stands beside a port-oriented, operative one.

As far as my research is concerned, I moved in the same wake. Indeed – in order to go back to the revolutionary origins of the “urban revolution” concept (Keil, 2018) – I found preliminary necessary to strive to *think Lefebvrianly*. Namely: to debate nowadays planetary urbanization A) in a geo-historically changed context, but anyway B) before the same emancipatory horizon than the French philosopher. That entailed a partial *methodological shift* with respect to the currently existing discussion around planetary urbanization. Indeed, I do not put it as (only) a realized object through which capitalism develops. Rather, while I assume the neoliberal condition we inhabit, I focus more specifically on how the former can *become differently*. Such a *new*, possible becoming is the object of the research. The latter, in turn, develops by working at and delving into a theoretical hypothesis able to grasp the former. The perspective is thus general: I do not start from specific places or localised struggles. Contrary, I take a holistic gaze, one which considers social totality before the ecological crisis as a planetary (although unevenly distributed) and total phenomena. In other that to happen, a *new* hypothesis had to be put as both *telos* and starting point. Then, within it, the Urban Society had to be re-figured out. Namely: a *possible becoming*, among others, of

the former had to be A) *a-priori* postulated, B) defined and investigated (throughout the PhD) and C) offered as a project for the latter to be realized (through social practice). It has to be given as “virtual object”, as “concrete abstraction” starting from a historical conjuncture which contains (by hypothesis) it as possible.

To clarify this difference, I suggest two names for A) the facet – with margins of uncertainty - the conjuncture has and B) the common oeuvre (to be chosen and produced) it is in the grip of. The two names do not properly identify as many different things. Contrary, they point out historically non-contemporary, only partially overlapping moments and temporalities which stir within the same contingency. First is *Planetary Flood*, which stands for the Lefebvrian “urbanization of society”. Echoing him, I might say: let us start from such a hypothesis, *the complete flooding of society*. Instead, second name is *Archipelago*. It defines a tendency, a possible becoming of the former, its potential. Therefore, it is the project I offer to let the Urban Society “result” (Ibid. p. 7) from the epochal crisis and conjuncture we call “climate change”. It is a theoretical hypothesis “the scientific thought has the right to formulate” (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 8) and – at the scale of a PhD or whatever research – to (methodologically) put as its own object of investigation. My work consisted of building it and orienting it towards practice. In fact, I believe that to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins and to debate it before a horizon of emancipation is precisely about such theoretically unbalanced work of exploration. Theory gets its primacy because of the abstract and hypothetical momentum. Moreover, *it is also creative, it pro-poses* for due coherence with the French philosopher way of reasoning, to take seriously his meta-philosophical gesture. To that regard, Chapter 3 is crucial (and textually central in the document). There, theory *gathers and reunites* to define and offer the operative concept, the figure, the project “Archipelago”.

Specifically, the enquiry is organized as follows. I talk about Part One and Two since it is the way the text is sub-divided. But, as said before, they correspond to as many and contemporary dimensions my three-years research developed through.

Part One carries out a process of dis-assembling, up-dating, and re-assembling the concept of “urban revolution”. Aim has been to *re-figure* it out under different historical conditions and let it *orientate* towards political alternatives. In fact, from 1970 (when *La Revolution Urbaine* was released) to date, new theories about the “socialization of society” have emerged and climate change has entered our historical and material experience of capitalism. That is why the process of re-figuring urban revolution – besides re-considering *how* Lefebvre himself conceived

of that collective oeuvre through his own reasoning – had also to address and to be integrated with recent advancements in political theory and ecology. The all first part of the research has been devoted to such a process of figuring or transduction, i.e., of reflection “around a possible object”. It ends by offering a definition: the *Archipelago*, as the name of and the project for Urban Society during the Planetary Flood. Moreover, the *social architect* and the *metabolic life of the multitude* emerge as subjective frameworks for visualizing the political which stirs the currently existing socialized society. Finally, the *threshold to be crossed* (see Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 11) appears that one of *techniques*.

Structure-wise, Part One is organized into three Chapters. They all consist of close reading some texts by following specific conceptual axes. While Chapter One and Two are sub-dived into two inner sections or paragraphs, Chapter three is all devoted to suggesting an interpretation of the same essay. Thus, the former may be conceived as *corings*, as article-length and books-focused insights I offer for disassembling and updating the “urban revolution” concept. Specifically, First Paragraph of Chapter One re-considers Lefebvre’s argument (1973a, 1973b, 2014[1968], 2018[1974]) following the conceptual axis immanence-oeuvre-project. Second one, instead, starts the process of up-dating. There, I compare the French Philosopher’s proposal with some more recent advancements in political theory. Negri and Hard’s works (2000, 2004, 2010) and Negri’s in particular (2008, 2011) are considered along the thematic knots: multitude-biopolitical production-common. Then, Chapter 2 is all devoted to the issue of non-human natures and climate change. I start from Lefebvre statement that nature simply *fades* (2014, p. 72), to implement it. First Paragraph discusses English philosopher Morton’s reflections around hyper-objects and climate change (2007, 2010, 2017, 2018). The ontological tragedy he shows is pointed out and finally observed in light of Lefebvre’s (2016 [1965]) suggestions about Metaphilosophy. Then, Paragraph Two close reads a recent essay by environmental historian Moore (2015) and advances the *metabolic life of the multitude* as a possible, operative, urban-political practice for facing both capitalism and non-humans’ radical distance. Finally, Chapter Three is about the *Archipelago*. It consists of offering an interpretation of Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari’s namesake essay ([1997] 2017). It is read with the lens prepared in previous chapters and considering Steinberg and Peters’ (2015, 2019) argument. The *Archipelago* is thus suggested as a possible becoming of the *Planetary Flood*. It may be a new project to debate planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation during climate change.

Part Two is organized differently. Generally speaking, it has been focused on identifying *situated* possible traces of alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019). In that regard, I have followed – though partially - again Lefebvre in methodology. Indeed, he himself used to discuss his theoretical advancements before architecture and concrete urbanistic practices as, for example, Fourier’s “unitary architecture” and Constant’s New Babylon. Stanek observes (2011) that such readings the French philosopher tempted can be conceived as examples of *transduction*, of movements “from the real to the possible” (Ibid., p. 169) Lefebvre did *through* architecture. Starting from that, I thus have used the Archipelago as a *transductive* tool – or illuminating virtuality – to shed potential light on some urbanistic plans I saw in the Netherlands. Therefore, again, it has been a matter of figuring. More precisely, of mobilizing a figure to show a *possible becoming* of some stirring urban morphologies and related logos. Additionally, in order that to happen, I took the perspective of the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. Hence, I developed the fieldwork as a *navigation* through it, whether the vehicle was a proper ship, or a train, or my feet.

In fact, I spent there more than six months (between January and July 2022) and focused on the relation between urbanization and (surplus) water. Specifically, a national planning initiative (the Room for the River Program) and some projects of floating urbanism (developed by Blue21 and others) have been considered. Moreover, I did in depth interviews with architects, engineers, and geographers there involved. Such a choice has been determined by the primacy acquired by those disciplines and fields along the first figuring process. However, Lefebvre himself gave crucial suggestions in that regard. In the already mentioned intervention he did in Lima before a public of architects he argued (Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 202):

“the architect and the town planner contribute more straightforwardly to these producers of space than do painters and sculptors, etc. They are inserted into the process of production and reproduction and consequently into the spatial practice of the capitalist mode of production. To what extent can they break free from these constraints and from instrumental space? That depends on the grassroots democratic movement, that of local communities, unions (when they attend to the question), “users,” construction workers—in short, on the network of social relations that more or less clearly and intensively targets the quality of space”.

Thus, I looked at some urbanistic and architectural practices to find operative traces of the urban logos the *social architect* (or metabolic life of the multitude) may think of his political project through.

Specifically, Part Two is divided into 3 chapters. Chapter 4 gives an historical introduction to the Dutch Delta Urbanism. Chapter 5, instead, reports the information, materials and interviews gathered during the fieldwork. It is organized into two huge paragraphs. The first one observes the Dutch environment following the line of two boat trips I did: from the Europoort of Rotterdam to the inner historical harbour, and from here to the eastward city of Dordrecht. The concept of porosity (Hein, 2021) is mobilized, and the Room for the River Program is introduced. Moreover, excerpts from three discussions I had with as many involved professionals are reported. Instead, the second one focuses on the city-ship relation. Firstly, I show how boats and boat-related objects still permeate Dutch artificial environment. Then, specifically, an in-depth presentation and discussion of Blue21's work is provided. They are a leading company as far as floating urbanism, and his more-than-technical issues are concerned. The argument develops cross reading their publications with a long interview I did with both the funder and an architect employed. Finally, Chapter 6 (which is properly about transduction) offers the Archipelago to visualize some *possible becoming the Dutch environment is in the grip of*.

By presenting in such divided manner the research's path, I do not argue that the two moments have been tightly separated, consequential, and/or subsequent in time. Nor I claim, with Lefebvre, that the first theoretical component emerges from pure theory and the second stands for its application. These are simplifications which I strongly refuse. On the one hand, the theoretical enquiry is already grounded in the historical and material semioticity of currently existing reality. Its partial abstractness is not only worthy of academic legitimacy as Lefebvre himself vigorously argued. Moreover, it is also concrete, even though it escapes tautology. Its concreteness is that one of the *politically possible* which stirs in the very material, currently existing morphology of our planetary, constantly negotiated and built construction site (Cuppini, 2017). On the other hand, it is neither true that – at the temporal scale of my research process – the moment of theoretical abstraction has anticipated the fieldwork one. The two have developed almost together, even though for Corona-19 reasons I went in the Netherlands a year and a half after the beginning of my PhD. The permanence in a flooded country has been crucial for knotting thoughts and – mostly – for putting them at a stronger *spatial trial*. Nevertheless, again with Lefebvre, under the historical stage of production of space, knowledge never exits that internality, neither when refers to *space* and not only to *things in space* (Lefebvre, 2018, p. 57-58). Hence, since space is now social – the author argue - no external is possible: knowledge is always at such a trial. The latter's hyper-objectual concreteness is always the terrain.

Therefore, my proposed methodology is not customary. Namely, I do not use “planetary urbanization” as an analytical framework for describing how capitalistic-oriented urbanization develops through terracide, social exclusion and violence. I do not deny those aspects of currently existing reality. Contrary, I completely agree with such perspectives, which also claim for increased attention on, and in support of social struggles against those more-than-human injustices. I just want to add another – crucial – layer. What happens *beside and before* struggles? What about social production and reproduction as a whole wherein those events cannot but take place? What about the “capacity to urbanize” (Brenner, 2019, p. 392) beyond capitalism and the State currently existing cooperative infrastructure fosters? I offer and debate “planetary urbanization” as a critical theory (Brenner, 2009) from this point of view. My research is not about an object, but develops *within* a hyper-object. It excavates the possible, it puts the *possible* – the abstract-concrete materiality of urban-political difference - as its own *object*¹⁶.

Let us *for*-see like a planetary archipolis!

¹⁶ In his last article, Lefebvre (1989, in Brenner, 2014, p. 566) wrote: “Today, it is impossible to write with the lyricism and modernist ecstasy embraced by Apollinaire: Paris nights are drunk with gin/ And blaze with electricity/ Green fres, fashing along their spines/ Tramways up and down their rails/ Shed tunes of mechanical folly”. The present research challenges that final statement Lefebvre gave us. Instead of using it for crediting our despair and finding shelter out of action or in political nihilism and inconsistency, I will consider that sombre indulgence as a momentum for escaping those traps. Otherwise, we cannot breathe here. Maybe Lefebvre simply chose the wrong city for drinking a gin and observing the infrastructural magic. Or maybe, more simply, my generation is definitively tired of “no future” perspectives after having gone through - in just 15 years - two global economic crises, a pandemic and a near Third World War. We hate evidence. Either our life and its effectual truth consists of the seemingly hidden side of reality, or it is nowhere. And we no longer want to be nowhere, including when we write a PhD thesis.

PART ONE

Those who contest philosophy, also abandon the idea of creation. The study of urban phenomena concerns the overcoming of these obstacles and dilemmas, of solving the internal conflicts of the reason that knows.
(Lefebvre, 2014 [1968], p. 58, translation mine).

Chapter 1 - The urbanistic life of the multitude.

Introduction.

In this chapter, I start investigating *how* the “urban revolution” argument can still be – as Brenner initially (2009) and more recently (2018, 2019) put it – also a productive way for exploring new possibilities of social liberation. Firstly, I offer an original reading about Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the Urban Society. Specifically, I suggest that it entails the emergence of a figure: the *social architect*, i.e., the working class considered at the epoch of space production. His urban-political will tend *to cross the threshold of techniques*. This way, “to decide” and “to build” also tend to coincide. I advance such a hypothesis by focusing mostly on his revolutionary¹⁷ essays: *The Right to the City* ([1968] 2014), *The Urban Revolution* ([1970] 1973b) and *The Production of space* ([1974] 2018). Thus, it is here that the process of disassembling takes place. The “urban revolution” concept gains a new meaning. It passes from being a descriptive tool only, to be also a powerful operative instrument for understanding and thinking of social change. Then, I introduce Negri and Hardt’s political thought (2000, 2004, 2010, 2018). This way, I show how they can be conceived “planetary urbanization” debaters before a horizon of emancipation. Indeed, in their elaboration, the metropolis plays a crucial role. Therefore, the *urbanistic life of the multitude* is here offered to update at the imperial stage of capitalism the figure of the social architect. I conclude by opening the way for Chapter 2, where “nature” – which, to Lefebvre, simply fades (2014, p. 72) – and ecological issues are addressed. I move along the conceptual axis immanence-oeuvre-project as far as Lefebvre is concerned. Three key thematic knots have been chosen for Negri and Hardt as well. They are: multitude-biopolitical production-common.

In fact, by reading the two authors in light of and through Lefebvre’s argument, I would love to re-bring the latter “at the trial of space” (Lefebvre, 2018, pp. 396-397), but 50 years after its conceptualization. On the one hand, I will show that the

¹⁷ According to Merrifield (2006), Lefebvre’s momentum towards a new humanism and radical social transformation reached the peak between the late 60s and early 70s.

urban revolution still lays as immanence in the currently existing space and life production. Moreover, I argue that it cannot be found on a putative “Planet B”, neither in a specific city or world area. General aim of the chapter (as of the whole research) is to start moving the “planetary urbanization” argument from being only a needed, precious, and crucial analytical lens for observing the “operations of capital” (Neilson, Mezzadra, 2019) or organizing interdisciplinary research on them (Brenner, 2019, p. 343). Rather, it is also offered as the analytical and practical terrain where to observe, for-see, and act the project of the multitude (Negri, Hardt, 2004, pp. 7, 400-405), our collective oeuvre of absolute democracy. I do not argue that such a good – *pluriversal* (Brenner, 2018, Goonewardena, 2018; Angelo, Goh, 2020) - planetary urbanization is pro-jectable starting from a new drawing. Nor I am interested in replacing the ontological occupation (Escobar, 2018, 2020) of a Picture of the world – the map (Farinelli, 1989, 2003, 2009, Heidegger, 1966, Mignolo, 2007) – with another’s one. My point is not to reify the Common to “enclosed communities” (Negri, Hardt, 2004, p. 13), to an areally defined, autopoietic (Escobar, 2018, p. 169), more or less big, self-organized “space” putatively separated from its geographical outside. Through the argument I propose, the urban autopoiesis of singularities works always in the Common. A productive synergy and cooperation take place, through which the collective project of the multitude *is made*.

Nor I offer the hypothesis that producing the above-mentioned oeuvre would only be about engineering the Earth, i.e., only about material operations of infrastructural production, were they pencils, satellites, platforms, ships, vaccines, or wardrobe doors. Subjectivity, the political and ethics matter – as I am going to show along Part 1 - in building the exodus from capital. Rather, in proposing Negri and Hardt’s arguments as *urban* ones, I shed light on *how* the urban revolution – conceived of “project of the multitude” (Negri, Hardt, 2004, p. 9) – unfolds and can more strongly unfold not only “on space” but “through space”, through its production *in time*. Indeed, my concern will be – on the one hand – to point out that we are already fighting for it with the work of our arms, legs, minds, and their mechanical prosthesis. According to the authors, we have already infra-structured some degrees of autonomy from capital. They emerge and may be observed as that built, operative, quasi-oeuvre, relational product – the *territory of exodus* (Negri, 2008, p. 16) - which is life-space production (Negri, Hardt, 2004, 2010). But, on the other hand, I will claim radical and new attention on *how* the social architect - the urbanistic life of the multitude - can (and cannot but) *decide* upon the course of that revolution and its complete realization. Indeed, my main point will be about showing that *urban-making and decision-making should coincide for radical*

democratic politics. Such argument takes the cue and delves into Brenner's (2019) thoughtful suggestion around the right to the city as "capacity to urbanize" (Ibid., p. 392) – i.e. to produce alter-urbanizations - under deployed planetary urbanization.

Finally, throughout the first paragraph - for due coherence with the author's lexicon - I always refer to the social architect with the male pronoun, "he". Indeed, Lefebvre talks about the Man. But, in the second paragraph, the multitude appears with the female one, "she" or "her". That is not a manneristic choice. Rather, I felt the necessity of taking care about the emancipatory, intersectional and freedom-oriented strength of the concept.

1.1 - Henri Lefebvre: about the urban-political productive *logos*.

1.1.1 - Immanence and oeuvre: the Urban as a collective artwork in the making.

Lefebvre concludes his enquiry about the "city" in Marx and Engels' texts as follows (1973a, pp. 156-157):

"This society is in the grip of the possible. What is it obsessed with? The violence, destruction and self-destruction whose principle it bears within itself, but also with the non-work, the total joy. And we cannot neglect the perfectly appropriate space, and therefore *urban*. [...] this society bears, still and always, its own utopia in its own bosom: the possible-impossible". (Emphasis in original)

The author's general perspective appears here clearly. Therefore, the passage is pivotal for reading and interconnecting other places of the French philosopher's revolutionary texts. The possible – he says – haunts *this* society. It emerges, it is produced within and through the latter which – in turn – is stirred, moved, constantly transformed by the former's currents. The perspective is thus that one of a radical immanence. Lefebvre retrieves it from Marx (Elden, 2004; Merrifield, 2006) and extends it to the production of space. Or better – as he writes in *The Urban Revolution* (1973b, p. 114) – he envisions "the completion of the Marxist *project* of a revolution in industrial organisation through a *project* of urban

revolution” (emphasis added). The latter should be oriented to build an “urban democracy” (Ibid. p. 160) up to a historical stage in which “productive forces have reached such a power to *produce the space*” (1973a, p. 153). Under that condition, the society remains divided: on the one hand there is violence and destruction, on the other freedom, non-work, and pleasure. Therefore, *this* society – according to the author - is exposed to a radical alternative: the possibility of a “global revolution” (1973b, p. 166) or catastrophe. The project of the former emerge – and is constantly left open – from such a fracture. I propose to call that condition “*ambivalence*” according to the use Turin sociologist Alquati did of concept. Namely: for Lefebvre, the alternative to capitalist and State command is a potential to be activated from within the process of space production. Indeed, as seen above, that is the ontological stage reached by productive forces. Moreover, and consequently, that potential seems to be under construction through the very production and reproduction of currently existing urbanized society. The latter is thus ambivalent since it is made of both that command and some degrees of autonomy with respect to it. It is – not by chance – at its *critical point* (1973b, p. 22 [“critical phase”]; 2014, p. 84). Indeed, Lefebvre says, the urban practice – a “marching social practice” (1973a, p. 23) – appears to be never completely appropriated by “the State and the enterprise” (2014, p. 82). Rather, it produces and reproduces itself in excess with respect to them, it appears partially autonomous from them thanks to a *residue* (2014, p. 107). The urban (short for “urban society” – 1973b, p. 23) – the author writes – is in fact nothing but a seed to be revived “that comes between the fractures of the planned and scheduled order” (2014, p. 83). In the following passage of *The right to the City*, the French philosopher is very clear in that regard (Ibid., p. 82, trans., mine):

“State power and big business interests can imagine only one strategy: to devalue, to degrade, to destroy urban society [...]. The State or business, or both (rivals, competitors, but often allies), tend to take over the functions, attributes, and prerogatives of urban society. [...] *And yet, on these faltering foundations, urban society and the urban not only remain but grow stronger. Social relations continue to become more and more complex, to multiply, to intensify, through the most painful contradictions.* The form of the urban, its supreme reason, namely simultaneity and encounter, cannot disappear. Urban reality, even in its disintegration, endures and densifies in the centres of decision-making and information.” (emphasis added).

Social relations, encounters, decisions making and communications – in a word: artificial life or *social practice* – appear to be a kind of engine which works

at the constitution of the urban, of urban democracy despite the power of the State or enterprises. “The perfectly appropriated space” – i.e. the urban (above) – emerge thus as an under-construction potential. It is immanent to this society – to its planetary *construction site* (Cuppini, 2015). Moreover, it tends to the coincidence between production of space and production of life, of transforming the second by and through the transformation of the former. As the French philosopher writes in *The Production of Space* (2018, p. 58): “the concept of social space develops by expanding: it introduces itself within the concept of production to the point of invading it and *becoming its perhaps essential content*” (Emphasis added)¹⁸. What appears to be crucial in the above quoted passage, is precisely (again) the rapprochement between the Urban and the field of life as inter-action, connection, commonality, affective and exceeding congeries of encounters. “The Urban” is described as the immanent movement of socialized life which – through space production *in time* – maintains the latter always open (since it “cannot disappear”) to democracy beyond capitalism and the State. In such a light, there is death matter anywhere, nor simply objects or people in space and surrounded by the void. Contrary, an overall magma emerges without possible outsides, full of tensions and real-utopian ferments in its heart (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 47).

Customary *urbanisme* is, to Lefebvre, unable to see such immanence since the former’s “thinking fixes on recessive evidence in relation to the present” (Ibid., p. 49), i.e., on “the city” and the disjunction between in-common life and space production. Nonetheless, it is neither a matter of simply changing lens to have the movement completely in front, as a predictable certainty. Partially, that field would continue to fade (Ibid., p. 48):

“The urban considered as a ‘field’ is not conceived simply as empty space filled with objects. If there is blindness, it is not only because these objects are not seen and because the space seems empty. The urban? It is a highly complex field of tensions; it is a virtuality, a possible-impossible...Blindness consists in what one does not see, the form of the urban, the vectors and

¹⁸ With the concept of “social space”, Lefebvre refers to the intertwining of production and reproduction. As he writes (2018, p. 53): “social space contains, by assigning them more or less appropriate places, the social relations of reproduction, i.e. bio-physical relations between sexes and ages, with the specific organisation of the family, and the relations of production, i.e. the division and organisation of labour”. Moreover, a bit after Lefebvre extends such concept to life as a whole, in its desiring, and cyclical dimension. As he writes (Ibid., p. 55): “social space incorporates the social acts of subjects, both collective and individual, who are born and die, suffer and act. For them, space is both life and death”. I believe such a tendential coincidence is pivotal to get the French philosopher’s argument around the Urban.

tensions inherent in the field, its logic and dialectical movement, the immanent need; one sees only things, operations, objects (functional and/or stigmatizing to a fully accomplished degree)”

Before such a dis-measuring, relational, immanent need (i.e., relationality, simultaneity, *commonality*, encounters), which is historically revealed and impossible to be reified, Lefebvre does not advance a new “ideological representation” (Ibid., p. 50). Contrary, he offers the former as “episteme of the epoch” (Ibid., note 5, p. 54). In that conjunctural frame, he envisions an effort of *orientation* through praxis (Ibid.), which considers the “experienced”, the “lived” (Ibid.).

This feature of the French philosopher’s Urban Revolution let us enter and delve into another of its characteristics: the *plenitude of life*, its nature of *social oeuvre*. Together with the immanent perspective it emerges from, I propose them as crucial aspects of the concept’s “revolutionary origins” (Keil, 2018).

Preliminary, it must be said that – especially in 1973b, 2014 and 2018 – the Lefebvrian text teems with evocative, poetic, political, more or less metaphorical, more or less philosophical, more or less technical definitions of “urban” and “urban society”. Especially in *The Right to the City* the rhythm is tight: he paws, hates, dares and dreams. Lefebvre’s proliferation of neologisms, abstract thoughts and theatrical tones has various reasons, so it has his specific way of writing which sometimes makes the reading and understanding difficult. On the one hand, such a creative style is – to me - completely coherent with his effort of describing, envisioning, and defending the proliferative, non-systematic and everchanging nature of productive and creative human life. After all – as he writes (2014, p. 128) about the urban centre: “either it is 'spontaneous theatre' or it is nothing”. Hence, his thinking and writing style itself could not but seek and assume partially such an artistic dimension. On the other hand, also the different references matter, the manifold authors and disciplines he frequented. Finally, how Lefebvre technically wrote is worth to notice. Indeed, lots of his books are the transcription of his own monologues by typists¹⁹. For the moment, I focus on some passages which give well back the idea of the urban as an infinite oeuvre, a collective and *productive* leaning towards the plenitude of life which emerge from *this* society. Let me start from these lines (2014, p. 84, trans. mine):

¹⁹ Which sometimes were “women he desired or loved, for whom he would improvise his ideas”, Elden, 2004, p. 5.

“One can neither define the *urban* as connected to a material morphology (on the ground, in the practical-sensible), nor as capable of detaching from it. It is not a timeless substance, nor a system among Systems or above other systems. It is a mental and social form, of simultaneity, union, convergence, encounter (or rather of encounters). It is a quality that arises from *quantities* (spaces, objects, products). It is a *difference*, or rather, a set of differences. The urban *contains* the meaning of industrial production [...] It is a *field* of relations...As a place of desire and the linking of times, the urban could present itself as the *signifier* of which we seek the *meanings* (i.e. the practical-sensible "realities" that would allow it to be realized in space with an appropriate morphological and material basis) [...] Urban society...manifests a different logic from that of the market. It is another world. The *urban* is based on use-value”. (Emphasis in original)

Instead, the next passage is retrieved from *The Urban Revolution* (1973b, p. 134, trans., mine):

“The urban is a pure form: the meeting point, the place of a gathering; the *simultaneity*. This form has no specific content, but everything comes and lives there. It is an abstraction, but the opposite of a metaphysical entity. It is a concrete abstraction, linked to practice. Beings of nature, results of industry, techniques and wealth, works of culture, including manners of living, situations, modulations, ruptures of the everyday, the urban is *cumulative* of all contents”. (Emphasis in original).

As one can see, first, the urban society (to Lefebvre) – the *telos* of the urban revolution which is, at once, immanently possible in and impeded by the currently existing socialized society (above) – is nothing about homogenization. On the contrary, it appears to be a *pluriverse*. It is “the simultaneity” – of course – but of differences. It seems the very opposite of a totalizing totality (see also, Goonewardena, 2018). Rather, it looks like a way for thinking holistically (Ibid.) of, take care and fight for what is common among those who are manifold. Moreover, that multiplicity appears as the very essence of the urban. To put it with a motto: no urban without differences, no differences without the urban. For Lefebvre, such a “social and mental form of simultaneity”, is crucial for letting them meet each other and preserving that multiplicity and aleatory, their “togetherness of differences” and “unforeseen events” (2014, p. 82). In other terms: *the urban* is described as what differences *have (already) in common*, and also what they have to unfold, produce, defend and realize. In this second case, it appears as the horizon

of another world. It is to be created through a suitable *morphology*, in order to completely re-appropriate space, life, and desire. The Urban is thus offered as the cumulative, endless time-space of social, artificial, dreaming life with all connected products. It is what we are looking for, and what contains that operative momentum: “beings of nature, achievements of industry, techniques and wealth, works of culture, including manners of living, situations” (above). Rather than a homogenizing epistemology, it looks like a *plenitude* of the multiple. It grounds on plurality (of will and objects), it stands for the *common* to come and also for its already existing “portion”, its embedded potential in practices. Indeed, it is not pure abstraction. Contrary, it works concretely, immanently as creation of “use values” within the currently (to Lefebvre) conjuncture of society. For all these reasons, it should be conceived – Lefebvre says – as “oeuvre”²⁰.

Indeed – for the French philosopher – the right to the city²¹ consists precisely in transforming *urban life* into an oeuvre (2014, p. 130). Namely: the former is

²⁰ On this topic, see also Biagi (2019) and Borelli (2011). My argument follows Biagi’s, but only partially. On the one hand, I agree with him when he says that, to Lefebvre, the “Right to the city” concerns the re-appropriation of the production of space. Therefore, it is about art since it entails the creation of use values. As he writes (2019, p. 20, trans. mine): “an authentic ‘urban revolution’ will take place when social space becomes the work, the drawing, the project of those who live and pass through it; when there is the possibility of a free, shared, plural, democratic production of space. One which is no longer dependent on interests and profits of the few”. Nevertheless, on the other hand, I disagree with Biagi when he says that the Lefebvrian formula “the city as an artwork” is a “performative metaphor” (Ibid.). Indeed, as I show specifically in sub-paragraph 2 here below, it is not. Contrary, such a conception of re-appropriation (which, as seen, is already partially ongoing through social practice) involves much more. Namely: it postulates the *becoming social architect* of the working class – i.e., the practical, technically informed, and morphologically attentive need and effort to *socialize urbanism* – as a revolutionary, post-capitalist and post-statal issue. Such a “new humanism” grounds – to me – on the *crossing of the threshold of techniques*. I advance that hypothesis starting from next sub-paragraph.

²¹ Famously, in the last decade, a debate took place upon the concept of “Right to the City” thanks particularly to David Harvey’s work (see for example, Harvey, 2012, 2013). Important contributions have arrived also from Rossi (2016, 2017) and Rossi, Vanolo (2010). On the one hand, Harvey recognizes that today – already to Lefebvre – “the right to the city is the right to something which no longer exists” (2012, p. 49). Thus, to some extents, it is a chimera. Nonetheless, on the other – according to the American geographer – it remains “an important step” (Ibid., p. 52) towards a general revolutionary movement, while the former cannot be “an end in itself” (Ibid.). Indeed, Harvey argues, the Right to the City consists of an empty signifier (Ibid., p. 49), which can be filled by different groups of people with different interests. For those who “have created the urban life” (Ibid., p. 50), it specifically concerns “the right to assert claims on what they have produced, and one of these claims is the right to build a city which suits their desires” (Ibid.). With respect to Harvey’s argument, Negri (see Tomasello, 2014) says that it is still too much dependent on a Fordist conceptualization of the metropolis and the related spatial divisions. To the Italian political philosopher, the former does not recognize the structure and the production of the commonwealth. At once, the autonomous, productive capacity of the multitude is underestimated to appropriate (and not only undergo) production. Next paragraph 2 takes directly on Negri’s and Hardt’s (2000, 2004,

about converting the second into a not-alienated process of “participating activity” (Ibid.), of time-space production as use collective value. Therefore, Lefebvre thinks of the “right to the city” more as re-appropriation of planning, than of a specific bounded area where to exercise juridical rights (Biagi, 2019). It concerns revolution as right to urban life (2014, p. 136), not to “the ancient city” (Ibid.), but to realize “rhythms of life and ways of spending time that allow a full and complete use of moments and places” (Ibid.). The dimension is that one of a *common oeuvre* which emerge from *social practice*. Indeed, as the French wrote for the Paris Commune ([1965] 2018, p. 28), also the urban society’s style should be that one of the feast, of a plenitude of life made of total joy and production of the man-for-the-man. Emphasis falls always on such a holistic dimension of creation, which concerns social life as a whole²². In fact, since the latter has been socialized, the Urban (as once the city, 2014, p. 18) – Lefebvre argues (Ibid., p. 137) – can emerge as work, oeuvre and “playful centrality” (Ibid., p. 127) only by “renewing the sense of *productive and creative* activity by destroying the ideology of consumption and producing a new humanism” (Ibid. p. 137)²³. It should be oriented to “develop and find new needs” (Ibid., p. 120) for the multi-sensory and multi-purpose urban man (Ibid., p. 101). According to the author, the latter are about (Ibid.): “creative activity, work...information, symbols, imagination, playful activities”. Only this way – Lefebvre continues (Ibid., p. 137) – through such new humanism, “the city and his everyday life in the city become work [oeuvre], appropriation, use value (and not exchange value) through the means made available by science, art, technology, and dominion over material nature”²⁴.

Crucial points advanced by the French philosopher are to me two. On the one hand, such an urban oeuvre is possible “in and through the urban society that begins

2010) argument around the metropolis precisely to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins but without trapping it in an outdated conception of “the right to the city”. Also, Cuppini (2023, p. 345) goes in a similar direction, when offers his “Metropolis 4.0” as “the coexistence of two flows. That of an accidental megamachine *a la* Bratton, and the Lefebvrian one: the potentiality of a collective oeuvre”.

²² Even thought – but that is precisely Lefebvre’s point – “‘productive’ events of reality, as social formation and oeuvre, elude knowledge” (2014, p. 58). Again, the issue of blindness arises. But answer cannot be to consider the new as irrational, or to deny it by reducing what is emerging to what pre-existed (Ibid.). Contrary, knowledge has to face creation, i.e., production considered as a matter of “giving life to something which before did not exist” (Ibid.). That is Lefebvre’s operative position when the Urban gains the status of “epochal episteme” (1973b, p. 54).

²³ That is an ethical cornerstone which especially Merrifield (2013) has drawn upon.

²⁴ Simona de Simoni (2014) has written very important words about Lefebvre’s philosophy of the everyday, and its – in his conception – ambivalence and potentiality. On the same theme see also Kipfer, Schmid, Goonewardena, Milgrom (2008).

to exist” (Ibid.). In that vein, the paradigm of immanence is confirmed: *oeuvre is a concrete potential*, it is what our socialized and urbanized society (2014, p. 77) is in the grip of. Overall, it sounds more like an operatively orienting perspective towards concrete democracy, than a “performative metaphor” only - as Biagi (2019) calls it. To Lefebvre, the emergence of such an epochal episteme – which allows to see better the anyway partially blind urban field – is addressed to the working class. The former, may revel immanent margins of self-valorization, of appropriation, of autonomous activity devoted to not-alienated creativity and art. On the other hand - and coherently - the “ephemeral city” (2014, p. 129)²⁵ can be its future and tendency. Very far from a State-governed, telluric-based territorial unity, it would appear as (Ibid., translation mine):

“Accelerated change of houses, areas, and established spaces... relentless work of the inhabitants, themselves mobile and mobilized for and by this work. *Time* [emphasis added] regains its own role, at centre stage. There is no doubt that technique makes possible the ephemeral city, the ultimate expression of the playful, as supreme work and luxury.”

To this extent, the urban society embodies the future of art. One where the latter “can become *praxis* and *poiesis*: the art of living in the city as an artwork” (Ibid.).

Hence, the urban revolution finds another great formulation as far as its aim and contents are concerned. “The future of the art is not artistic, but urban” (Ibid.) – Lefebvre states. The breadth of such a maxim – which the author reach reflecting on “perspectives” for the urban society (2014, pp. 115-130) – is relevant. In fact, it entails a conception of the urban which stands at the very opposite side than homogenization or unifying totality. Contrary, it appears the field where the right to “individuation in socialization” (2014, p. 130) is appropriated and not dismantled. That is the sense of envisioning the future of art as urban: the unicity of creation, the “unicity” (2018, p. 88) of the product of creativity will not find its ontology in transcendence or in the alienation of art. Rather, the very urban life as togetherness of urban products, of Common, will be its place (see also, 2018, p. 123 and 391). Lefebvre is saying that what is growing under socialization of society is

²⁵ I believe that here an interesting research path appears, which may compare Lefebvre’s argument and Koolhaas’ (2006; with Mau, B., 1997). Indeed, while the latter – according to Biraghi (2005) – advance a free from nostalgia thinking *à la* Tafuri, the former seems to reverse it but in support of social democratic transformation. On the one hand, Stanek (2011) reports various cases of divergence among the French philosopher and the Italian architecture historian. On the other, an unprecedented kinship could be found out, for example starting from Assennato’s claim (2018) about thinking of urban struggles and projects in the dimension of the Bigness.

the possibility – to be activated and defended – of the coincidence between art and life under the umbrella of urban production of space. Of course, as known, such perspective follows Lefebvre’s connection with the Situationist International²⁶. Nevertheless, *it must be pointed out that the coincidence is not given on the terrain of art, but on the urban one!* The latter is the future of art, not the other way around. Production of space must become production of art, production itself – as a biopolitical whole - has to tend towards art. In the Lefebvrian perspective, the second overcomes its alienated condition *by entering and reappropriating the terrain of production* which, in turn, thanks to the former, can tend towards use value. In other terms: for the French philosopher, the end of alienated production based only on exchange value – thus the beginning of art - is not the end of production. Rather, it is about the *production of life* (and its morphological, materially grounded urban space) as art. There, the latter stops to be an alienated representation of space – an “object of art” (2014, p. 129) – and permeates inhabitation and the material production of a common oeuvre beyond the State. Urban revolution appears the “proclamation and realization” of such a “real of use” (Ibid. p. 137), where art has crossed the threshold of alienation and coincides with productive life. That is the reading I offer of the above-mentioned statement (2014, p. 129): “art can become *praxis* and *poiesis*: the art of living in the city as an artwork”. Indeed, although returned to use value, the oeuvre will be also – and already partially is - a product. In that regard, the author writes in *The Production of Space* (2018, p. 95, trans. mine):

“Every work occupies a space, generates it, shapes it; every product, occupying a space, circulates in it. There is no reason that requires separating the artwork from the product, even to positing the transcendence of the oeuvre. And if this is true, the hope is not lost of finding a dialectical movement whereby the latter flows through the product, and the product does not engulf the creation in the repetitive”.

Therefore, the oeuvre is not given – to Lefebvre - in transcendence. Very differently, art (non-alienated creativity) is not only possible, but even necessary for the urban revolution. Indeed, the latter consists (also) in the becoming world of the former as transformation of life – i.e., through a completely reappropriation and production of time-space (the Urban). There, the “city as a process of writing” (2014, pp. 54-56) crosses the threshold of representation. It does no longer mediate the “proximate order” with the “remote one” (Ibid.). Its syntax and *logos* should

²⁶ See Merrifield (2006), pp. 30-38.

coincide with the materially infra-structured time-space of life. She will contain at once, in its collective intelligence, the triple helix Lefebvre describes as “perceived space”, “inhabited space” and “thought out space”.

1.1.2 – From the working class to the Social Architect: to decide in common may mean to build?

Till now, I have focused on two different but intertwined aspects of the “planetary urbanization” concept’s revolutionary origins. On the one hand, the urban – or: the urban society, the urban revolution – has emerged as a social process embedded in those social relation and (urban) practices which the capital cannot completely capture. That is the first “position” Lefebvre advances. The Urban appears under the complete urbanization of society (1973b, p.7) as a practical, ongoing (“in formation”, 2014, p. 102) and restless process *in excess* with respect to State control, exchange value and those ancient morphologies such as the city and the village. “Human dimension, it is said” – writes Lefebvre (2014, p. 103) peremptorily, and polemically with urbanistic ideologies - “just when we have to deal with the boundless, to create 'something' *to match the universe*” (emphasis added). To that extent, the urban – event though immanent - must be realized and chosen. Its possibility arises thanks to the socialization of society, thanks to – one could say – the pooling of social production of life. Its commonality appears to the author as both premise and stake of the urban and the urban revolution. As he clearly says (2014, p. 84, but also *ibid.*, p. 76):

“The reformists' misunderstanding of the 'socialisation of society' has barred the way for the urban transformation (in, of, for the city). It has not been realised that *the essence of socialisation is urbanisation.*” (Emphasis added)

The socialization of society, of life production, has been possible – Lefebvre says - through the very process of urbanization. In turn – that is the second revolutionary position - the true realization of the urban entails the *becoming-common* of urban life as pure creativity, encounters, oeuvre and plenitude of life. “The man of urban society is a man of great needs: the man of rich needs” – Lefebvre states (2014, p. 120.). Nevertheless, for the moment, it remains an alienated, dispersed actuality, a virtuality (*Ibid.*, p. 102).

That is why – and we are in the third revolutionary position I would like to take care for - it emerges also as *project*. It arises as something to be produced, an already-there and at once a not-yet, a concrete-abstraction (1973b, p. 134 and elsewhere) which has to overcome some obstacles (Ibid., pp. 31-54) to be realized. This dimension has already inevitably appeared. After all, Lefebvre’s speech is not systematic. Reading and understanding his pages, one faces more a “quantum”, “non-local”, “entangled” geometry of argumentation than a linear one. Nevertheless, I now focus specifically on the project issue.

In Lima, Peru, at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning (December 2, 1972, in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206) Lefebvre put it in a very clear way, which in turn re-calls what discussed and suggested above. He said:

“It will be a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called art”.

Indeed, it is not by chance that the same seminar started this way (Ibid., p. 196):

“These propositions present a project, that of a simultaneously descriptive, analytical, and global understanding that would positively and negatively be linked to social practice [...] *Proposing* does not amount to *producing*, but *propositions* open the way for those who will produce”.

It is facing the issue of production directly that Lefebvre’s revolutionary intelligence reaches its highest point. *How* he conceives of the realization of the urban revolution is worth to attention, how its – as I am going to argue – *urban-political* project may develop is crucial. In other terms: the “trial of space” – as he calls it in *The Production of Space* (2018, p. 397 and elsewhere) – is where, to me, the core revolutionary conception of Lefebvre’s urban revolution lays. There it must be “bring back” – to quote Keil’s claim (2018).

Firstly, I suggest that the word “project” is better than “virtuality” in order to grasp A) the importance (for the author) of realizing it and B) because “project” entails which instruments, contents and practices should be up to the task (i.e., of removing the obstacles which prevent the urban). Although – as seen - it is not about (1973b, p. 11) “search[ing] for a recipe empirical way to make this product, the urban reality”, nevertheless - as Lefebvre writes in *The Right to the city* (2014, p. 97, 136) - the capacity only of social practice can produce the urban society. “Only *social practical implementation capacity*” – the French philosopher states (2014, p. 85, emphasis added) – “has the right to collect the theoretical elements of

synthesis by effecting it”. But there is more. That “social implementation” would be possible only if the working class – with its needs of joy, playtime, and richness - will take charge of it. The following passage puts it clearly (2014, p. 136):

“The proclamation and realisation of urban life as a realm of use ... is part of the prospects of revolution under the hegemony of the working class [...] Only the assumption of planning by the working class and its political representatives can profoundly change social life and open a second era: that of socialism in the neo-capitalist countries”.

The working class appears – to Lefebvre – the subject of the urban revolution, its avant-garde which “represents the general interests of society” (2014, p. 136). Nevertheless, a point is worth to notice. On the one hand (2018, p. 399), “inventive capacities can only arise from the interplay of plans and counter-plans, of projects and counter-projects”. It entails that producing the urban revolution is also a matter of producing, negotiating and fight precisely at the level of planning. I offer the preliminary idea that – according to Lefebvre – the working class *should thus become architect and urbanist*. Indeed, “the ability to draw up counter-projects, to discuss them with the authorities and to oblige them to take them into account *becomes the measure of 'real' democracy*” (Ibid., emphasis added). Nevertheless, on the other hand, the author is also clear about the fact that the “working class” alone is not sufficient in this challenge. Or better: the forces and movements which can support the urban revolution – and its realization and *planning* – are always social. They appear to exceed not only – as above seen – the State and Enterprise, but also the working class as a specific portion of productive and reproductive forces. Lefebvre puts it this way (2014, p. 111):

“Only the social force capable of engaging directly in the urban, on the basis of a consolidated political experience, can take on the task of implementing a programme that concerns urban society.”

That is why – as the author writes (2018, p. 48) – the social space is a social product. It is produced socially, in excess with respect to the State, the Enterprise and – to some extent – also with respect to the working class. Indeed, “spatial practice incorporates production and reproduction” (2018, p. 58). Thus, also reproductive and non-productive forces matters. As De Simoni has greatly shown (2014), the huge study Lefebvre did upon the everyday life ([1961], 1977)²⁷ was

²⁷ Lefebvre, H., *Critica della vita quotidiana*, Vol. I, II, Dedalo Edizioni, Bari, 1977.

precisely focused on the revolutionary potentials there embedded. Throughout social space, in its weave of production, reproduction and creative micro-actions, the potentiality of feast arises. It is not – De Simoni says (2014) – something like the carnivalesque. Rather, through the everyday life “a political project is defined of re-appropriation of the power and wealth disseminated and produced in the dense web of minute existence” (Ibid.). I point out this non-coincidence between the working class and the urban revolution. Indeed, even if Lefebvre puts explicitly the former as subject, nevertheless he also seems to partially overcome such a claim. I suggest the contradiction is worth to attention since it unveils a very interesting and underdiscussed aspect of the revolutionary breadth of his project-proposal.

To delve into it, let me focus on the very final page of *The Production of Space*. There (2018, p. 401, translation mine) the French philosopher writes:

“Looking forward, the problem is thus to produce the space of the human species as a *collective* (generic) *oeuvre* of this species, in the same way that what was called and is still called ‘art’ did, and which today no longer makes sense at the scale of the isolated ‘object’ made by and for the individual. *To create (produce) planetary space as the social support of a transformed everyday life*, open to various possibilities as the east opens to the horizon”. (Emphasis added).

Here, on the one hand, it seems clear that – for Lefebvre – the project of a planetary *oeuvre* should be taken on by “someone” greater than the working class (strictly conceived) alone. On the other, such a collective *oeuvre* opens to a crucial understanding of (and political proposal about) urban planning (IT: *urbanistica*, FR: *urbanisme*).

Firstly, the author is very critical with respect to such a discipline and rationality. In *The Urban Revolution* it defines *urbanisme* as the “filler” (1973b, p. 49) which impedes the concrete virtuality of the urban. That is why the latter appears as a “blind field” (ibid.). Together with the State and the Enterprise, urban planning as well – Lefebvre says – is an obstacle. It “is fixed on recessive evidence in relation to the present (Ibid.) since its rationality can grasp only what can be seen with and drawn by the pencil (2014, p. 36). Indeed, in *The Right to The City*, the author calls such approach the “urbanistic ideology”. To him, the latter uses a-critically some models from the past such as “the village”, “the community”, “the neighbourhood” without understanding that “man has changed scale, and the old measure (the city, the village) is transformed into dis-measure” (Ibid.).

Notwithstanding, it is not a matter of dismantling *urbanisme* and rationality. Contrary, that practice is worth of renovated attention and engagement since it is becoming *social*. As he puts it (Ibid., p. 49):

“It is not a philosophical view of praxis, but it concerns the fact that so-called urbanist thinking becomes practice on a global level. For some years now, urbanism has aimed to move beyond partial techniques and applications...to become a social practice that pertains to and affects the whole society. *Critical examination of this social practice (evidently putting the emphasis on critical) can allow Theory to resolve a difficulty due to the fact that it was separated from practice.*” (Emphasis in original)

The passage contains the analytical bases where one among the most revolutionary potentials of Lefebvre’s theory lays. Under germinating urban society, urbanism is going social - he says. Moreover, that may help Theory in rejoining practice. Indeed, we are entering - the French philosopher argues (2014, p. 130) – the third period of philosophy. Now, the latter “contributes to a promotion of rationality and practice, which are transformed into urban rationality and urban practice” (Ibid.). According to Lefebvre, at the historical stage of “production of space” - when life is essentially urban since society has been socialized - philosophy could truly become world²⁸ as social urbanism. More precisely, that might happen

²⁸ Lefebvre addresses the issue of such – as he calls it Marxianly – “meta-philosophy” specifically in the namesake essay (Lefebvre, *Metaphilosophy*, 2016 [1965]). As Elden, who also edited this last edition, writes in his critical introduction to the French philosopher (2004, p. 84), metaphilosophy points to the effort of “‘to realise’, ‘to surmount’ [surmonter], ‘to overcome [depasser] philosophy”. To him – in Lefebvre’s conceptualization – it entails “not simply an *after* philosophy but is rather like a metamorphosis” (Ibid.). In *Metaphilosophy* (2016, pp. 307-308), Lefebvre writes: “Metaphilosophical thought encompasses...fragmentary, broken totality, on route towards ‘something else’: towards a *planetary totality* that is totally new. Along with the globalization of autonomized and automatized powers, at the same time the true powers of the human being, his *moments*, strengthen and reassert themselves: play, rest, love, poetry, and so on” (first emphasis added). It is not by chance, thus, that the concept of metaphilosophy appears a lot in Lefebvre’s revolutionary and “planetary” texts. In 1973b (pp. 75-78), he writes: “does metaphilosophy emanate from philosophy as urban society emerges from the exploded city? This meditation is not located on this side of philosophy, nor within philosophy, but beyond philosophy as an activity that *is itself specialised, constituted, and instituted* [...] Philosophy transformed into metaphilosophy no longer shows an already accomplished or lost reality, the ‘man’, it points a way, an orientation” (emphasis added). Such a political, transformative, and productive tension of metaphilosophy is also clear in 2018 (p. 352), where Lefebvre writes: “even if the fundamental concept of production links it closely to social practice: this is the aspect that defines metaphilosophy, founded on philosophy, but capable of opening it up to the ‘real’ and the possible”. Nevertheless, it is in *The Right to the City* that, to me, the coincidence between metaphilosophy and socialized urbanism is evident. There, the French philosopher states (2014, pp. 132-133): “In a society and an urban life freed from its former limitations - of poverty and economism - techniques, art, knowledge are put at the service of

by means of the revolutionary socialization of urbanism. Chapter “Philosophy and the city” of *The Right to the city* (2014, pp. 39-46) directly addresses that issue.

On the one hand, Lefebvre argues (2014, p. 42) that it is not philosophy which brings the urban life into the realm of concepts. Rather - very poetically – it is “the city as apparition, language, meditation [which] rises to theoretical light by means of the philosopher and philosophy”. Thus, firstly, the emerging “epochal episteme” of the planetary Urban entails – for philosophy – to get that dimension. It should “recover itself” (2014, p. 46) precisely starting from “its connection with the city (conditions and contents of this thought)” (Ibid.). In fact, without the latter, the former cannot realize the “project of synthesis and totality” it yearns to (Ibid. p. 39). To that extent, Lefebvre explicitly refers and accepts the Hegelian simultaneous becoming-world of philosophy and becoming-philosophy of the world. But, on the other hand, with Marx, the French philosopher also assumes that the unity is not reached. Such mission is up – he adds – to the proletariat, which has to put an end to all separations. As the author writes (pp. 44-45):

“it is not in or through the State...that philosophy is realised. This historical mission belongs to the proletariat, which alone can put an end to separations (alienations). Its mission is twofold: to destroy bourgeois society by building another society, to abolish speculation and philosophical abstractions, alienating contemplation and systematisation, in order to realise the philosophical project of the human being. It is in industry, in industrial production, in its relation to productive forces and labour, certainly not in moral or philosophical judgement, that the working class finds its possibilities”.

Again, the working class is the proposed subject for realizing philosophy and building – through production - another society beyond the State. But, at the same time (see above), the former - if strictly conceived - is not sufficient (for the author himself) to re-appropriate such an urban planning. While the latter is going social and reaching all dimensions of life, all productive and re-productive forces should in fact be involved. It is at this gap, at the encounter of these streams of thoughts, that I propose to introduce the figure of the *social architect*. To me, such an operative figure emerges through the fold of Lefebvre’s reasoning.

everyday life in order to transform it. *This is how the realisation of philosophy is defined*. It is no longer a philosophy of the city and a socio-historical philosophy that runs parallel to a science of the city. *The realisation of philosophy makes sense of the sciences of reality*” (emphasis added).

It should be conceived as a *meta-philosophical concept* which embodies the subjective dimension of a political and spatial-productive actor in the making. On the one hand, to the author, “philosophical concepts have nothing operational” (2014, p. 46). However (Ibid.), they “place the city and the urban - and the whole of society - as a unity here and beyond analytical fragmentations”. On the other, the social architect seems exactly what Lefebvre is conceptually working at – though explicitly absent in the text - to take care about both the becoming-urbanism of philosophy and the needed re-appropriation of that process. The former, as I propose it, takes etymologically together (“concept” is from Latin *cum-capere*, which means to gather, to re-unite) and meta-philosophically reunites the operative dimension that chance entails. It (he) “makes sense of the sciences of reality” (Ibid., p. 133) since embodies and does no longer keep separate “a philosophy of the city and a socio-historical philosophy that runs parallel to a science of the city” (Ibid.). Therefore, the social architect may be imagined as *both the historical addressee of and the vanishing (concrete, operative) point which holds up Lefebvre’s argument. The former appears to be who takes charge of the socialization of urbanism to realize philosophy, to produce a common planetary artwork and the end of alienations. That way, it embodies the subject of the urban revolution and prolongs philosophy onto (revolutionary) practice.* I propose to call he “architect” and not “urbanist” to take care about the dimension of art and creativity. I suggest that such a figure – or operative concept - may be useful to describe and conceptually gather *the means* the Urban Society’s *project* involves according to Lefebvre.

Therefore, in the afore-mentioned passage (2014, p. 49), Lefebvre does not simply states that “urbanism” as a specific sector of production is going more social-oriented and mass-oriented than in another given moment under capitalism. Rather, he is arguing (and claiming for) something very different: profiting from that process, urbanism should be reappropriated (i.e., *acted*) as a social practice, by the commonality of productive, re-productive e non-productive forces which stir to escape from the Capital’s and the State’s grip. That way – he says (2014, p. 44) – the philosophical project of human being, the Urban Revolution, may take place and be realized. The French philosopher is claiming for practically, meta-philosophically *crossing the threshold of techniques* and thus doing urbanism, doing space production as a revolutionary practice of contestation against, negotiation with, and escape from capitalistic-oriented socialization of society. In that the urban revolution project consist of. Lefebvre is saying that this possibility – for “theory [to] resolve a difficulty due to the fact that it was separated from practice” (2014, p. 49) - is immanent in currently existing planetary urbanization. Namely, in currently deploying “third period of philosophy” (2014, p. 130), i.e.,

when the latter becomes “urban rationality” (Ibid.). From within it, but against, a new *logos* emerges (and should be supported and realized). It might be conceived as the urban *logos* of the *social architect* which thinks about, produces, and builds (also out of metaphor) his revolution. One where urban society emancipates from capital and the State by building, negotiating, and working at the production of planetary space as her common oeuvre.

In light of what discussed since now, it seems to me that the *social architect* is a pertinent figure to embed that mission during planetary urbanization. Moreover, it can be argued that – to Lefebvre - the becoming world of philosophy entails decisive *acts of urbanism*, that the former is given *as* such urban-political, revolutionary praxis. With those understandings in mind, I suggest reading the following series of statements. “A revolution that does not produce a new space”, Lefebvre writes (2018, p. 73), “is not accomplished to the end; it fails; it does not change lives”. Rather, “a revolutionary transformation is measured by its ability to creatively intervene in everyday life, in language, in space” (Ibid.). It seems not about simply “having” a plan on space. *Space itself*, its turbulent materiality is the terrain through which revolutionary decisions must be taken. In addition, I say “building” out of metaphor since morphology matters. It is crucial for understanding the revolutionary breadth of the social architect, of his productive, planning, technical logos. “The urban life” – Lefebvre clearly writes (2014, p. 57) – “the urban society, in a word the *urban*, cannot do without a practical-tangible base, without a morphology”. Few pages after (Ibid. p. 86), he is again very clear in that regard:

“The *urban* can only be entrusted to a strategy that foregrounds the problem of the urban, the intensification of urban life, the actual realisation of society (i.e. of *its morphological, material, practical-tangible basis*)”
(Second emphasis added)

What I claim for is that the social architect *should be really conceived as an architect*. It is not a metaphor. The former stands for, describes, and points out the needed subjective dimension of the political when – under the becoming-urbanism of both philosophy and social life - decision-making *tends to coincide with* urban-making. He embodies that “capacity to urbanize” (Brenner, 2019, p. 392) - to create alter-urbanizations - the right to the city consists of (according to the American theorist) under deployed planetary urbanization. The social architect should decide productively, *by* building. Namely: to Lefebvre, the former’s decision *is immediately given* as spatial transformation. He really has – in order to take charge

of the urban revolution – to think of and plan it also by and through the material, morphological base which supports it. There is no longer a separation between such a socialized, revolutionary urbanism and the product, between the “architect” and the “ground”. Rather, they tend to coincide in the same artificially produced oeuvre, in the same “urban life” (above) to be also morphologically intensified. Infrastructures, services, streets, platforms, communication *et similia* tend – in such a process towards the urban society – to coincide (according to Lefebvre) with the very artificial body of the social architect and its urban(istic) life. The latter, in turn, is nothing else but reappropriated time through *living architecturally* – remember (2014, p. 129): “art can become *praxis* and *poiesis*: the art of living in the city as an artwork”. One could say it consists of the *political* effort of living with-in the planetary urban (the accumulation of all contents, see above) *architecturally* produced. Nevertheless, as seen, the urban cannot be reified to a specific form. It cannot neither be separated by its morphology as it was a metaphysic entity disentangled from materiality. Its *telos* is not a “thing”, an ideological architectural object, or State, or “city”. Social *urbanisme* cannot thus be about producing “a city”. The latter is – as Lefebvre says – dead. Contrary, the former concerns a *potential* stirring in currently existing planetary urbanization. That one of a margin of autonomy in social life production which already exceeds the State and the Enterprise.

Quid tum? I offer the hypothesis that – to Lefebvre - socialized urban planning should gain to the generality of planetary space production the city’s tension towards the oeuvre. An oeuvre of unexpectedly meeting oeuvres: that way the planetary metropolis should look like. “Terrestrial space is thus created” – Lefebvre concludes, in fact, in Lima *before an audience of architects* (Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206) – “as the social support for a transformed everyday life: containing multiple possibilities”. To that regard, reading *The Right to the City* together with - and not in opposition to - *The Urban Revolution* (as I did since now) a strong continuity appears. Both essays concern the same “capacity to urbanize” (Brenner, 2019, 392). More than to “a city”, the “right” the author claims for there seems to be that one to reappropriate the spacetime production process. It is not a right to an object, but to a practice: the urban-making, meta-philosophical practice of politically moulding matter towards a planetary common oeuvre. That capacity interrogates and might make philosophy become world as liberated collective urbanism. Therefore, from and beyond Lefebvre, struggles could be imagined as *social architecture* moments which leans towards the urban society. They participate in the social architect’s makings. Social struggles and conflicts might appear as political accelerations in that process of urban realization of life. They may be grasped (and conducted?) as

social urban planning events and processes, as decisive and deciding urban-political tensions taking place within our open planetary construction site (Cuppini, 2017). One could think of the French philosopher claiming: “struggles! be aware and think of the urban project you are in need of not to fail!”. Or: “struggles! Be aware you have to technically think with and of the urban morphology which support the revolution!”. Those implicit harangues emerge, for example, from passages as the one which follows from *The Production of space* (2018, p. 78, translation mine):

“The path indicated here, is thus related to a strategic hypothesis. That is, to a long-term theoretical and practical project. Is it a political project? Yes and no. On the one hand it implies a politics of space, but it goes beyond politics, and presupposes a critical analysis of all spatial politics and politics in general. By pointing the way to produce another space, that of a different (social) life, and of a different mode of production, *the project overcomes the gap between science and utopia, between reality and the ideal, between the thought out and the inhabited*”. (Emphasis added).

If not an explicit claim before, from and for struggles, this passage shows – at least - what I propose to call the *urban-political* project and *logos* of the social architect. That one with which the latter has to replace the old urbanistic rationality oriented to drawable objects. Namely: the old political project devoid of urban consciousness. His syntax and *intelligence* should – according to Lefebvre - coincide with, thinking and produce through the materially infra-structured time-space of life. The former will contain at once, in its common, multi-temporal brain, the triple helix the author describes as “perceived space”, “inhabited space” and “thought out space” (2018, p. 59). Politics and morphology, the political dimension of the project and the material, infrastructures-oriented one tend to coincide for the social architect. When the space is produced as a “currently existing whole” (2018, p. 58) – Lefebvre says – “the production and the product”, the process and the *telos*, “are two inseparable faces, not two separable representations” (Ibid.). At such an historical stage, the space is a product and means of production. “Networks of exchanges, flow of raw materials and energy” – he argues (Ibid. p. 102) – “shape space and are determined by it”. Therefore, the social architect has to take charge also *technically* of his political project of a common, urban, oeuvre. In other terms, the author is saying that – for staying revolutionarily at the historical stage of urbanized society – it is needed to imagine and conduct struggles as forms and processes of *social architecture*, of urban meta-philosophy. In that vein, struggles may, not only, concern a specific project. Rather, *they should be architecture*. Their *project* should cross the threshold of techniques and decide architecturally to

“overcome the gap between science and utopia, between reality and the ideal, between the thought out and the inhabited” (2018, p. 78). In *The Urban Revolution*, the French philosopher argues (1973b, p. 11) that “undoubtedly, there will be a threshold to cross before entering the concrete, that is, the social practice theoretically understood”. I offer the hypothesis that – according to what seen since now – the threshold he thought about was that one of techniques and the social architect is the subject able to take on such a historical mission.

In conclusion, with this brief excursion through Lefebvre’s thoughts, I pointed out three elements which – to me – are crucial for grasping the revolutionary breadth of his proposal. Firstly: the urban society is *immanent* and partially already produced by and through the currently existing socialization of society. Secondly: the urban is about, concerns, is made as *oeuvre*. It is defined as the complete reappropriation of creativity, life, desires, and needs. To this extent, it is the future of art. Thirdly and most importantly: the Lefebvrian Urban entails, depends on and may be realized only through *production*. It involves *urban-political projects* and a true, accomplished *becoming social* of urbanism. To that purpose, the *social architect* has emerged as an operative concept which points to an embodied subject. The latter is *who* might be able to take on, think with, produce and plan through such a meta-philosophical, historically deployed process. His techniques are political since, by means of them and the morphologies they realize, he participates in that becoming-world of philosophy as social urbanism. But, at the same time, he may profit from and bend that *concretizing logos* by infra-structuring separations and overcoming alienations. *Architecture* – the material production of not-alienated morphologies – is thus the social architect’s politics and art. It is crucial to realize and produce the common oeuvre of the human species. For Lefebvre, planetary urbanization brings forward – thanks to its commonality – this other world as a potential. It produces it, and at once impedes it. Obstacles are the State, the private Enterprise and old urban planning rationality. In *The Urban Revolution* (1973b, p. 155), the French philosopher writes: “urban revolution and concrete democracy coincide”. The currently existing social and spatial morphology of socialized society – or planetary urbanization – opens the possibility for such a common world. Struggles and conflicts should be aware and up to the task of a similar huge opportunity and responsibility. Theoretical speaking, these are the key points I bring forward as far as the revolutionary origins of the “planetary urbanization” argument are concerned. This way, I conclude the process of disassembling. At once, the former can now pass from being a precious, descriptive, analytical tool only, to also an operative one oriented towards the tracking and production of alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019).

Nevertheless, before that, an updating of Lefebvre's thoughts is needed. For this purpose, next paragraph offers Negri and Hardt as planetary urbanization debaters. I suggest they develop the argument before a horizon of emancipation (Keil, 2018), but 50 years after the French philosopher's formulations. Instead, Chapter 2 will address the ecological issue.

1.2 - Negri and Hardt: about the *urban* project of the multitude

1.2.1 – Archipelago multitude: absolute democracy and the biopolitical production of the Common.

Together, Negri and Hardt have published four essays: *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), *Commonwealth* (2010) and *Assembly* (2018). They all concern the possibility of thinking of, fight for and realize radical democracy. Therefore, they develop through the effort of building a general theory which regards both capitalism and its overcoming. Particularly, I consider here the first three ones. More specifically, I focus on the conceptual axis multitude-biopolitical production-Common to show how the (planetary) metropolis stands – to the authors - in a crucial position. In addition, a collection of essays is taken into account written by Negri only²⁹: *Dalla fabbrica alla metropoli* (2008). There, the urban territory finds

²⁹ Sadly, Negri died while I was writing the thesis, on December 16, 2023. He has been a major figure in Italian politics and philosophy. As professor of Political Theory at the University of Padova since 1967, during the 70's he has been founder and member of the far-left organization *Potere Operaio*, other groups and journals. Because of that, Negri has then been sentenced to 12 years in prison. After four, in 1983 he was a candidate with the Radical Party at the Italian Parliament and got out of jail. But he soon escaped and fled to France into exile, where he remained until 1997, when returned to Italy to finish serving his sentence. That is when the series of publications with Hardt began. During his lifetime, Negri published numerous essays and journal articles. He is considered one of the theorists of Italian *operaismo*. Among the essays released in the 1970s, some of those that were banned after his conviction can be mentioned. They are: *Crisi dello Stato-piano* (1974), *Partito operaio contro il lavoro* (1974), *Proletari e Stato* (1976), *Il dominio e il sabotaggio* (1978). The volumes are also worthy of attention: *Marx oltre Marx* (1979) and *Dall'Operaio massa all'operaio sociale* (1979). Subsequently, in the 1980s, Negri studies and published on Spinoza (*L'autonomia selvaggia*, 1981) and Leopardi (*Lenta Ginestra*, 1987). In 1992, *Il Potere Costituente* was released, together with *Il lavoro di Dioniso* (with Hardt). Both books start developing crucial

centrality and other insights emerge which strengthen the point advanced while discussing the first three essays. Namely, unprecedented links are traced which connect Hardt, Negri and Lefebvre. Even though the two political philosophers are not influent in critical geography, they can be considered “planetary urbanization” debaters. In fact, their “absolute democracy” and “project of the multitude” may be approached to the lefebvrian idea of urban revolution.

To begin with, Negri and Hardt (2004, p. 9, translation mine) starts this way their enquiry about the multitude:

“The possibility of a *global democracy* is only now emerging for the first time. This book is about such a possibility, which we call the “*project of the multitude*.” The project of the multitude not only expresses the desire for a world characterized by equality and freedom, not only demands an open and inclusive global democratic society, but also *has within itself the tools to translate them into reality*. (Emphasis added)”.

According to the authors, the project (politically speaking) they will talk about concerns the possibility – to be activated - of a global democracy. The multitude is the subject (Ibid., p. 255) who should be able of realizing and defend that social association. Indeed, for the moment, the latter is “obscured and threatened by a world-scale conflict that seems to have become permanent...a state of war”³⁰. Instead, the former is “potentially composed of all the different figures of social production (2004, p. 13)”. It may support a “necessary democracy” against that condition of “fear, insecurity and domination” (Ibid., p. 14). The multitude –

themes which will be deeply faced in *Impero* (2000). Finally, one can mention *Kairòs, alma venus, multitudo* (2000) and *Dalla Fabbrica alla metropoli* (2008).

³⁰ The book has been written in a period which goes from September 11, 2001, to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Thus, the war the authors talk about was not a metaphor, but a terrible reality. In such a regard, I would like to point out that the same goes nowadays. Almost two years after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and after months of daily risk of a nuclear catastrophe, 90 days of carnage has been going on in Palestine. The first case has had a huge impact also on our living conditions in Europe, in both economic and political terms. Therefore, to me, the action of writing this thesis, which explores the possibility of a new conception of “urban revolution” and “urban democracy”, strongly empathize with Negri and Hardt’s argument. I try to, at least, give some smell back of theirs, letting a kind of revolutionary imagination permeate my research and its utopian afflatus (in Bloch’s terms, see Introduction) beyond the prison of the present.

Also, it is worth of attention that Negri and Hardt’s starting position is very close to Lefebvre’s. Indeed, he stood before a very similar “object” (the urban society or urban democracy) which, in addition, was emerging itself for the first time according to the author. Moreover, the three speaks about obscurity and obstruction (even for different reasons) with respect to such a novelty. Thus, they all seem to share – since the beginning – a common afflatus and analysis towards a potential.

authors argue (Ibid., p. 124) - cannot be unified, “it remains plural and manifold”. Therefore, one can preliminary say that she appears as an *archipelago*. Indeed, the “singularities” (Ibid.) which make her are those “social subjects whose differences cannot be reduced to any identity...and oppose point by point to the undifferentiated unity of the people” (Ibid.). The multitude is also different from the working class. According to the authors, the latter is a too much exclusive concept (pp. 12-13). Being generally referred to industrial workers only, it cannot consider and encompass all those other figures which have emerged under the new global economy. Now, Negri and Hard say, immaterial production, and that one of communication, lifestyles and relations must be taken into account.

Moreover, they argue she has a “strange, double temporality”, a “demonic face” (pp. 258-259)³¹. On the one hand, they refer to an ontological, *sub specie aeternitatis* multitude. It points to the historical human effort of refusing “authority and command” (p. 257), through which our species has looked for “freedom, with countless revolts and revolutions” (ibid.). On the other hand, another multitude must be considered. It is the political one, which needs a political project to be realized (p. 258). The historical possibility of the second – authors say – exists precisely by virtue of the ontological primacy of the former. Firstly, crucial point of their argument around the multitude is her vital, productive force. She is living flesh, the word “element” would be needed to grasp it (p. 224). As Negri and Hardt write (p. 224, trans mine):

“The flesh of the multitude is pure power, a life force without any particular form, a social being constantly aimed at realizing the *plenitude of life* [emphasis added]. From this ontological perspective, the flesh of the multitude is an elemental energy that continuously expands social being and produces in excess with respect to any normal measure of value. No matter how hard we try to harness them, the wind, the seas, and the earth will always escape our grasp. From the standpoint of political order and control, the elemental flesh of the multitude is intolerably elusive, since it cannot be fully subsumed in the hierarchical organs of a political body”.

The nexus is worth to notice between the non-human strength of land, sea, and air and that one of the flesh-multitude. To that extent, the latter is nothing but an

³¹ The authors retrieve their conception of the multitude directly from Spinoza. See especially Negri (2018), but also Del Lucchese (2010, 2022).

exceeding, restless, natural, organic exchange³². She participates in the material and turbulent movement of matter, which gives her the ontological potential of being otherwise. This appears to be the first level: the flesh multitude is stirred by more-than-human currents which puts her under a process of endless metamorphosis and re-constitution. But, on the other hand, such a becoming constantly produces another, monstrous nature of the multitude. Indeed – echoing Haraway’s (1985) works on cyborgs - author say that, while the *elementary*, ontological dimension matters still nowadays, nevertheless, to think of it politically entails referring to its “artificial” (2004, p. 225), “second, third and umpteenth nature” (2004, p. 401; 2000, p. 332). Such a socially productive moment of the multitude offers a first point of connection between Negri, Hardt and Lefebvre. I start by outlining the former’s concept of bio-political production and Common. Then, I point out some links with the French philosopher. Indeed, the creative, productive “plenitude of life” which the multitude strives to, is also a key feature of Lefebvre’s conception of the urban and the urban revolution project.

Bio-political production is a pivotal concept and proposal. Essentially, it points to the ambivalent form the vital, hedonistic momentum takes – for Hardt and Negri - under the currently existing stage of imperial capitalism. It expresses the ontological, constitutive power of living labour which nowadays challenges capitalist command (Viparelli, 2018). In fact, as the authors write, the latter is characterized by a radical *commonality and cooperation* (2000, p. 333, trans mine):

“It seems to us that today we participate in the most radical and profound commonality that has ever been experienced in the history of capitalism. The fact is that we are inside a productive universe created for social communication, interactive services, and common languages. Our economic and social reality is no longer exclusively dominated by material objects produced to be consumed; rather, it is pervaded by services and relationships produced by cooperation. *To produce means, increasingly, to build cooperation and communicative commonality.*” [Emphasis added]

That is the material ground, the specific *social space* where production becomes bio-political and its *ambivalence*³³ emerges. Empire is such a social configuration without an outside where Man and Machine continuously hybridize

³² Such dimension will be crucial for proposing the Archipelago as her project amid the Planetary Flood (Chapter 3 of this Part 1).

³³ They use – and I throughout this research as well (see Introduction) - that concept accordingly with Turin sociologist Romano Alquati.

themselves and the multitude appears in her monstrous, artificial momentum towards creativity and freedom. Of course – as Roggero points out – that does not mean to mistake the “communism of capital” (2011, p. 75) with the Common. Rather, it is about “embodying [the latter] in the materiality of social relations” (p. 61) since “it already exists in the tension line between the autonomy of living labour and capitalist capture” (p. 75). Therefore, that commonality is, at once, base for the emergence of the multitude and her product. But, on the other hand, it is constantly expropriated by capitalism, which in turn cannot but need her exceeding, her partially autonomous movement in excess with respect to him. In such a configuration – Negri and Hardt argue - production becomes bio-political.

The notion has been coined by Foucault, but the authors – as Balibar observes (2011, p. 39) – use it considering a peculiar conceptualization of “life”. To them, Balibar says, the latter is employed for bridging the gap between the Foucauldian concept and the Marxian one of “living labour”. This way, “life” becomes both an “ontological category which denotes the immanence of the overall productive process...and an ethical one”. Negri and Hardt takes and defines their notion of bio-political production from various sides. In *Multitudine* (2004, p. 14, trans mine) it appears since the beginning as such:

“We shall call this new dominant model "biopolitical production," to emphasize that it involves not only the production of material goods in a strictly economic sense. More importantly, it involves and produces all facets of social, economic, cultural, and political life. Biopolitical production, by making the common increase, constitutes a powerful lintel for the contemporary possibility of democracy”.

On the one hand, bio-political production is “bio” since it involves all dimensions of life, its material and immaterial infrastructures, its monstrous bodies of artificial, more-than-human matter. It concerns commodities, platforms for connection and movement, services, and the fostering of human encounters and creativity. On the other, such a condition, supports the possibility for the absolute democracy of the multitude, for her liberation and freedom. Negri and Hardt are extreme clear in that regard (2004, p. 408): “today the institutions of democracy must coincide with the cooperative and communication networks that continuously produce and reproduce social life”. The nexus is crucial since it points out how – for the authors – the *political difference* is immanent to that above mentioned commonality. The possibility of radical democracy and liberation from capital - premises and bases of that *project* - lay nowhere else than, authors say, in the

already existing productive and re-productive (cooperative) infra-structural configuration. They are already in the making, in every point and time of that material vortex of common and restless metamorphosis. They exist as embodied *power* of this “form of socialization which breaks the formal division between life and work, production and re-production, material and immaterial” (Curcio, 2011, p. 24). Therefore, according to Negri and Hardt, the ambivalence of the bio-political stage of production we live in is pivotal. That is why they argue and strongly claim for paying attention on how “living labour” – the fundamental (according to Marx), creative faculty of human beings through which we act in the world producing relations – is always something more than the mere production of commodities. As they write (2004, p. 175):

“Our creative and innovative capacities are always greater than productive labour (productive in the sense that it produces capital). At this point, we can clearly state that *biopolitical production* is, on the one hand, *immeasurable* - since it can no longer be quantified based on given units of time. On the other, it *always exceeds* the value that capital can extract. That happens for the simple reason that capital cannot capture the totality of life”. (emphasis added)

Hence, an un-reduction, an unsolved *residue* lays between bio-political production and capital. The former is given and reproduces itself always in excess with respect to the second. Therefore, being immanent in labour, it is at once external to capital. This way, it gains quotes of increasing autonomy and the same goes for the “project of the multitude” it may involve. According to the authors, the latter’s possibility is nowadays increasing, one can add, precisely because the multitude *has already attributed to herself* portions of production, of that cooperative infrastructure. She has already incorporated, to some extents, quotes of fixed capital to produce her life in partial autonomy. In fact, as Negri and Hardt put it since the beginning of *Multitude* (2004, see above), we are already creating and living-with the instruments and potential institutions of that project. When life itself is productive, radical democracy thus stirs – to them - in the production of the overall infrastructure of social life. Some critics (Balibar, 2011; Thoburn, 2003) have argued that such a reading of currently existing capitalism and its beyond entails the perception that – to Negri and Hardt – “relations which are reproduced under the productive process are no more capitalist but already ‘communist’ or able in recreating the ‘common’” (Balibar, 2011, p. 39). To some extents, that is precisely what the authors say, and precisely what – for me – their theoretical courage and “lefebvrianism” consists of. Sure, if one recognizes and assume the

“non-homogeneity between the becoming-common (the making-multitude of singularities) and communism of capital (i.e., global power as financial capital)” (Balibar, Negri, 2011, p. 28).

I thus suggest that Negri and Hardt’s argument is strongly Lefebvrian in analysis and aims, even though there are not specific references to the French philosophers³⁴. The former seem to develop and actualize his thought. In fact, not only the multitude is offered in almost the same terms than (what I called) the social architect. Not only, I mean, the *plenitude of life* is her telos, as it was (to Lefebvre) for the new man of the urban society. Also, the means to realize it appear to be very similar. In fact, Negri and Hardt describes the project of the multitude and its possibility exactly as the French philosopher did as far as the Urban was concerned. Both are immanent in currently existing society, both partially exceed Capital and the State, both concern the production of life spaetime, of that overall infrastructure. In other terms: bio-political production seems to ground – again – the possibility of an Urban Society. The former keeps alive such an “epochal episteme” by exceeding the command. Let us read again now what Lefebvre writes in *The Right to the City* (2014, p. 82, trans., mine):

“State power and big business interests can imagine only one strategy: to devalue, to degrade, to destroy urban society [...]. The State or business, or both (rivals, competitors, but often allies), tend to take over the functions, attributes, and prerogatives of urban society. [...] *And yet, on these faltering foundations, urban society and the urban not only remain but grow stronger. Social relations continue to become more and more complex, to multiply, to intensify, through the most painful contradictions.* The form of the urban, its supreme reason, namely simultaneity and encounter, cannot disappear.” (emphasis added).

With the concept of bio-political production, Negri and Hardt seem to describe the same scenario. One where, beside the capitalist capture, exploitation and destruction, a movement persists beyond it. That reality hits and multiplies at once, wounds and intensify the Urban: i.e., the possibility of such a society rooted on, organized for e reproduced through encounters, simultaneity, and commonality by means of communication and informational infra-structures. Therefore, a second strong connection emerges between them and Lefebvre. The two political

³⁴ Only one reference appears in *Common* and another in *Empire*, but only as a bibliographical nod. No one in *Multitude*.

philosophers seem to call "biopolitical production" exactly what Lefebvre called the "socialization of space production". Namely: that stage of capitalist development whereby production began to extend to all aspects of social life. In other words, for Negri and Hardt, the project of the multitude is today rooted on the same conditions that were the basis, according to Lefebvre (50 years ago), for a real urban democracy (i.e. the accomplished urban revolution, 1973b, p. 155). Moreover, both are given through a movement in excess with respect to Capital, thanks to an autonomous self-valorization. But what for the latter was an emerging possibility, for the two is today actual. Therefore, they reverse the bleak and despairing perspective (Cuppini, 2017) the French described in 1989. Yes, society has been socialized - they seem to say - and this is still a possibility for the Urban. Maybe, it is even its first appearance in history (2004, p. 14). Certainly, that is not its end.

Then, a third point of connection emerges (which in turn strengthens all the others) if one looks at another pivotal concept Negri and Hardt develop: *the Common*. Again, as it went for Lefebvre with the idea of "project", in this case also some references have already been given. Reason is that the two political philosophers' argument is made of deeply interconnected categories, which are impossible to be completely isolated. Cooperation works, one could say, at that scale as well, in the very logos through which it is observed.

The democracy of the multitude – the authors write - is "conceivable and possible only insofar as we all share and participate together in the common" (Hardt, Negri, 2010, p. 7-8). With the latter, they firstly point to "the commonwealth of the material world - air, water, the fruits of the earth and all the gifts of nature" (Ibid.). In the meanwhile, it is also referred to the overall produced infrastructure through which life unfolds and reproduces. To this extent, the Common denotes "everything that is obtained from social production, which is necessary for social interaction and the prosecution of production, such as knowledge, languages, codes, information, affects and so on" (Ibid.). Therefore, the former refers not – only – to the non-human component of life. It also concerns the (ontological) production of a "common social being" (2004, p. 187) which is both matrix for the currently existing world and the *potential* for an alternative society. As the multitude, also the Common appears to have a demoniac face: it is "already-since-ever" and at once a "not-yet" (2004, p. 258). It is a matter of autopoietic, political production, it involves the *exceeding* movement of making multitude (2010, p. 180). It is the terrain of living labour, it includes creativity as an endless, infinite organic and artificial exchange within life. Thus, it also is a productive force (2004, p. 230).

Techno-politically, it is at once internal to (and captured by) capital and autonomous with respect to it. That is the radical ambivalence of currently existing commonality and cooperation the authors observe. Such is the spiral through which the multitude and her biopolitical production are enveloped within, against and beyond capital. Therefore, I agree with Balibar (2011) and Thoburn (2003) when argue that Negri and Hardt's argument entails considering the common as already existing and haunting our life. As I have shown, that is what they precisely say. Nevertheless, I think it is more their point of major strength than the weakest one. *It is there that their deep lefebvrianism emerge. They actualize the French's legacy by revealing the new ontology of production the world is in the grip of.*

Indeed, as Negri (2011, p. 28-29) says, the emergence of the common is to be considered and assumed as an *ontologically relevant rupture* rooted in the production of bio-political surpluses. A radical, adventurous gesture in analysis grounds their argument, which remembers the Lefebvrian arrogance in proclaiming the Urban as "epochal episteme". Then, they can argue that since we produce in common the historical possibility for producing the Common, the Multitude and her project emerge (2004, p. 390). The same did the French philosopher: insofar as urbanization is going planetary, the urban, radically democratic society is now possible. In light of that rupture only the latter may be observed alive – Negri writes (2011, p. 28) - in the "non-homogeneity between the becoming-common (the making-multitude of singularities) and communism of capital (i.e., global power as financial capital)". The same non-coincidence which Lefebvre detected (again 2014, p. 82). Finally, through this revealed gap stretching to infinity, a political, alternative project can arise and can be – lefebvrianly – *proposed*. Negri puts it this way (2011, p. 28, trans mine):

"Will the new structure of living labour, the new technical composition of the labour force, the making-multitude (and thus the new, eventual, political composition) be able to definitively hold open, *i.e. break, the technical-political structure of capital?*" (Emphasis added).

As to Lefebvre – to whom the urban revolution coincided with radical democracy (1973b, p. 155) – for Negri and Hardt as well the quoted question leans toward *absolute democracy*. It denotes the *telos* of the multitude's project, the accomplished, completely appropriated Common. Again, they retrieve the concept from Spinoza for referring to the "democracy of all" (2004, p. 278) which emerge

– they say - in the exodus (Ibid., p. 115) away from capital³⁵, from its technical-political structure.

Firstly, the former is an immanent telos (2000, p. 229), “it is well rooted in the real development of our social world” (2004, p. 404). As the authors write in *Empire* (2000, pp. 440-444), the body itself of the multitude is the content of that telos, its mean and aim. Indeed, the construction is at stake of a new system of machines which put at the centre the production of the multitude and of her powers. Absolute democracy is thus the reappropriated common, which institutions coincide with the “cooperative and communication webs which endlessly produce and reproduce social life” (2004, p. 408). That is why authors write that bio-political production is the content of that democracy (2004, p. 119). Under the latter’s conditions, differences remain different, singularities navigate one towards the other never being reduced to one. Between them and/in the multitude, a reciprocal exchange takes place, a constituent engine is started. Radical democratic subjectivity emerges producing in common; then, it appropriates and refines instruments for producing more common in exodus from the capital’s ratio and grip. This way its project – the “project of the multitude” – grows up, by constantly exceeding capitalistic capture, and building itself autonomously from it (2004, p. 121, trans mine):

“Our starting point is the understanding that the production of subjectivity and the production of the common can join in a spiral, in a symbiotic relationship. Subjectivity produced by cooperation and communication, in turn, animates new forms of cooperation, which generate new figures of subjectivity and so on. In this spiral, each movement, from the production of subjectivity to the production of the common, represents an innovation from which ever richer realities arise. In this metamorphosis, which is also a

³⁵ Such exodus, authors say, develops by exerting a constituent power. The latter is defined as: “a decision that emerges from the social and ontological processes of productive labor; it is an institutional form that develops a content that is common; it is an unfolding of the force that defends the historical progression of emancipation and liberation: it is, in short, an act of love” (2004, p. 404). Negri has devoted an entire book (1992) to the concept. With Hardt, they have at length returned on the topic in *Assembly* (2018). As the authors write in *Commonwealth* (2010, p. 174), the issue of political decision-making cannot but be faced on the premise that “the multitude is not a political subject in its own right, but a program of political organization. In other words, the discussion on these issues must first be shifted from the plane of the multitude’s being to the plane of becoming and doing multitude”. A bit after in the essay (2010, p. 179) – but also in *Multitude* (2004, p. 390) – the issue is linked with the webs of production and communication. With Negri and Hardt’s word: “economic production by the multitude, in other words, is not only a *model* of political decision-making, but also tends to *become* political decision-making precisely because it is economic production” (2004, p. 390). More recently (2019), Hardt has returned on the issue as far as the gilet jaunes movement in France was concerned.

process of constitution, we can perhaps recognize the germination of the multitude's body, a fundamentally new body, a common and democratic body.”

As one can see, Negri and Hardt's thought is rooted in a radical immanence. The present and the possible are deeply intertwined. At the bio-political stage of production, the common is defined as both the latter's content and telos. It works as a *concrete abstraction*, as a *virtuality* to be realized which – in turn - has already hit the ground with *alter-urbanization* traces. “The condition for the production and reproduction of the multitude's social life” are developed – authors write (2004, p. 401) - in their concrete and abstract aspects “through [such] a continuous current of encounters, communications and chaining”. The same went – as seen - for Lefebvre as far as the Urban was concerned. Indeed, for the two political philosophers also, the material, artificially produced environment is crucial which supports and through which those encounters cannot but take place. To them, the multitude (and her power) is growing in the more-than-human, turbulent, metamorphic field which Cuppini (2017) has called the “planetary construction site”. Through that morphologically given configuration which – to Lefebvre – was essential to conceive of the urban. In fact - he writes (2014, pp. 56-57) – “[the latter is] not a soul, a spirit, a philosophical entity...it cannot do without a morphology”. Therefore, Negri and Hardt seem to describe absolute democracy and its possibility exactly as the French philosopher did about the Urban. Let us take, for example, the last pages of *Marxism and the city* (1973a, p. 156), where he defines “the perfectly re-appropriated space” as “the urban”. Negri and Hardt argue very similarly about that construction site. The latter is described as mean and *telos* for the absolute democracy and the common to be defended and made. It is offered as the concrete trace of a virtuality, as it was in the grip and composed of alter-urbanizations (2004, p. 403-404):

“Biopolitical production [is] economic and political production at once, [it creates] directly social relations and [lays] the foundation of a new constituent power [...] Biopolitical production offers us the possibility of doing the political work of producing and preserving social relations through the same communicative and cooperative networks of social production [...] In this sense, economic and political production would come to coincide, *and the cooperative networks of production would indicate the scaffolding of a new institutional structure of society. This democracy, in which we all collaboratively create and conserve society through biopolitical production, is what we call "absolute democracy"»* (Emphasis added).

So, the possibility of absolute democracy emerges within such social production of space. Similarly, for Lefebvre, the Urban defined the telos of a being-yet-in-common that could be fully realized in the accomplished urban society. "In short" - he wrote (1973b, p. 155, trans mine) - "the urban revolution and concrete (developed) democracy coincide. Urban practice, that of groups and classes, that is, their way of life, the morphology they have cannot be confronted with urban ideology other than this way. Thus, contestation is transformed into reclamation". In 1970, the French philosopher saw this possibility in potency in the then emerging society. Negri and Hardt seem instead to say: that potential has today been strengthened. Cooperative production (the socialization of production) actualizes it. To them - in fact - absolute democracy will be based on the same planetary scaffolding or morphology that Lefebvre speaks of. Their *Common gathers* as it gathered the French philosopher's Urban. Both, we might say, follow an archipelagic ratio: they describe a common project of singularities supported by a common infrastructure, they are storage of aggregative energies. Indeed, what Lefebvre wrote in the conclusion of *The Urban Revolution* seems to fully anticipate the two political philosophers. "The urban reunites" - the former say - "the urban as a form transforms what it brings together (concentrates)... It brings everything together, including determinisms, heterogeneous matter and content, prior order and disorder. Including conflicts. Including pre-existing communications and forms of communication" (1973b, pp. 194-195, trans mine).

Moreover – as the excerpt above testifies - Negri and Hardt's proposals about the multitude and her project arise from and are constantly put "at the trial of space" (Lefebvre, 2018, p. 396 and elsewhere). *Her political body and logos are described as an immediately operative intelligence. One which has crossed the threshold of techniques, and precisely because of that may emerge, create, and conserve absolute democracy.* While it is currently produced by social cooperation, it also has yet to be fully realized outside of capital. In addition, it is the overall infrastructure itself which tends to become political decision-making. In other words: *the making multitude tends - for Negri and Hardt - to the making metropolis out of metaphor*³⁶. The Project of the former and the latter coincide - one might say - urban-politically. Negri and Hardt - like Lefebvre - conceive of them at the trial

³⁶ In that regard, Negri has been very clear in a 2014 interview (Tomasello, 2014). "It is not a metaphor" – he argues – "to say that, today, the metropolis is to the multitude what the factory once was for the working class. One must insist on this element: it is not a metaphor because a relationship exists, it happens, even if it is no longer simply one of exploitation as it was in the factory relationship". Therefore, to him as to Lefebvre, the "urban contains the sense of industrialization" (2014, p. 83, trans mine).

of space, of creation. The action of moulding, of producing morphologies are offered as radically political initiative and radically necessary to the collective oeuvre they call absolute democracy of productive cooperation. So, I think they can be considered planetary urbanization debaters before a horizon of liberation. The same *meta-philosophical* effort occurs as in Lefebvre. The two actualize the latter's argument, they make it again possible during the imperial stage of neo-liberalism. Thus, Negri and Hardt's elaboration appears crucial for re-figuring the urban revolution. In fact, the metropolis is so central (to them) as infrastructure of the Common that - I believe - the figure of the social architect as well may find a re-proposition in Negri and Hardt's argument. What - for Lefebvre - was just germinating and to be acted upon (by means of the socialization of urbanism) seems to be radically implicated in the Project of the Multitude. Indeed, as seen, the latter presupposes - and not only envisions - the *crossing of the threshold of techniques*. *The appropriation of productive capacities and quotes of fixed capital appear in fact already in process.*

Therefore, I suggest considering Negri and Hardt's argument as a renovated claim for the socialization of urbanism, for such a becoming-world of philosophy thorough the production of social life space. The *social architect* himself (in the wider form of the archipelago multitude) and the Urban (in the most political vein of the Common and absolute democracy) may gain completely new life 50 years after Lefebvre's formulations.

To strengthen the hypothesis, next sub-paragraph describes - before concluding - the *urbanistic life of the multitude*. She is a living concept (or figure) I propose to grasp Negri and Hardt's afflatus towards the urban revolution. It emerges from their elaboration and updates the "social architect".

1.2.2 – The urbanistic life of the Multitude.

Negri and Hardt (2004, pp. 403-404) write – as previously already noted: “economic and political production would coincide, and the cooperative networks of production would indicate the *scaffolding* [emphasis added] of a new institutional structure of society”. And a bit further (2004, p. 408): “today the institutions of democracy must coincide with the cooperative and communication networks that continuously produce and reproduce social life”.

I suggest considering that “scaffold” – according to what seen before – as a real scaffold out of metaphor. One should think of the latter as made of - under biopolitical production – “techniques which thinks” (Assennato, 2018, p. 9), i.e., productive, exceeding life which partially already attributes to herself quotes of fixed capital. In other terms: the former matter as bio-political instruments. Fascinatingly, Negri and Hardt say (2010, p. 251, trans mine):

“The metropolis is the skeleton and backbone of the multitude, the material environment that sustains her activities and the social environment which constitutes the storage of affections, relationships, habits, desires, knowledge, and cultural circuits. The past of the multitude - its subordination, sufferings, and struggles - is not only inscribed and reactivated in the metropolis, but the latter *determines* [emphasis added], above all, the positive and negative conditions of its future”³⁷.

Elsewhere (Negri, Hardt, 2004, pp. 222-247), scaffolds (*et similia*, i.e., fixed capital) are presented as the *flesh* of the multitude where the project is stirring of her political *body*. In light also of what seen above, urban planning seems to stand in a crucial position with respect to absolute democracy. On the one hand, the latter has appeared as the accomplishment of the currently open construction site, i.e., of the overall infrastructure of platforms, satellites, streets, squares, services, meeting points and all others urban facets which allows encounters and communication. Thus, their technical-political organization for a completely realized cooperation beyond capital involves *by definition* the appropriation of techno-political capacities. On the other, the metropolis is described as the very constitutive environment of that intelligence, its workshop and destiny, its mean and telos (Negri, Hardt, 2010, p. 252, trans mine):

“The metropolis is the locus of biopolitical production since it is the space of the common, of life in common, of resource sharing, of goods and ideas exchange [...] *The metropolis is the factory in which the common is produced*. Contrary to the industrial-era economies of scale, the cycle of biopolitical

³⁷ The assonance is astonishing with the above-quoted passage from the *The Urban Revolution*. Let us read it again: "The urban reunites, the urban as a form transforms what it brings together (concentrates)... It brings everything together, including determinisms, heterogeneous matter and content, prior order and disorder. Including conflicts. Including pre-existing communications and forms of communication" (Lefebvre, 1973b, pp. 194-195, trans mine).

production tends to be autonomous from capital, since patterns of cooperation arise within the production process itself, with respect to which any imposition of command is an obstacle to productivity”.

In fact, they present the metropolitan morphology as an integral, constitutive part of the artificial and political multitude’s body to come. It is not only her infrastructural support, it *is* the multitude, the materialization of her *urban logos* – as Lefebvre would say. Not by chance, the above-quoted passage is retrieved from the chapter “De corpore” (Negri, Hardt, 2010). Hence, the metropolis - her “inorganic body” (Ibid.), her non-human flesh which nowadays replace the factory - is the terrain where and through which she *crosses the threshold of techniques* and re-appropriates life. To that extent, to make multitude (as a political gesture) and to make metropolis (as a technical effort) coincide. As the authors say laconically (2010, p. 253): “the production of the Common is nothing else than urban life itself”. There the latter is produced (p. 252) as an artificial sphere since the metropolis is completely integrated in the biopolitical production.

Therefore, the constitution of the multitude’s project (i.e., absolute democracy) entails *decisive acts of planning (as organized appropriation and production of cooperative infrastructures)*. To that extent, *as for Lefebvre, Negri and Hardt as well seem to imagine democracy as urban*, as the productive urban practice through which the multitude *decides*. The fact that she and the metropolis tend to coincide means that the logos and life of the former will find complete realization in the environment of the second. Namely: she tends to (and has to, for democracy to be realized) produce the cooperative infrastructure as (her own) *oeuvre*. Thus, with Lefebvre, one can say that – 50 years after – the future of art is still urban. Indeed, to Negri and Hardt, the multitude reappropriates bio-political production becoming (her own) architect, living urbanistically and deciding urbanistically. The decision-making process tends to be (metaphilosophically) metropolis-making. And that is precisely what Lefebvre envisioned when imagined the urban revolution as socialized urbanism. The social architect seems to find updating. That operative concept appears embodied in the historical emergence of the multitude and bio-political production.

On the one hand, authors recognize that nowadays the metropolis is a planetary condition (2010, p. 254) but, on the other, it remains the space of differences and conflict. Therefore, in such a vein - and according with what has been shown since now - the currently existing planetary metropolis is (always and everywhere) *partially captured and partially a territory made through and built by the*

multitude's autonomy and exodus from capital (see also Negri, 2008, p. 36, and here below). In fact, as for Lefebvre, for Negri and Hardt as well a *residue*, a non-coincidence, a non-homogeneity is given between the (potential of) urban society – the “future” (2010, p. 151) - and currently existing socialized society. But, to them, it is *already partially planned and built* by means of portion of self-attribution. Present day global infrastructure is already crossed by those decisive acts of planning. That is the radical *ambivalence* which they land, territorialize, and put – again with Lefebvre - at the trial of space. The multitude is, at once, the political subjective potential which has to take on that opportunity, and the living actuality of that turbulent morphology which her exodus is *made of*. “A large source of commonwealth is the metropolis” (2010, p. 158), Negri and Hardt say. Therefore, to them, the emergence of the common appears as the morphological, space-productive emergence of the *urbanistic life of the multitude*. In that, they re-call directly Lefebvre and territorialize his “*working class*” and only announced “*social architect*” in a new historical political body (to be always made): *the multitude*.

Issues concerning the relation between the latter, the metropolis, and the production of the common are key arguments also of a collection of essays written by Negri only (2008). There, he writes (p. 36, trans mine):

“We must simply deepen our awareness of being in the midst of a new path: rather, of a new, irreducible problematic, posed for the purpose of territorializing the concept of multitude [...] I want to add that only when the concept of multitude is territorialized...any claim to universalize the Project dissolves, *and thus the issue arises adequately and forcefully of reappropriation of the material conditions. Also, as far as productions of subjectivity of cooperation among singularities are concerned.*” (emphasis added)

The passage is crucial for understanding and conceive of the multitude as the social architect envisioned by Lefebvre. Moreover, it helps in grasping the productive actuality and potential of her urbanistic life, of the socialization of urbanism she entails and act.

Indeed, her power does not perish under the metropolitan biopower but finds in that *urban* terrain the space for her realization, her new path. Therefore, the “metropolitan democracy” (2008, p. 15) – which was at stake for Lefebvre as well – she can “build” (Ibid.) appears to the author as the conscious and revolutionary

production of the Common (Ibid., p. 17). It starts in the metropolis; its premises are there territorialized but must *move* in exodus from the capital ratio. The multitude produces the metropolis – Negri says - by exceeding it. The former inhabits the second “as biopolitical power in excess with respect to control capacities” (2008, p. 16). She goes towards the multiplication of encounters. Again, I suggest conceiving of this excess as a *built excess*, even though she does not move towards outside an area, but through the very terrain (without an outside) of biopolitical, environmental production – i.e. towards the *planetary socialization of urbanism as a biopolitical and economical practice*. The multitude does not appear to produce “another metropolis”, but to fight and build, produce, and reappropriate the planetary common by means of decisive acts of bio-political production, of foundation (2008, p. 77) and planning. Such a movement on space (2000, p. 433) she does is an un-interrupted path which in turn constitutes her on a limitless place. Through that *urbanistic life*, she builds the network of human cooperation, *she let currently existing planetary urbanization tend to the planetary commune Lefebvre envisioned*. As Negri clearly writes (2008, p. 77, trans mine):

“First of all, the formation of the multitude takes place during a movement in space, which constitutes it in an unlimited place [...] The multitude defines a new geography, just as the productive flows of bodies create new rivers and ports. The cities of the earth will soon become the great storages of human cooperation and the locomotives of circulation, the temporary residences, and networks of the mass distribution of human beings”.

Therefore, the multitude’s exodus from capital does not take place going out of “the city”. She neither thinks in “methodological cityism” (Wachsmuth, Angelo, 2015) terms. Her territory is the planetary construction site, she appears in-between port-cities, she cut across - by bio-politically exceeding it - the production of global space. Moreover, the facet of such a common oeuvre appears closer to that one of an *archipelago*. The Urban – as mental, social and material form of simultaneity and encounter (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 84) - seems to be the proper name of this togetherness of singularities, of their infra-structured commonality. In such a vein, the common is not a space within a metropolis, nor outside it. Contrary, it haunts through and must be reappropriated from the currently existing planetary archipelago. Negri’s thinking stands at the same level of generality and holism than Lefebvre’s. For both, the horizon is a *planetary commune*, a planetary space conceived as a collective oeuvre.

In fact, the multitude occupies such an *archipolis* as flows, collective enterprise, and constituent power (Negri, 2008, p. 39). To the author, the planetary metropolis is “common world” not since it represents a “general will” but as common, infinite openness towards encounters, aleatory and artificial creativity (Ibid. p. 68). The subjective element - the intelligence of the multitude – appears thus to be the bio-political, urbanistic, architectural *logos* and capacity of producing-building such a common urban ground and territory. The *logos* is cooperative in essence, etymologically. But, in the case of the multitude, it also becomes world as such. Namely: as urban-political effort of connection, of building infra-structures. Indeed, to open the metropolis to flows of people and goods, to reclaim investments for services up to pure cooperation is the political struggle that – according to Negri (2008, p. 42) – the urbanistic life of the multitude should undertake. That is why the author – re-calling again Lefebvre almost directly - polemizes against “urban reformism” (Ibid., pp. 17-20) and against those urban reformists which try to grasp the *problematique* of the multitude.

Indeed, to him, on the one hand, architects must abandon the utopia of measure and form. On the other, political activists cannot think the common in “methodological cityism” terms such as “housing communes, self-managed city gardens and vegetable gardens, multifunctional squats” (2008, p. 224). Rather, for Negri it is necessary to think of a “community of exodus” and the production of space in “the dimension of the Bigness, not in those one of handicrafts but of the general intellect” (Ibid.). Lefebvre must be remembered here, when he writes (2014, p. 103): “human dimension, it is said, just when we have to deal with the boundless, to create 'something' *to match the universe*” (emphasis added). The urbanistic life of the multitude – differently from urban reformism – should be up to such a task. It appears the needed subjective *Bildung* (Negri, 2008, p. 95) for building-fighting for our absolute democracy. In such a vein, I suggest observing the multitude productively *at work* (IT: *all'opera*) *within* the planetary construction site and its multi-scalar system of various infrastructures. Indeed, since she stirs and lives there in partial autonomy, as “biopolitical potential which exceeds control capacities of dominant institutions” (Negri, 2008, p. 16) – her products tend to the *oeuvre*, to cooperative-use values. Were they books, restaurants and cars or logistical networks, platforms, and medicines, were they feelings, relations, and friendships or this computer. To that extent, *her logos is socializing urbanism*.

Finally, for all these reasons, the latter seems to embody the meta-philosophical gesture the urban revolution consisted of to Lefebvre. Indeed, the multitude acts and tends to realize the becoming world of philosophy as production beyond

alienation and separations (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 44). On the one hand, she thinks cooperation. She retains, and attributes to herself portions of products as cooperative-use values. On the other – exactly by means of producing cooperation – her logos tends to rejoin the primordial unity between the urban form and the philosophical one (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 42). Moreover, in so doing, what she produces is the planetary infrastructure, the planetary social space and its morphology. Thus, she takes on the urban revolution as Lefebvre conceived of it. She is historically taking charge of the process of letting coincide *revolutionary decision-making with architecture-making*, i.e. with the production of cooperative-use values for the plenitude of life. At this deeper level, again, to make multitude and to make metropolis tend finally to blur in a *planetary commune* to be built. With the French philosopher’s words – which seem written by Negri and Hardt:

“A society thus transformed presupposes the collective ownership and management of space. With regard to the orientation of a process that begins in this way, passing through this opening, it will tend to overcome the contradiction between the work [*oeuvre*] and the product: between the repeated and reproducible product—its reproduction entailing that of social relations—and the work, the unique, which bears the mark of a “subject,” of a moment that can never be restored. It will be a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called *art*” (Lefebvre, 1972, in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206, emphasis in original).

In conclusion. To Negri and Hardt – 50 years after Lefebvre - the multitude appears to be in the making. She produces the Common as her potential *body* to be constantly taken away from capital. She works at and *in* the morphology of space, she crosses the threshold of techniques and appropriate them, she partially is, at once, their *producer and cooperative user*. That seems to be - according to Negri - the potential of currently existing planetary overall, communicative infrastructure. The multitude’s exodus itself unfolds through such an artificial flesh. She is infrastructure, *she historically arises by infra-structuring cooperation*. Thus, infrastructures appear, are *a way* to decide. What said about economics (Negri and Hardt, 2004, p. 390) can be repeat about material morphologies: they are not only a *model* for political decision but *become* a political decision. They embody and realize the “capacity to [alter]urbanize” the right to the city consists of (Brenner, 2019, p. 392) under deployed planetary urbanization. To take them may mean to build them. To this extent – and in light of what advanced in previous paragraph - one could say that Hard and Negri conceive of the multitude as a *social architect*,

of her life as architectural, urbanistic, spatial-productive. She appears the social, urban-maker body which – by socializing urbanism - leaves materially open the technical-political structure of capital. This opening, this rupture consists of *urban decisions*, of attributions of fixed capital and has the morphology of the (planetary) *metropolis*. Moreover, they tend to absolute democracy, to an accomplished planetary commune made of cooperative-use values.

In addition, as for the French philosopher, encounters are a key component of urban life for Negri and Hardt too. Indeed, the metropolis is conceived as made of “the unexpected between singularities”. It is the *archipelago* where – “with Baudelaire” - to take a bath of multitude “that arouses the thrill of a 'universal communion” (Negri, Hardt, 2010, p. 252). Politics of the metropolis – the authors continue (Ibid., p. 253) – is in fact exactly about the organization of encounters. That is perfectly Lefebvrian! Then, the metropolis’ morphology appears to be pervaded and stirred by the biopolitical and productive excess of the multitude. She constantly, everywhere, and endlessly moves away from capital *by building her own exodus as a metropolitan, artificial, web of cooperation and communication*. To this extent, the latter tends to coincide with the scaffold of a new institutional structure of society (2004, p. 403) and biopolitical production with the multitude’s *urban-political way of decision making*.

That is why I claim for conceiving of her as the *social architect* Lefebvre envisioned. After all, the French writes in *The Right to the City* (2014, p. 105): “neither the architect, nor the town planner, nor the sociologist, nor the economist, nor the philosopher or the politician can derive from nothing, by decree, new forms and new relationships [...] Only social life (praxis) in its global capacity, may or may not have such powers”. The *urbanistic life of the multitude*, her intelligence is – to me – a way for grasping such a revolutionary, radically democratic “urban logos” in the making. At the imperial stage of capitalism (and according to Hardt and Negri), it participates in the production of social space by leaving the latter open. *It creates the becoming world-metropolis of philosophy through the cooperative infrastructures it strives to realize*. In fact, as Lefebvre thoughtfully argues (1973b, p. 83), “the philosophical reason elaborated by the entire Western tradition was succeeded by industrial practical reason (Saint-Simon, Marx, etc.), which is being superseded in our times by the *urban rationality in the making*” (emphasis added). The urbanistic life of the multitude seems precisely to struggle through and negotiate the production of such a field.

For all these reasons, Negri and Hardt can be approached to Lefebvre and conceived as planetary urbanization debaters before a horizon of emancipation. Moreover, *the urbanistic life of the multitude* is the living concept (or figure) I offer to start updating Lefebvre's proposals about the urban revolution. The former has been suggested as the new subject in charge of the latter. In fact, her project can be considered a project of urban revolution. It develops urban-politically, being made of and unfolding by creating cooperation and suitable morphologies. Under currently existing biopolitical society, the project of the multitude, her capacity to urbanize, seems thus to be up to envision, produce and orientate social life beyond capitalism and the State. Moreover, by means of such a concept, I want to draw attention on, take care for, and point out all those forms of building and productive intelligence through which that revolutionary "urban rationality and urbanistic practice" (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 130) cannot but *decide and reproduce*.

Nevertheless, the epochal context of climate change immediately challenges the *problematique*. Thus, the ecological issue is to be addressed. Then, a new figure is needed which may work as orientation to operatively navigate currently existing, historical-materially rough waters. Next Chapter points to that direction.

Conclusions

A first, pivotal step towards a new *use* and *conceptualization* of "planetary urbanization" has been offered throughout this chapter. Two preliminary figures have been given for focusing not only on how capitalism determines currently existing infra-structured world. Rather, some reading key are also proposed for grasping which alter-urbanization capacities (Brenner, 2018, 2019) stir the latter. Taking on Keil's claim (2018), it has been a matter of going back to the concept's revolutionary origins, to disassemble and start updating it.

Firstly, its operative and figuring essence has been visualized. To that regard, I followed the axis immanence-oeuvre-project to read some lefebvrian essays. Specifically, I considered: *The Right to the City* (2014[1968]), *The Urban Revolution* (1973b) and *The Production of Space* (2018 [1974]). The three conceptual knots stand for as many crucial characteristics the urban revolution would have consisted of according to the French philosopher. Then, the *social architect* has been suggested for grasping how – to him – it would have entailed the

socialization of urbanism. That way, I pointed also out the meta-philosophical gesture the urban revolution would involve. In fact, by re-appropriating the production of the overall social space, the social architect may overcome alienations and separations through the creation of urban life (and its morphologies) as artworks.

Subsequently, such a conception of the urban revolution has been updated at the imperial and bio-political stage of capitalism and production.

In that regard, a reading has been offered of Negri and Hardt's thought. In particular, I considered their *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (2010) by following the axis multitude-biopolitical production-Commonwealth. Therefore, the (planetary) metropolis has emerged as a crucial terrain for the *absolute democracy* to be built. Indeed, it is there that the project of the multitude becomes possible. The latter consists of the tendential coincidence between liberated life and the very production of the infrastructure of cooperation, i.e. of cooperative-use values. Such an *urbanistic life* - which, for the authors, is already in the making - tends thus *to cross the threshold of techniques* and urban-politically blur the division among "to decide" and "to build". As to Lefebvre, the telos appears of a *planetary commune* to be created as a human artwork. For all these reasons, Negri and Hardt have finally been offered as planetary urbanization debaters before a horizon of emancipation.

Moreover, a first preliminary answer emerges as far as the general question of the research is concerned. In fact, to "go back" to the origins of the urban revolution concept involves thinking (also) from the perspective of the urbanistic life of the multitude. Namely: in terms of analysis, it entails understanding how a productive excess also is at work through currently existing planetary urbanization. The former leaves the structure of capitalism open and makes the second an ambivalent whole. Therein, portions of fixed capital are in fact already appropriated and constitute the scaffold of a new institutional arrangement beyond capitalism and the State. Therefore, to debate planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation, I believe it is crucial to focus on that urbanistic life. It is of paramount importance to investigate how it develops, how her project emerges from within social space production and currently existing, partially expropriated *scaffold* of common cooperation.

Nevertheless, to that purpose, the historical contingency of climate change is to be considered. In fact, the ecological crisis we are facing immediately challenges

the productive capacities of the multitude. Her project cannot but address and be aware about the turbulent materiality and the theoretical relevance of what is going on onto planet Earth. Therefore, the process of updating the urban revolution argument is still to be completed.

In Negri and Hardt, the ecological issue is not discussed directly. The artificial life takes the stage by producing a “second, third and umpteenth nature” (Negri, Hardt, 2004, p. 401; 2000, p. 332). Non-humans matter as commonwealth (Negri, Hardt, 2010, p. 7), but they seem not to challenge human autonomous agency. Lefebvre himself is not abundant in that regard either. However, he offers a good starting point from which to go further. Indeed, to him, nature is what fades and escapes from human action (2014, p. 72):

“Nature as such eludes as much from the grip of rationally pursued action as it does from control and appropriation. More precisely, it remains outside such attempts at grasping. It 'is' what escapes”.

But, at once, it is precisely in the urban society that – according to Lefebvre – culture and nature may find a new unity (1973b, p. 197). Indeed, the Urban is also described as “the source and foundation of another nature or a nature other than the initial (Ibid., p. 122).

Therefore, next chapter goes on in updating the “urban revolution” concept starting from such suggestions. Two authors – Morton and Moore – are discussed focusing specifically on that apparently irreconcilable double face of nature. Aim is to look for ecological proposals and practices which can help in *re-figuring* the urban society under climate change conditions. Namely, which can support the urbanistic life of the multitude and her logos in *approximating* non-human natures for going beyond capitalism.

“And nature, does it produce? Yes, in the etymological sense of the word: to lead and bring forth, to bring out of depth. However, nature does not work; its characteristic is to create. And what it creates - that is, distinct 'beings' - emerges and comes forth. It is unaware of that (unless one supposes in nature an ordering God, a providence). A tree, a fruit, a flower are not 'products,' not even in a garden; the rose is without why, it blooms because it blooms. [...] Violent, generous, stingy, abundant, always open, nature unfolds. The space-nature is not that of a staging. Why? There is not why. The flower does not know it is a flower, nor does death know it is dying.” (Lefebvre, 2018 [1974], p. 89).

Chapter 2

The metabolic life of the multitude.

Introduction

This chapter goes ahead in re-figuring urban society. Now, ecological issues are considered. Indeed, the current climate emergency forces us to understand how non-humans matter in the production of space. Moreover, the social architect and the urban logos he embeds should be able in dealing with such a “new” reality but looking towards a post-capitalist horizon. Lefebvre says that nature escapes and “remains outside” reason’s efforts to grip it (2014, p. 72). I thus take the cue from this suggestion for entering the terrain of contemporary *new materialism* and political ecology.

As far as the former is concerned, it is a huge box with huge differences inside. D’Angelo, Pinzolo and Pozzoni (2021) have recently edited an issue of the Italian philosophical review *Quaderni Materialisti* devoting it completely to new materialism. The three main sections – as the editors say explicitly in the introduction – are telling in themselves. Vital new-materialism, negative new-materialism and performative neo-materialism are as many tentative sub-groups of a field which is more “a kaleidoscope of different approaches” (D’Angelo, Pozzoni, 2021, p. 10) than a clearly defined stream of thought. The formula was coined by Rosi Braidotti in the 90s, even though (as *neo-materialism*) it appeared also in Landa (Ibid., p. 9). Generally speaking, it can be said that new materialism has roots in feminism, natural sciences, theoretical philosophy and arose against de-materializing tendencies (Ibid.) in human sciences. As Coole and Frost argues (2010) – and D’Angelo and Pozzoni are also aware about (2021) – three are the main issues approached by new materialists: ontology but in light of natural sciences, the agency of or *how* non-human natures matter and an update of Marxian critic of political economy. Nevertheless, this latter dimension is the less deepened.

That is why D'Angelo and Pozzoni argue that (Ibid., p. 26) “a materialist perspective that takes the viewpoint of totality on social and non-social reality” is still to be gained.

Here, I specifically focus on Timothy Morton. He is an English philosopher who develops an interesting ecological approach by means of the idea of hyper-objects (2009, 2010, 2017, 2018). He can be conceived a negative neo-materialist since assumes the reciprocal distance between the matter and the thought. However, he elaborates stimulating perspectives as far as the undoubtedly practical problem of climate change is concerned. That is why his proposal around the unsolvable remoteness between us humans and non-humans is deeply presented and discussed. The same goes for the implications that historically and materially given hyper-objects have for our thinking. Then, a connection is made with Lefebvre's metaphilosophy (1965). On the one hand, Morton's thought appears very close to the French philosopher's regarding our ontological condition. On the other, an insufficiency in the former's practical proposal is recognized, which does not allow to stop there the process of updating.

Therefore – in the second paragraph - I offer Moore's Marxian world-ecology as a theoretical and productive instrument for taking care of both the ontological distance of non-humans and a common post-capitalist horizon. After having showed why his perspective is geographically relevant, his conception of *metabolism* is finally approached to what seen in Chapter 1. Indeed, Moore's proposal about social change as creation-of-environment appears a productive lens through with envisioning the *metabolic life of the multitude*. This operative concept (which points to a collective subject and completes the previous, only *urbanistic* one), takes seriously the material immensity and distance of non-human natures. At once, it productively preserves a post-capitalist horizon. In its light, products of work, metabolic synthesis, and infrastructures in the web of life emerge as ways through which urban-political decisions can be taken. Moreover, philosophy can that way strive to become world *as* social urbanism during climate change. Here the process of updating finishes, as far as the concept of “urban revolution” is concerned. Then, Chapter 3 will reassemble it by offering a figure as *orientation*: the *Archipelago*. It stands for the *Urban Society* to be realized through the *Planetary Flood*.

2.1 - The Ecological Distance: Morton's hyper-objects and the end of measurable nature.

2.1.1 – Hyper-objects: thinking material indefiniteness.

Morton is an English philosopher and ecological thinker. In this paragraph, I present and discuss his proposal about hyper-objects (2018). For that purpose, I also look at some of his major essays. In particular, references are taken from: *Ecology without Nature* (2009), *The Ecological Thought* (2010) and *Humankind: Solidarity with Non-human People* (2017). In fact, hyper-objects' implication are considered, as far as understanding and living-with climate change is concerned.

Morton writes ([2013]2018, pp. 17-18, trans mine):

“Hyper-objects caused the end of the world. Of course, the planet Earth did not explode: but the concept of the world stopped working, and precisely hyper-objects caused its demise. The idea of an end of the world is very much alive in the environmentalist debate; however, I argue that this idea is not effective: [...] The end of the world has already happened”.

The author presents hyper-objects as a radical novelty for our world, to such an extent that the latter must be re-discussed in its conceptualization. The former usher - Morton writes (2018, p. 12) - in an era of weakness and instability for human beings. Together with the “end of the world” (Ibid.), they are also connected to climate change and Anthropocene. Indeed, we can realize their existence only starting from the ecological emergency where we awoke (2018, p. 260). Morton coined the “hyper-object” concept in *The Ecological Thought* (2010, pp. 130-135) referring to “things” that “outlast us all” as precisely climate change. They “burn a hole in your mind” (Ibid.) because of their – to some extent terrifying – immensity. Nevertheless – as the author clearly states (Ibid., and 2018, p. 12) – such a conceptualization of objects is directly retrieved from the OOO, i.e., Object Oriented Ontology. The formula has been first proposed by Levi Bryant (2011), even though Graham Harman (2011) is to be conceived the founder of the namesake philosophical program (Pinzolo, 2022). Its core contribution consists of developing a flat ontology to avoid hierarchical categorisations among entities. Direct

consequence is that (Ibid., p. 122) “an object can never be described on the basis of the property or quality by which it manifests itself to us”. Rather, objects escape all those characteristics behind which they manifest to us, they always partially “withdraw” (Morton, 2018, p. 27). That is why one can say that they are given *in excess* with respect to our rational capacity. Morton starts from such an ontology, from the Husserlian assumption that “no matter how many times you flip a coin, you will never see the other side as the other side” (Ibid., p. 23). But he brings it forward for discussing its ecological implications – i.e. our relationship with non-human entities and beings.

In fact, “a thing” – he writes (2018., p. 31) – “is nothing more than a fracture between what it is and the way it appears to us, and this applies to any kind of entity, not just that entity we call the (human) subject”. Nevertheless (beyond Harman and the OOO) Morton adds the prefix “hyper-“ not only as a matter of tautology. Indeed - as he clearly states (2018, p. 260) in accordance with the OOO - “every object is a hyper-object”. Rather, the prefix wants to point out the *material consistency* and *ontological importance* of that withdrawing. Which in turn is a being-here, but in a very spectral (see below), stranger way. Hyper-objects escape our *cum*-prehension to start haunting us (2017, p. 10). They at once fade and remain. That is why they are always partially unknown and out of control (2018, p. 221). Notwithstanding – and it is why the prefix is crucial – hyper-objects’ excess is not out of materiality. They do not escape the physical, *symbiotic mesh* (2010, p. 37) of reality. Contrary, they enshrine the end of metaphysics. As Morton puts it very clearly: (2018, p. 12):

“Hyper-objects put an end to the possibility of making transcendental leaps 'beyond' physical reality. Hyper-objects force us to recognise the *immanence* of our thinking in the realm of the physical.” (Emphasis added)

Or, elsewhere (2018, p.188):

“Make no mistake: these ideas in no way encourage a feeling of hostility towards science. On the contrary: they try to reintegrate contemporary science into philosophy in order to 'imagine what we already know', to put it in the words of Percy Shelley. The OOO is able to account for the three most advanced scientific visions of our time: relativity, ecology and quantum theory.”

Morton thus seeks an integration between philosophy and natural sciences. That is to say: he proposes a thought that manages as much as possible to take seriously and work within the most recent advancements in the fields of physics and biology.

This way, a perspective of *radical immanence* is advanced. Philosophy – he argues – must think with the immense, exceeding materiality of hyper-objects. The former’s “becoming-world”, one might say, passes by that metamorphosis. Hyper-objects force philosophy to give up its transcendental position, in order to enter the terrain of physics, even though un-determined. In addition, according to Morton, it seems that precisely by virtue of such a revealed material indeterminacy philosophy either becomes world or cannot but disappear. Moreover, Morton’s meta-philosophy appears also a *geo-philosophy*³⁸ - as the author himself puts it (2018, p. 18). It is a way for thinking through the material, non-transcendental, immanent relation with non-human hyper-objects. So, the prefix hyper- is important: it points to an immense materiality that eludes us, to something from whose experience we cannot escape and yet it is not completely cum-prehensible. This is the *problematique* for Morton. That is way the quantum physics’ lexicon and imagery is crucial to his elaboration³⁹.

In *Humankind* (2017, p. 41), the author puts his perspective very clearly: “‘withdrawn’ doesn’t mean empirically shrunken back or moving behind; it means - and this is why I now sometimes say ‘open’ instead of ‘withdrawn’ - *so in your face that you can’t see it*” (emphasis in original). He is interested in showing that

³⁸ Geo-philosophy is a term coined by Deleuze and Guattari (2002). Bonesio (2006, p. 4637) defines it as the effort of “bringing the land to the thought” (IT: *portare la terra al pensiero*). See also next Chapter 3 of this research.

³⁹ I purposely use the word *problematique*, which – to Lefebvre - goes with *urban*. In fact, Morton’s approach to hyper-objects is close to the French philosopher’s with respect to the abstract-concreteness. In Chapter 1 I have at length discussed the peculiar relationship the urban entertains with its morphology. Moreover, in the methodological section of the Introduction, how Lefebvre himself conceived of the former – *antelitteram* – as a hyper-object is showed. Indeed, to him, it was a virtuality of matter, a concrete entity one could not completely observe. The partial blindness we suffer regarding the urban consisted also of that. But, in addition, the French philosopher as well derives his imagery from quantum physics. For example, the conceptualization of the urban as a “field” – a word which often appears in italics in both *The Right to the city* and *The Urban Revolution* – has explicit physical references. As the author writes (1973b, p. 38): “blind fields? It is not a literary image, nor is it a metaphor [...] it is a notion that is found or rediscovered in several ways, that emerges both *philosophically* and *scientifically*, i.e. in the so-called philosophical analysis and in knowledge” (emphasis in original). At this point there is a note which refers to “J. J. Desanti, *Les Idéalités mathématiques*, 1968”. Therefore, one might say that Lefebvre’s Urban and Morton’s hyper-objects share the same ontology and the same meta-philosophical gesture to be observed and considered: before-within them, philosophy has to take seriously their partially abstract materiality. To me, no one better than Merrifield (2013b) has echoed that dimension of the French philosopher’s proposal. Passing by some Pollock’s paintings, he actualizes the lefebvrian quantum imagery to describe contemporary non-reducible urban totality, its field of tensions determined by encounters and manifold forces. Notwithstanding, in a broader sense, quantum metaphors are nowadays widely hosted in geography. One can think about Haraway’s entanglements in the Chthulucene (2019) or at Amin and Thrift’s hyper-objectual city (2017).

the appearance, the emergence of phenomena's materiality must be taken so seriously that - as the introductory (2018, pp. 11-39) chapter titles and discusses it - a *Beingquake* is taking place. With reference to Latour's (Latour, 2005; Croce, 2021) lexicon - whose basic premises Morton nonetheless shares (Morton, 2018, p. 33) - he calls *irreductionism* (Ibid.) the scalar impossibility of reducing the object to the experience we have of it. Such an ontological move serves the English philosopher to challenge Kantian *correlationalism* for entering speculative realism. Indeed, according to the former, the essence of things is not accessible to us, but only our relation to them mediated by categories is. While, for the second, essence remains unknowable, but that does not necessarily imply ignoring the material validity and importance of things⁴⁰. That is why Morton looks for an encounter between philosophy and quantum physics. A gesture is needed not to reify objects, nor to obscure their concrete indefiniteness. As he puts it (2018, p. 28), "hyper-objects are not mere mental (or ideal) constructs, but real entities whose ultimate essence is precluded to human beings". Such material-oriented effort of the English philosopher's reasoning is witnessed by the four properties he ascribes to hyper-objects. They are: viscosity, non-locality, temporal ripple, and phasing.

Viscosity is - according to him - the general characteristic. It refers to the fact that we are always attached to them, and it is impossible to stay out: "we are always inside an object" (2018, p.30). Such a property points out, again, the inescapable withdrawing. A hyper-object can never stay totally in front, it is never *vorhanden* (2018, p. 188) - at the disposal of a subject. Non-locality, instead, is a technical term from physics. It entails that each quantum exercises an action on another one, it does not matter how far they are in time-space. As far as hyper-objects are concerned, non-locality describes their extension, the fact that they act from the distance on us and between them. "To understand hyper-objects" - Morton writes (2018, p. 88) - "one has to imagine an abyss opening up in front of things". Together with temporal ripple and phasing, he lets these properties converge in the concept of inter-objectivity. It refers to the fact that "nothing is experienced directly, but only through other entities in a shared sensual space" (Ibid., p. 110). "Our minds" - the author says with an Heideggerian lexicon - are indeed "thrown in an inter-objective space" (2018, p. 114).

⁴⁰ "Speculative Realism" is a variegated box, with partially different opinions and authors in. The battle against correlationism is what they have in common, i.e., the effort of thinking larger than the "small island where philosophy self-exiled" (Morton, 2018, p. 21) since it considered of objects as too much flimsy to be materially taken into account. See Meillassoux (2006) and Harman (2018).

Therefore, one might say, Morton is exposing correlationism to its ecological limits in light of global warming and its critical manifestations. His proposal starts from an historical contingency: *climate change forces philosophy to think both materiality and indefiniteness*. Thus, he develops his thinking within the interweaving of climate and intellect, of environment and theory, of philosophy and air (that is precisely *geo-philosophy* for Deleuze and Guattari⁴¹). He does not, in fact, mystify the climatic link, the atmosphere, that underpins the thought. Rather, he makes the latter explicit and puts it as the core issue. It is precisely global warming - the *climate of climate* - the ground from where, through and with which Morton's philosophy wants to reckon.

2.1.2– More is less: ecology at the time of climate change.

After a general overview of hyper-objects, how Morton discusses their ecological implications is now worth to attention. Indeed, he writes (2018, p. 230):

“It was our impulse to see and know everything that made us discover their [hyper-objects’] viscous presence. *The nihilism of modernity has to come to terms with its ghost: the nullity of the thing*. This phenomenon confirms that we have entered the ecological era” (emphasis in original).

Ecology without Nature (Morton, 2009) and *The Ecological Thought* (Morton, 2010) are good points of cross-reference for deepening hyper-objects’ ecological importance and the consequences of their historical revealing.

In fact, in that regard, Morton offers a provocative perspective: “nature” - he writes (2009, p. 2) - “in all its confusing, ideological intensity, [...] ironically impedes a proper relationship with the earth and its lifeforms, which would, of course, include ethics and science”. The former appears to be an anti-ecological obstacle. “Modern thinkers” – he argues elsewhere (2010, p. 14) – “had taken it for granted that the ghost of Nature, rattling its chains, would remind them of a time without industry, a time without ‘technology’, as if we had never used flint or

⁴¹ In 2002 (p. 111) they write: “Geography [...] wrests history away from the cult of necessity to assert the irreducibility of contingency. It wrests it from the cult of origins in order to assert the power of an 'environment' (what philosophy finds with the Greeks, Nietzsche said, is not an origin, but a climate, an environment, an atmosphere).”

wheat...In Nature, they saw the reflected, inverted image of their own age”⁴². Therefore, it seems first and foremost an aesthetic object that serves as a mirror in which to project and keep socially and cognitively under control the *spectre* of the symbiotic real (2017, p. 45). Namely, the constitutive outside of modern reason that stirs in its philosophical, political, and social structures. Hence, to the English philosopher, nature appears as a kind of trap. It prevents true critical ecological thinking by confining the latter in a container. Moreover, it precludes philosophy from radically opening itself to interconnections, to the gigantic, to that “fantastic fact” that is the web, the *mesh* (2010, p. 37).

According to Morton, Nature is thus an obstacle, rather than the crucial referent for critical ecological thinking. Ironically, it haunts us at the very moment when its referent is historically dissolving (Morton, 2010, p. 12, but also 2018, pp. 131-173). That is: when, due to the capitalist social relationship and its terrestrial exploitation, what Nature should refer to is threatened, transformed, and destroyed. Therefore, Nature is described as an “hallucination” (Morton, 2010, p. 66), a “retro-utopian nostalgia” - as Bauman (2017) would put it. To Morton, repostulating - amid the ecological emergency - an elsewhere-behind appears to be a shortcut. Contrary, facing the fear (“hyper-objects invoke a terror” - 2010, p. 144), the shiver that they impose, the English philosopher suggests imagining a kind of *risk society* (2018, p. 53). One where scientific awareness of risk “changes the very nature of democracy” (Ibid.). “When hyper-objects show themselves in all their magnificence and defile us” – Morton argues (Ibid.) - it is “the picture of the world that must be destroyed” (2018, p. 165). Referring to national parks, reserves *et similia*, he continues: “we must destroy the process of anesthetisation [of Nature]: in the event of an ecological emergency, break the glass” (2018, p. 165)⁴³.

⁴² A similar perspective is given by Galli in his introduction to the *Dialettica dell'Illuminismo* (2010, p. XII): “the origin of thought does not lie” – he says “in the exit from nature - as the Enlightenment proclaims - rather, thought carries within itself the negated nature, as a repressed guilt that gives rise to a sort of unconscious but powerful compulsion, in the rational subject, to deny nature outside itself and within itself: but this forced negation is also an unconscious and paradoxical re-proposition of nature. [...] This is the barbarism that dwells in the Enlightenment from the beginning”.

⁴³ In Smith (2008) a similar position is expressed with the formula “ideology of nature” (pp. 10-48) regarding the American “back to nature” movement of the nineteenth century. Equally similar is the “territorialist” perspective emerging in the Italian debate, see for example Magnaghi (2010, 2021) and Marzocca (2019). Instead, the link between the removal of Nature and the breaking of the world's picture in Morton's text refers to the well-known essay *L'epoca dell'Immagine del Mondo*, contained in Heidegger (1966). It is here that the German philosopher introduces the “gigantic” (Ibid., p. 100-101) as the limit towards which the Modern World is pushed and from the edge of which future history opens up (Ibid.). The same gigantic that Morton (2018, p. 179) ascribes as a property to hyper-objects. The former is an “eminent modality of the big” (Heidegger, 1966, p. 100).

Non-humans' ontology is hence demystified when they break - with their deadly, dis-measured, and boundless reality - into our everyday life. Morton is seeking to rid himself of both the dreams of reason and those of the imagination. He prefigures a condition where kinships, *string figures* - to use Haraway's (2019) words - are grounded in risk. Indeed, it will not be a question of re-entering through the window what has gone out from the door of the house-Nature. What one will have to be able to recognise all the way through is the ontological distance of the non-human from the cognitive structures that the human - that self-conscious part of life - possesses. The former's non cum-prehensible otherness must be taken care for: that appears to be Morton's claim. In fact, it is precisely with such material hyper-objects that we will have to live with. The same goes for sciences and philosophy. They will have to become-world, to think-with the former and without first conceptualising and objectifying them. In the symbiotic real, beyond the mystification of nature, at the point of closest proximity, it is the infinite distance which we discover. We should – Morton argues – break the glass, i.e., *cross the threshold of representation* in ecology ("Nature" as an object "right there", an "it") to join the immense, un-graspable symbiotic real. Indeed, he writes (2009, p. 205):

“we must deal with the idea of *distance* itself. If we try to get rid of distance too fast, in our rush to join the nonhuman, we will end up caught in our prejudice, our concept of distance, our concept of 'them'. Hanging out in the distance may be the surest way of relating to the nonhuman”. (Emphasis added)

Here, the ecology proposed by Morton opens to the radical *irreduction* of the other, to his obscurity, to recognise *materialistically* the opacity that protects him. That is what the prefix hyper- refers to. Such an ecology appears as an ecology for the age of globalised baroque - to put it with Glissant's words (2007, pp. 93-95).

It appears when the shadow which always stretches behind the entity conceived as object makes even what is apparently always calculable incalculable. The "symbiotic real" - what the modern project has obscured as a spectre (Morton, 2017, pp. 10-44) - can thus be conceived as such gigantic. Hyper-objects show it historically by appearing to us as climate change. Moreover, as Farinelli (1989) has shown, the reduction of the world to a picture has been an essentially cartographic operation. The World's picture *par excellence* has been – he claims - the map. In addition, some de-colonial scholars (Mignolo, 2007; Escobar, 2018, 2020) suggest that such an operation is to be accountable for the One-World World ontology, i.e. the ontological occupation of territories and worlds by the One-World Cartographic picture. Therefore, a de-colonial tension emerges in Morton's thought. He wants to get rid of the modern homogenizing conception of space by giving seriously room to the exceeding materiality of non-human others. Next sub-paragraph 3 and the whole paragraph 2 (of this Chapter 2) show how that also concerns the city-countryside dichotomy and entails a planetary urban thought oriented to production, to metabolism.

Indeed, the latter proposes the unity-diversity (Ibid.) of the world as a *tragic ontology* unsolvable by any rational penetration. He affirms a being-in-society that hosts intemperance, depths, that makes "an appeal to circumvention, to proliferation, to spatial redundancy, to that which mocks the pretended uniqueness of the known and the knower, to that which exalts the quantity infinitely taken up, the totality infinitely restarted" (Glissant, 2007, p. 94). The same goes for Morton, who says (2010, p. 58):

"Interconnection implies separateness and difference. There would be no mesh if there were no strange strangers. The mesh isn't a background against which the strange stranger appears. It is the entanglement of all strangers".

But what is interesting about the English philosopher's perspective, is that the distance-grounded ontological tragedy he recognizes does not involve the withdrawn and shrinking of ecology itself. Contrary, the former should force us to think big. Indeed, he writes (2010, p. 13): "we may need to think bigger than totality itself, if totality means something closed, something we can be sure of, something that remains the same". However, it appears the opposite than a totalizing view or a new, reversed, cartographic reification. Rather, it seems to refer to a *spectral* bigness. In fact, "if everything is interconnected" – Morton argues (Ibid., p.43) - "there is less of everything. Nothing is complete in itself". A bit after, he directly considers non-human hyper-objects and write (Ibid., p. 51, emphasis added): "their *strangeness* itself is *strange*. We can never absolutely figure them out. If we could, then all we would have is a ready-made box to put them in, and we would just be looking at the box". Differences do not disappear into the indistinct but go the opposite direction: they open an ontology of the Other that postulates and ensures its in-appropriability, its own fading edge. This way, that ever-changing potentiality that has never ceased to "enchant the world" (Ibid., p. 116) is assumed and preserved against the sacralisation of an "it", of a "there". In fact, Morton describes his ecology as anti-animist anti-anthropocentrism (2018, p. 221). Reasoning "without the -meta", "without an elsewhere" (2018, p. 32) does not lead him to a pantheistic eco-mimesis, nor to "play around with fantasies about embeddedness" (Ibid.). Rather, it makes we aware of our ontological condition of thrownness to gear us up for an age of Asymmetry. It wants us to assume the distance – not the coincidence – with the non-human Other. The latter escapes - to quote Lefebvre (2014, p. 72) - but through a very material real where we should geo-philosophically acclimate ourselves (Ibid., p. 205 and followings):

“we are now entering a new age of knowledge: thinking beyond the ‘-meta’ will make us *acclimate* in the strangeness of things, a strangeness which evolutionism, ecology, relative and quantum theories talk about”.

Such a radical unknowability of hyper-objects does not produce a new comforting metaphysics, but a disturbing immanence of the *strange stranger*. It is a geo-philosophy – keyword is, again, *to acclimate* – which takes charge of the latter’s arrival and materiality. Morton says it is a “ploy of reason” (2018, p., 220) which allows us not to alienate again the Other in a knowable and predictable object, nor to deny it through assimilation. Instead, we should know and live with it in its admitted excess. “There is no comfort” – the author writes (2018, p. 221) – “in the Big Acceleration age or Anthropocene. Rather, the feeling arises that *the non-human is out of control, it is irreparably withdrawn from human access*” (emphasis added).

Therefore, Morton’s proposal does not take shelter in a “contract ecology” (Luisetti, 2017), nor in animism. Contrary, it postulates and makes its way through an *ontological tragedy*, a rationally unsolvable distance: *omnia per inane geruntur* (Lucrezio, *De rerum natura*, III, vv. 16-18). To him, we must learn how to live-, act- and think-with such a gigantic thrownness. For the English philosopher, the intimacy with non-humans hyper-objects does not fall under the anthropic and comforting sign of *commotion*⁴⁴, but rather of silence, of a kind of emptiness which separates us. Such an ecology does not assume the cynical holism of Gaia (2018, p. 201): non-humans are no more natural than we are, we are all hyper-objects. That is why reason needs - as we have seen - unprecedented wit to act within the Asymmetry, i.e., outside the *principle of equivalence* (Galli, 2010). Not to reproduce separations but to become-world – according to Morton - philosophy will have to deal (and live) with the symbiotic real without objectifying it, without alienating it in the picture Nature. During the ecological emergency, i.e. when hyper-objects reveal themselves, the thinking must thus be based on uncertainty (Morton, 2010, p. 36) and take seriously the latter’s material immensity.

⁴⁴ Reference is to Latour (2020). Even though the author is repeatedly explicit (e.g., p. 119, “events are a cascade of unforeseen contingencies”) about the fact that he is not oriented to the search for harmony with nature, traces of reductionism appear. Particularly, one might observe his comforting conceptualization of agency, i.e. the “will of struggling rivers” (Ibid., p. 66), the impossibility of escaping anthropomorphism in the age of the Anthropocene (p. 122), the Earth which gets emotional (p. 71).

2.1.3 – A limitless plasticity: from rocking-with the symbiotic real to creation by approximation.

So, what to do? How to carry out such a meta-philosophical gesture? Morton offers his “theory of action” in *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (2017). Facing the ontological distance of matter, the nothingness of “the thing” (2018, p. 225), it is necessary – he writes (2017, pp. 10-44) – to build new forms of solidarity for re-discovering, assuming and “rocking” in the symbiotic real by letting the non-human hyper-objects haunting us.

“Something like a permeable boundary between things and their phenomena” – Morton writes (2017, p. 11) – “is highly necessary for thinking solidarity”. The latter – he argues - must be re-thought by “embracing a haunting, uncanny, spectral dimension” (Ibid., p. 42) of non-human hyper-objects. It is a physical and political state of organization (p. 20), a cheap, stirring, and pleasant feeling. But crucially, it has to resist the Severing (Ibid. p. 25). With that word, the author refers (p. 20) to the fissure between “*reality* (the human-correlated world) and the *real* (ecological symbiosis of human and nonhuman parts of the biosphere)”. Only a new form of solidarity can resist such a fracture and let us live- and think-with the symbiotic real.

In order that to happen, Morton argues that - on the one hand - we have to overcome the “agricultural religion”. On the other, “rocking” is offered as a new, queer theory of action up to the task. As far as the first issue is concerned, the author refers to the Mesopotamian conception of space based on the agricultural-city format: “a walled city, surrounded by fields, surrounded by ‘the wild’” (Ibid., p. 27). For Morton, we severed that way our ties with the non-human. We built a “human” world by walling out the disturbing symbiotic real⁴⁵. Therefore, the ecological emergency and the related arrival of non-human hyper-objects require – the English philosopher writes (p. 40-41) “another holism”. One which is able of thinking “at a *planetary scale* without just upgrading or retweeting the basic agricultural theological meme, a meme that justifies a human–nonhuman

⁴⁵ See also Jutte (2014). Here, the author shows how it was traumatic the arrival at night before a closed city. He writes (Ibid., p. 221): “the colloquial term ‘*Torschlußpanik*’ (literally, ‘panic of gate closure’), now used in German in a figurative sense, still resounds with the anxiety of pre-modern people faced with the prospect of not being allowed to enter the city”. After in the article, reports are given of travellers which had to sleep outside the city and thanked God for having remained alive.

boundary” (Ibid., emphasis added). Instead, as far as the related operative dimension, Morton offers a preliminary theory of action based on “rocking”. It should be opposed to what he calls the “fixation on places”, i.e., the “claim earthbound ‘location, location, location’” (Morton, 2010, p. 36). In fact, to him – in order to overcome the Mesopotamian trap – to rock might involve a “spectral action, namely an action that subscends hardcore correlationism and hardcore materialism and includes the spectral, the spectral nonhuman” (2017, p. 159). Such a rocking should thus queer the distinction between active and passive action (Ibid. p. 160) and would look like “spooky, or like nothing at all, or impossible, or magical, depending on what kind of a person you are” (p. 159).

On the one hand, Morton’s point about the geographically fixed Severing seems to open the possibility for a society which thinks beyond the *methodological cityism* (Angelo, Wachsmuth, 2014) in analysis and practice. Namely: a new imagery of space emerges which refuses to distinguish between what is social and what is not by means of the (geographically inscribed) object “city”. Rather, solidarity should be organized – like the Urban (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 195) – as what “reunites” culture and nature. Of course, to Morton such a reunion remains partial. Indeed, it is a matter of letting the non-human haunt us, not to reduce it to a fixed representation. “You can’t visualize the climate” – the English philosopher states (2010, p. 37). It follows that all those up-scaled or down-scaled city-forms (such as the State, or the region) become unable of “solidarity”, being spatial, social and political objects materially constituted by an outside. On the other, an insufficiency arises. In fact, if – abstractly – that sounds a coherent perspective for hosting hyper-objects’ material immensity, practically speaking it seems to stop at a metaphorical level. That is why what Pinzolo (2021, p. 136) writes about the Object-Oriented Ontology in general can be argued also for Morton’s argument in particular: “it appears as a *construction site* or as an *intent* whose *project* remains to be outlined” (emphasis in original). Moreover, how – beside thinking with the distance – English philosopher’s ecology and new theory of action should also relate with the historical context of neoliberalism is not discussed clearly. The author writes in *The Ecological Thought* (2010, p. 17): “reframing our world, our problems, and ourselves is part of the ecological project. This is what praxis means— action that is thoughtful and thought that is active”. But *how* can the solidarity with the symbiotic real be active? What environment such a “friendship” cannot but produce?

While next paragraph offers a way to overcome the gap, the utility of Morton’s perspective for updating Lefebvre’s at climate change can be further strengthened.

As seen in previous chapter, to the French philosopher the socialization of urbanism was the way through which the urban revolution should be fought out. This way, he says, philosophy can become world, by orienting and producing not a space in general, but the *planetary common oeuvre*: i.e., radical or – with Negri and Hardt – absolute democracy and its needed morphology. In *The Right to the City* and *The Urban Revolution* the issue of meta-philosophy finds thus a practical and historically determined answer. As the Logos emerged from the polis (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 41), the urban revolution under planetary urbanization should produce a new one by decisive urban-political acts of *poiesis*, of *architectural* creation. Nevertheless, in *Metaphylosophy* ([1965] 2016) Lefebvre did not arrive at this point. There, the main instrument of philosophy is still “discourse” (p. 316), it is still not at the operative trial of space of urban socialization which – in turn - practically destroys any philosophical abstraction or speculation. In *Metaphilosophy*, Lefebvre stopped a bit before by envisioning “a new thought” of totality which recalls Morton’s eco-ontology. Indeed, the French philosopher argues (Ibid., p. 308):

“Being and (conscious) thought, or if you prefer, *nature* and *praxis*, recognize one another and encounter each other in their reciprocal shared belonging and appropriation. Not without conflicts. This totality can be attained neither by philosophy, nor by some science of human reality, nor again by the ensemble of these sciences. These sciences can be *neither separated nor united*. As soon as they are separated, they confront each other in a formless babel; and as soon as the attempt is made to unite them into a *synthetic picture*, they divorce and each goes its own way. Only a *new thought, aimed at a totality* that is determined neither as economic, nor as sociological, nor as historical in the usual sense of the term, and yet takes into account all these levels and elements of the real, can dominate the sciences” (Emphasis added)

As one can see, the perspective is very close to Morton’s. Lefebvre as well is looking for a thought which integrates human and natural sciences, nature and praxis, but without reifying it in a *picture*. The latter is a keyword that – as for the English philosopher – proves the Heideggerian sources of the reasoning. Nevertheless – differently from the German – Lefebvre states that Man finds himself by creating his dwelling. For the French, it is not about (p. 316) “as Heidegger says, the dwelling of Being in language, but the dwelling of man as human being; constructed by praxis. *On earth*”. The perspective is strongly materialistic. However, such Earth – or universe – is not at complete disposal, it can

be only “approximated” (Ibid.) by philosophy, “it would be neither irrational nor absurd, nor in itself full of meaning. It would be characterized neither by meaning nor by the absence of meaning. Man would be neither its end nor its aim, neither its absence of end nor its absurdity” (Ibid.). The passage is crucial since it seems really “object-oriented”, really close to Morton’s perspective around their ontological withdrawal. The same goes for other definitions or descriptions of the more-than-human totality Lefebvre is striving to grasp. See for example at page 316 (Ibid.):

“Nothing has precise contours. Nothing is susceptible to rigorous definition (including the spherical form of the earth, for example, this prototype of stabilities and self-regulations). Nothing is completely determined or can be completely measured. Nothing is absolutely stable”.

Or, a bit after (p. 323):

“Nothing is total. Nothing exhausts the totality. By placing itself within a particular entity (state, philosophy, mathematics, etc.), a *residue* is displayed, which becomes essential. Every fact, every work, presents gaps and voids in relation to the virtual totality that never offers itself except fragmentarily: in relation to the infinite that never gives itself except in the finite” (Emphasis added).

Again, Morton’s themes are here deployed. The residue, the voids, the impossibility of measure are not put as abstract concepts, but as very material oriented ones. To be “approximated”, to be unstable is the very globe, the very universe, the very matter through which we live, where-in we live. Nevertheless, in such *ontological tragedy*, in such thrown condition there is no room – to Lefebvre – for pure philosophy, nor for silence, nor for “partial sciences” or inaction. The distance, the *abyss*⁴⁶ – also in terms of politics, society etc - it opens before humans, on the contrary, must stimulate it. “We must not retreat in the face of its depth” – the French philosopher argues (pp. 308-309) – “*but on the contrary, expand this [debate]. It compels us to redefine socialism and communism, as perspectives (possibilities) of the historical movement*” [emphasis added]. Lefebvre brings social change at the trial of the acknowledged ontological emptiness and distance. To him, after having assumed the former, is immediately a matter of thinking about radical democracy and creativity with-in it. *Poiesis* and *praxis* do not disappear. Contrary, they can seize the chance for realizing philosophy after having discovered its

⁴⁶ “To understand hyper-objects” – Morton writes (2018, p. 88) - “one has to imagine an abyss opening up in front of things”.

alienation (in de-materialized abstraction). They serve to stand, one might say, *within but operatively against the tragedy* to survive it better. In fact, differently – or more strongly – than Morton, for Lefebvre such a “rocking” in the symbiotic real falls under the banner of plasticity and being-creation (pp. 316-320):

“Between being and nothingness, between matter and spirit, between the In-itself and the For-itself, between the determined and the undetermined, these traditional concepts of philosophy, there would be the site of a *plasticity* without assignable limits. [...] Metaphilosophical meditation refuses to define it [the being]. It recognizes the double determination of the ‘real’: the particular, the limit, the determined, the finite; the infinite, the undetermined, the possible, the universal. It refuses therefore to speak being, to posit the general, since and because *being is to be created.*” (Emphasis added)

Therefore, to Lefebvre, even and foremost since ontologically there is room for “approximation” only, there has to be also for *poiesis* and creation. On the one hand, it is “on Earth” – not elsewhere, nor in language – that we inhabit in between finite and in-finite. On the other – and consequently - it is only as *plasticity* (i.e. production, creation and transformation) that philosophy can become-world in a material world, that it can find historical-material site. This point reached, the urbanistic destination (Lefebvre, 1973b, 2014, 2018) of such reflections appears clearer.

So, as one can see, Lefebvre started developing his meta-philosophy as a sort of hyper-objectual, materialistic-oriented theory of “symbiotic” praxis and poiesis. In that, it has lots of common points with Morton’s. Thus - as far as re-figuring planetary urbanization under climate change condition is concerned - such connection can be productive.

Indeed, the English philosopher updates and repropose the same approach than the French one but under partially changed historical-environmental conditions. That nature which to Lefebvre “simply” may escape and might be given in approximation (in distant-proximity) is today revealing its turbulent, deadly materiality. In that regard – as shown - Morton gives crucial understandings. His ontological perspective is – to me – pivotal not to fall back into “*retrotopical* traps”, nor to comfort ourselves with measure-like ecologies, nor – finally – to ascetically abstract our theories from the too much material challenge issued by hyper-objects. That is why I have offered it in order to continue in re-figuring the urban society. Both grounds on a tragic ontology. Moreover, the English philosopher is also

explicit about the necessity of a logos which overcomes the “agricultural religion”, i.e., the “methodological citysm” in analysis and practice. Indeed, the historical arrival of non-human hyper-objects represents a *Beingquake* which – with its turbulent materiality – breaks (or may break) the separation between *nature and praxis*. However, Morton – differently from Lefebvre - does not give sufficient instruments for understanding how the urbanistic life of the (human) multitude should seize such a chance and go (and *build*) beyond capitalism. *How* should she realize her project and let philosophy become world, i.e., plasticity-making, common urbanism? How should such a move entail a post-capitalist gesture of complete re-appropriation?

In the next paragraph, starting from the ontological bases here discussed, I offer Moore’s world-ecology (2015, 2017) as a way for going ahead. There, the terrain of environmental production is gained from a Marxist perspective in order to imagine the intelligence of the multitude (i.e. her urbanistic life) at the "spatial trial" of non-human hyper-objects under climate change conditions. Namely: I am going to show how solidarity with the symbiotic real can be conceived as “organic exchange” – i.e. *metabolism*, as production of environment in the web of life. Moreover, how it entails a critical praxis for exiting capitalism is showed. This way, a figure can be searched for grasping and *orienting* the intertwining between the urbanistic life of the multitude and the exceeding presence of non-human hyper-objects. It will have to be animated by a productive thinking *of* and *through* symbiotic infra-structures. Namely: one which – *by crossing the threshold of representation* – can completely reappropriate techniques and become-world by metabolically producing environments.

2.2 - Moore’s World-Ecology: *metabolism* as creation-of-environment.

2.2.1 – Metabolism: a solvent for a double spatial trial.

In previous chapter, the urban revolution has been showed as a potentiality embedded in currently existing socialized society. Firstly, Lefebvre original formulations have been considered about the becoming social of *urbanisme* as the constitutive social practice for tendentially realize a truly urban society. Negri and Hardt have then been offered as contemporary planetary urbanization debaters before a horizon of emancipation. Passing through the concept of Multitude, Common, and bio-political production, I have proposed the *social architect* and the *urbanistic life of the multitude* as preliminary figures (or operative concepts) for envisioning, fight for and produce the Urban Society under present-day socioeconomical configuration. Considering non-human natures amid climate change has thus appeared crucial to continue updating Lefebvre's formulations.

Therefore, Morton's ecological proposal has been introduced. In alternative to the colonial epistemological othering, he recognizes non-humans' unsolvable distance and excess. Thus, to him, hyper-objects reveal an *ontological tragedy*: i.e., the impossibility for reason to control and grasp them completely. They always partially withdraw. Hence, at the level of analysis, the English philosopher's proposal fits Lefebvre's. In fact, for both, non-human natures are something which *escape* (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 72) and can only be "approximated" (Lefebvre, 2016 [1965], p. 316). Moreover, they agree in considering the "city" as an obstacle to a not alienated practice of space. Nevertheless, Morton's perspective remains insufficient as far as a complete updating of the French's one is concerned. Indeed, the former proposes to assume the symbiotic real as the terrain where to act, or *rocking*, with such a spectral distance-proximity. But that seems more a vague suggestion than a proper *orientation* (as the "urban revolution" concept demands) for social practice to move beyond capitalism and the State.

Then, how to get out of metaphor? How to preserve Morton's ontological achievements but – at once - think operatively of the *limitless plasticity* they disclose? Namely: how to put social change at the *double spatial trial* of - on the one hand - the practical trauma of non-human hyper-objects arrival and – on the other – of the crisis of capitalism such a novelty involves? How to stay with that trouble, *both within but also against the tragedy of thrownness and the way capitalism has obscured it*? How to take care for the double (and reciprocal) excess of human and non-human natures and - at once - imagining ways for going beyond capitalism? To Lefebvre (1973b, p. 195), the Urban reunites culture and nature by creating a second nature. Would that be still possible, when hyper-objects' spectral reality is revealed in all their turbulent, deadly, partially un-predictable materiality?

Ultimately, can we really continue - amid climate change – to envision Urban Society as a planetary common oeuvre?

In recent years, lots of authors have used the concept of *metabolism* for describing the relation between the production of space (i.e., urbanization) and non-human natures. Mostly, U.rban P.olitical E.cology is the field of research where the issue has been deepened (Swyngedouw, 1996, 2006; Gandy, 2011; Heynen, 2014; Wachsmuth, 2012, 2014; Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2015; Angelo, 2017; Tzaninis *et alia*, 2020; Brenner and Katsikis, 2020, Arboleda, 2016, 2020). As Foster (1999, p. 383) writes, Marx and Engels have been the first ones who applied the term “metabolism” to society. “For Marx” - Foster continues (Ibid., p. 388) - “the human metabolism with nature was a highly dynamic relationship, reflecting changes in the ways human beings mediated between nature and society through production”. Therefore, to him, it concerns labour, the very transformation of matter through the use of mind, arms and legs (see also Schmidt, 1969, pp. 70-86). It is not only an “abstract” metaphor which points to the relation between human and non-human natures. Rather, metabolism stands also for the concrete organic exchange which dissolve that distinction through the very creation of use values, of products of labour. Moreover, such an “organic exchange” - Marx writes (in Schmidt, 1969, pp. 70-86) – is common to all form of societies, it concerns the very natural condition of human natures. Instead, capitalism provokes a *metabolic rift*, an estrangement of human beings from that mode of existence (Foster, 1999, p. 383). To Marx, that rift as well - Foster argues directly discussing some Marxian texts – was not only an abstract, analytical tool. It was also rooted geographically and produced materially. Or – to put it differently: the Marxian “metabolic rift” pointed to a specific, produced environment as well. One where exists a clear distinction and antagonism between the city and the countryside. One where society and nature are materially produced as different through the very geographical, spatial, urban, concrete distinction between the “city” and its “outside” (Ibid., p. 384). That is why – Foster argues (1999, p. 386) – Marx emphasized the need for planning through measures which entailed “the elimination of the antagonism between town and country through the more even dispersal of the population (Marx and Engels [1848] 1967, pp. 40–41)”.

Therefore, for Foster (according to Marx), *metabolism refers to the labour of producing*. It is a way for conceiving of the co-transformative interaction of human creativity and non-human natures in terms of concrete production. Swyngedouw (2006) as well proposes the same use of the concept. He reads and discusses some Marxian texts and argues:

“This environmental ‘production’ process is conceived in the broadest possible sense. It refers to the metabolic process that is energized through the *fusion* [emphasis added] of the physical properties and creative capacities of humans with those of non-humans. [...] Production is an organic process in the first instance, similar (but not reducible or identical) to the act of producing things new by other organic and non-organic ‘actants’. [...] Whether we consider the production of dams, the re-engineering of rivers, the management of biodiversity hotspots, the transfiguration of DNA codes, the cultivation of tomatoes (genetically modified or not) or the construction of houses, they all testify to the particular associational relations through which socio-natural metabolisms are organized”.

Nevertheless, positioning from the perspective of metabolism, choosing its terrain as a critical standpoint entails further considerations. Indeed, as Moore argues at length (2017b) a “Vampire model” (Ibid., p. 299) struggles to vanish. That one according to which “planetary nature appears mainly as something to be sucked dry by capital” (Ibid.). On the one hand, such model prevents bridging the Great Divide. It makes metabolism remain in the grip of the Society *and* Nature dualism by strengthening “a view of nature in which human use is impossible to distinguish from capitalist transformation” (Ibid.). On the other, consequently, that way the concept does not work properly as a “fusion” (Swyngedouw, 2006) operator, as a *solvent* (Moore, 2017b, p. 313). Thus, it cannot help in *solving* the capitalist-induced metabolic rift but only in describing it.

Starting from the following paragraph and mostly throughout Chapter 3, I offer a possible way to escape that vampire model. I show how Moore’s (2011, 2015, 2017a, 2017b) conception of *metabolism* can be up to both overcome Morton’s practical insufficiencies and finishing updating Lefebvre’s proposal about the urban revolution. Specifically, to that purpose, I advance the *metabolic life of the multitude* as an operative concept. It metaphilosophically points to and may be embodied in a subject in charge of realizing Urban Society *through* non-human hyper-objects and by means of *approximation*. Finally, in Chapter 3, metabolism works as an instrument – among others - for re-figuring such a planetary oeuvre amid the Planetary Flood.

2.2.2 – The end of nature-as-external: producing without and beyond the “ecological surplus”.

In his *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?* (2017a) Moore coined the second term of the question to indicate - differently from the common argument - the specific responsibilities the currently existing model of development has with respect to the ecological crisis. In fact, the author is situated in a huge Marxist debate⁴⁷. Moreover, his essay has the merit of tracing – together with the earlier *Ecologia-Mondo e crisi del capitalismo* (2015) - the spatial, philosophical-political and economic transformations that have led to the present environmental situation. Moore often uses the formula “web-of-life” to indicate the intertwining of human and non-human co-productions within, *through* - and not *on* or *with* - which (2017a, p. 43) colonial modernity and capitalism have developed. This perspective, which to him is historical and theoretical-methodological on the present, opens also to the possibility of investigating (dimension of critique) and acting on (dimension of practice) the production of environment in unprecedented ways. Indeed – while discussing Foster's and Swingedouw's positions – the author argues that metabolism should work as a *solvent* (2015, p. 156). Namely: it should be the productive way to practically (as well as theoretically) overcome the metabolic rift by conceiving of and transforming human natures *through* non-human ones. Therefore, that is not by chance that – to Moore - the end of external and cheap nature (see below) is both a crisis in capitalism and the opportunity for thinking social change as production of environment. He writes (2017a, p. 48):

“I believe that this shift from political ecology or environmental history of social change to social change *as* production-of-environment is now a possibility with significant intellectual and thus political implications. [That is] Moving from a focus on the environmental consequences *of* so-called social processes, to a view of social processes as co-produced by human and extra-human natures” (emphasis in original).

Moore is here saying that social change should be imagined, produced, and negotiated as *metabolic change* (or “shift”, Moore, 2017b), as a change in the

⁴⁷ In addition to the above quoted authors, see also Gorz (2020), Harvey (2007), Foster (2000), O’Connor (2021). More recently, in Italy: Leonardi (2017). At the international level: Saito (2021), Malm (2016, 2021).

organizational virtualities (epistemology) and concrete practices through which we humanity organize *in*, transform *the*, and are transformed *by* the web-of-life. In order to support such a project of new metabolism, it is necessary to delve into what it emerges against.

In his “*Ecologia-mondo e crisi del capitalismo*” (2015), Moore argues that neo-liberalism – the currently existing phase of capitalism – is now facing a crisis. In his view, it is related to the erosion of the “ecological surplus”. This latter refers to the availability of huge quantities of “cheap food, energy, feed stocks and work force” (Ibid., pp. 33 and 57). When the “cheap four” cannot be found and become more expensive, a crisis takes place (Ibid., p. 51). Moore's question is about understanding if it is a “spy crisis” - one where that surplus does not grow fast enough – or a terminal one. Specifically, he asks if we are facing a moment in which capitalism cannot but change the overall strategy of world-nature organization. Crucial points for Moore are mainly two: A) how the crisis is given and where it is rooted and B) what can be a critical perspective able to grasp it and act with-in it. The two are not separated: the very understanding of the first one passes through and in turn cannot but imply the second.

Firstly, “through ‘ecology’” – Moore writes (2015, p. 30) – “and its akin, I seek to transcend the Cartesian narrative of capitalism *and* the ‘environment’. Rather, I focus on the relations of capitalism *through* the turbulent fractures and interdependencies of the social and biophysical natures”. He then adds (Ibid.):

“I therefore borrow the Greek root *oikos* (home) and refer to regimes, revolutions, and ecological crises, recalling the botanical philosopher Theophrastus' term *oikeios* 'to denote the relationship between plant species and the environment' (Hughes, 1994, 4). *Oikeios* is the term I use for this messy combination of relationships that gives rise to the nature-society dialectic”.

Therefore, ecology is not – for Moore – a discipline which should preserve the binary society-nature. To him, it must be used as a *solvent* for understanding (critical analysis) and acting (social transformation as historic-environmental praxis) within what he calls *oikeios*, a messy combination. Ecology should take care for the turbulent materiality of biophysical natures and *mediate* the latter's relation with “society”; it should *cross the threshold of representation* (see below) in both analysis and – thus – in practice for thinking *with-in* the *oikeios*. Hence, “environment” will not appear as something which stays “there”. Rather, the author

seems to develop an ecological *logos* freed from the trap of objectivization. Indeed, it is worth to notice how Moore goes ahead (Ibid.):

“If neoliberalism is typically viewed as a combination of social forces acting on the rest of nature, imposing its "footprint" according to a simple metaphor, capitalism as "world-ecology" is the differentiated unity of natures production and unceasing accumulation of capital. From this perspective, capitalism does not *have* an ecological regime. It *is* an ecological regime”. (Emphasis in original)

In light of such methodological statements, Moore goes thus through the aforementioned issues at point A). He suggests a critical history of modern capitalism looking at it as a way to organize the web-of-life. Premise is that such an organization proceeds through mystifications and produces alienation. Therefore: what kind of organizational strategy has modern capitalism adopted with respect to the *oikeios* – to alienate it? Why is it now in crisis? The key formula the author introduces is “nature-as-external”, which is strongly related with the idea and historical capitalistic *praxis* of “cheap nature”. As Moore writes (2015, p. 92):

“What we are witnessing is the ‘end of cheap nature’ as a strategy of a civilization, born during the rise of capitalism in the long 16th century (1450-1648). An ingenious civilization project was at the heart of this strategy: constructing nature as external to human activity, and, thus, mobilizing the labor of non-commodified human and non-human natures in the service of advancing labor productivity in commodity production”.

Firstly, Moore’s point sounds like Morton’s about the severing. Modern capitalism, the former says, walled out (out of metaphor, see below) the symbiotic real - or *oikeios* – and its messy combination. However, now, the author does not go back till the Mesopotamian agricultural religion. Key elements are here three: temporally speaking, the present crisis has its roots in the long XVI century; economically, the ecological surplus arose thanks to the high productivity of a cheap or free human and non-human labour; symbolically and spatially, nature had to be “external” to human activity. I focus on this latter to then come back on the others.

“Nature” - Moore argues (2015, p. 94) “could not be made cheap until it was made external”. Therefore, what does it mean “external”? To what? Is it a symbolical, economical, or material externality? Or are these dimensions considered together? And: who and what is part of such a nature-as-external? First:

“natures” are – the author claims - both human and non-human. They are women, slaves, forests, and lands (Ibid., pp. 92-95). But (p. 94) “nature” is also a matrix, an organizational virtuality. That is to say: it has also an “abstract” component, an externality abstractly achieved, one which co-produce and is co-produced by its material inscription onto the ground. This point is crucial. Let us read Moore's words directly (Ibid., p. 94):

“This view of nature as an external object...represented an essential moment in the rise of capitalism. [...] The world-*praxis* of early capitalism, fusing symbolic codification with material inscription, supported a bold fetishization of nature. This manifested itself, strongly, in the cartographic, scientific and quantifying revolutions of the period. These represented the symbolic moments of the original accumulation, which created a new intellectual system whose presumption, personified by Descartes, was to separate humans from the rest of nature”.

So: cartography co-produces the nature-as-external. The former is the symbolic strategy (representation) which codifies and materially inscribes (*praxis*) such an externality into the ground. The latter, again, is not only the geographical surface of the Earth, but is also composed of some human natures (slaves, women), which in turn are geographically externalized in colonies and other gated social spaces (see Plumwood, 1993). Moore calls such a matrix-like *moment* of nature “social abstract nature” (a formula derived from the Marxian “social abstract labour”). The latter, in turn, had been possible – Moore argues - only by virtue of an accelerated relation with the free work of human and non-human natures (2015, pp. 99-101). Then, *world-praxis* refers to the togetherness of the two moments. This relation must be better explained (see below, the last “quarter turn” of the dialectic circle here at stake), but first another aspect of “social abstract nature” material inscription is worth to notice. That is: what has it entailed geographically? *How* does cartography hit the ground in order to inscribe itself? The division between city and countryside is here crucial.

Social abstract nature produces environment, organizes materially the relation between human and non-human natures *thanks to and through the production of “the city” and “the countryside” as two distinct and antagonistic areas*. As Moore writes (2015, p. 31, not by chance recalling Foster – see above):

“In other words, city-country antagonism...is the determining geographical relationship [...] Foster's (2000) metabolic rift, then, is not

simply a particular effect of capitalism, but it is constitutive of the capitalist mode of production”.

The city appears the key infrastructure for producing nature-as-external, its reification, its objectuality. Such a perspective, echoes what Farinelli (2008) argues. Namely: that the city has been the *noema*, the very deep meaning of cartography. As the Italian geographer states, in fact, cartography have been possible only by virtue of and through the existence and preserving of “the city” as that *place* where the perceived space and the symbolic one matched (Farinelli, 2010). The city had to be clearly spatially seen! At the same time, crucial point is – for Moore - the capitalistic relevance of that rift. The distinction between Society and Nature grounds – he argues - the alienated human condition from and within the web-of-life. That is possible also through the geographical division between the city and the country (or colonies) to be preserved and produced as such. In other terms: *the alienation of society from the web-of-life have been possible – Moore says – by producing and spatially grounding “the city” and “nature as external”*. Nature starts to be conceived and produced as external to society and human activity thanks to this entanglement of abstract and concrete practices. It started existing historically with cartography, with colonies and – this must be pointed out now – the alienation of human activity through paid (or free) labour.

Indeed, as said above: “nature could not be made cheap until it was made external” (2015, p. 94). That is: externality and cheapness of some natures are the key and co-constitutive characteristics of capitalistic ecology (and its value chain). Why – after having been codified as external – nature appear also to be cheap? Because, this way, Capital was able to benefit from the free work of slaves and of forests, materials, oceans etc (Moore, 2015, p. 95) thanks to the low composition of their value. Namely: they were given in abundance and Capital earned a lot by spending little. That is how the ecological surplus started to be accumulated. Therefore - last quarter turn of the dialectical circle – nature-as-external appears *to be not really outside*. We are still in question A) with respect to the aforementioned division of Moore's enquiry. In fact, external nature is completely internal and necessary to capitalist accumulation. In other terms: according to the author, Capital had to mystify the web-of-life through the invention of “nature-as-external” to appropriate its free and unpaid (or low paid) work. Nature (non-humans, slaves, women etc) are external with respect to the sphere of commodities but completely internal to capitalist power.

The “city” - together with its down-scaled (home) or up-scaled (colonies, enclosures) synecdoches (see also Plumwood, 1993) - thus appears as the material infrastructure which has supported (during capitalist modernity) the political and economic one. The first sphere of waged and commodified labour – where the worker is separated from the very metabolic act of production since he does not own nor completely benefit from what produced – depends on the second sphere of appropriated free labour from human and non-human natures. Together, the two spheres produce the alienated capitalistic ecology, which is geographically grounded in and infra-structurally inscribed through the city-countryside division. One which cartesianism is only apparent. Indeed, according to Moore, Capital knows that Society and Nature as a dichotomy is the mean to exploit both. What the former builds as-external is completely inside his power, and - in turn - could not have been appropriated without a tactical (abstract and concrete) moment of fictitious externalization. As the author clearly writes (pp. 101 -103):

“The vital activity carried out outside commodity production, but articulated with it, *is socially necessary unpaid labor*. [...] In order to reduce necessary labor time, capital sets in motion a civilization...which aims to maximize the unpaid "labor" of life outside the circuit of capital, but within the scope of capitalist power. The reduction of socially necessary labor time through commodification is what I call capitalization; the maximization of unpaid labor in the service of capitalization I call appropriation”.

The “city” and “nature” look like core characters of this tragic show. To take such a position - paraphrasing it with author's own words (2015, pp. 93-94) - "means immediately to abandon the concept of civilization (or world-system or capitalism) *and* environment, and instead refocusing on the idea of civilization-*in*-nature, of capitalism as a producer-of-environment process”. The *oikeios* is the biophysical entity (the web-of-life) and the methodological perspective from where Moore's *critical* – both diagnostic and prognostic - elaboration develops.

So, nature-as-external is presented as an abstract-concrete capitalistic mystification made in order to freely appropriate the labour of human and non-human natures and pay the less as possible the capitalized (commodified) one. This way the ecological surplus is accumulated and the law of value runs (2015, pp. 115-117). Indeed, social abstract nature is immanent to the latter and its *praxis* (historical natures-as-external) has been strategic for the production and commodities exchange – Moore says (Ibid). Moreover, this mystification was supported by the city-country/colony division. Nature and society have been thus

produced as *geographically* and mutually external to fit better capitalist power and necessities in organizing the web-of-life. This geographically supported alienation is functional to the overall alienation of labour from its metabolic role. Namely: arms, legs and mind – under capitalism - are separated from their natural activity, i.e., the transformation of environment for the use and survival. Therefore, capitalist world-ecology have been based – one might say – on a strong *methodological citysm* in practice. The former has become world by walling out “nature”. In the meanwhile, the web-of-life (or *oikeios*) has been infra-structured through the city-country separation, following such an alienating *logos-praxis*.

That ecological regime grounded on “external and cheap nature” and on the ecological surplus it entailed is now - Moore argues - *in crisis*. Why? Basically, because of two related reasons. On the one hand, along the XX century an extraordinary change happened (Moore, 2015, p. 103):

“The extraordinary change that occurred in the 20th century - through subsequent chemical, biotechnological and hybridization "revolutions" - has been the capitalization of agro-ecological (unpaid labor) relations previously external to the commodity system (Kloppenburg, 1988). The 21st century capitalist farmer must buy new seeds every year instead of saving them; every year he must buy more pesticides and herbicides to protect production...an agro-ecological model that, increasingly, is 'reproduced within the circuits of capitalist accumulation' (Boyd, Prudham and Schurman 201, 560)”.

That is to say: during the XX century, natures which before fell within the value grasp and power but outside the commodities circuit (i.e. they were not capitalized) started to enter also this latter sphere. Consequently: the composition of their value (money necessary for production) arose, and the ecological surplus decreased since they were no longer cheap. But, on the other hand, there is another related factor which let the crisis emerge: the insubordination of non-human natures⁴⁸. Moore writes: “the second movement, that of capitalization as sociotechnical innovation, is already generating a set of unpredictable responses: the *superweed effect*” (2015, p. 53, emphasis added). With such a formula, the author refers to the reaction and resistance to herbicide in GMO cultures. Namely: as in the case of Monsanto (Ibid., p. 42), GMO do not increase the yield but protect it. “Superweeds” can be read as non-human natures which block the process of appropriation without capitalization

⁴⁸Moore focuses on such an insubordination. Of course, as seen in previous chapter, also human natures rebelled against capitalism along the XX century.

since they require new technical intervention to be removed. At once, they persist, thus the composition of value arises, the ecological surplus decrease and nature-as-external as a matrix does not work productively. Indeed, historical natures – such as the superweeds – “deny” themselves as-external by entering the sphere of capitalization. This way, they increase production costs and “deny” themselves as exploited and non-paid labour, as class. For Capital that is a huge problem: biophysical natures evolve quicker than its capacity to control them (2015, p. 43), they are more and more unpredictable (Ibid., p. 54). The result – Moore argues (Ibid., p. 51) is that “*the increasing capitalization of nature creates a situation of increasing production costs at the level of world-history, due to the degradation of production conditions*” (emphasis in original).

That is the crisis of nature-as-external as Moore conceives of it. Historical natures enter society with their creativity, unpredictability, and autonomy. They are “in” *as material excess, as hyper-objects*, as such they deny themselves as class-nature. They cost a lot, and the gravitational field of financial capital (2015, p. 29) also – which has represented a solution in the above-described nexus between appropriation and capitalization (Ibid., p. 63) – is facing a problem (Ibid., p. 64):

“the hegemony of finance capital has exhausted capitalism's greatest source of dynamism, founded on uninterrupted scientific-technological revolutions that have greatly advanced the productivity of labor and subordinated extra-human nature to its own purposes”.

For all these reasons, Moore’s proposal seems to offer a way for understanding *how* non-human hyper-objects – beside involving an ontological trauma, a *Beingquake* (Morton, 2018) – are also responsible for a crucial crisis of capitalist ecology. The author gains, one might say, Morton’s perspective to a stronger post-capitalist horizon. Indeed, the American environmental historian does not only detect the historical emergence and revealing of non-human immensity and partial excess with respect to our rational grip. *He does not stop at the tragedy of distance*. In addition, he also explains *how* it concerns capitalism, its value machine and environmental-production process. In so doing, a crucial issue arises. The object “city” has been pivotal in reproducing and building the capitalist world-praxis. In fact, nature has been walled out, mystified in its excess, and kept into capital’s grip as measure precisely thanks to that infrastructure. Such an operative ecology caused and *built* a metabolic rift. It obscured, in analysis and (counter) practice, that “capitalist relations move through, not upon, space, which is to say through, and

not upon, nature as a whole” (Moore, 2017b, p. 313). Therefore, as far as post-capitalism is concerned, some suggestion may emerge from Moore’s perspective.

Firstly, the latter entails that a new world-praxis should be grounded not on a renovated, putative “more green” methodological citysm. Contrary, a Lefebvrian-like imagination seems more proper. One which *thinks, propose, and plan* beyond the city by means of a concrete abstraction, i.e., the urban. In fact, as widely discussed throughout Chapter 1, the latter is not an object, but a mental form of association and cooperation grounded on a coherent morphology. It is a field which *reunites* – as Lefebvre writes (1973b, p. 194-195) – by bringing “everything together, including determinisms, heterogeneous subjects and contents, prior order and disorder. [...] It de-structures and re-structures its elements, messages and codes that came from the industrial and the agrarian”. After all, Moore himself conceives of the *oikeios* in very similar terms (2015, p. 30): “[I] refer to regimes, revolutions, and ecological crises, recalling the botanical philosopher Theophrastus' term...[it] is the term I use for this messy combination of relationships that gives rise to the nature-society dialectic”.

But, secondly and in so doing, non-human natures can no longer be conceived as measure-like entities. Contrary, their hyper-objectuality must be assumed and should work *as such* through the new world-praxis. Our post-capitalist alliance cannot but be rooted on their own material (“practical”) denial as measure-like entities. Indeed, the latter was exactly the alienated world-praxis through which capitalism and its spatial inscription developed and appropriated the free (or law paid) work of humans and non-humans. Thus, the *oikeios* – and its post-capitalist ecology - involves a *crucial effort*: the tragical one of dealing with something which is distant in proximity, which we are crossed and produced by, an immensity which cannot be reduced or completely controlled. In other words, as to Morton, for Moore as well we have to face a troubling symbiotic real. But the latter – although from the same premises - offers a more convincing strategy: *metabolism as creation*.

2.2.3 – Towards the multitude’s world-praxis: from the urbanistic to the metabolic life.

If – since now – I have shown how, for the American environmental sociologist, the crisis of nature-as-external develops, which are its genealogies and causes,

another crucial question arises. Is it “developmental” - i.e. it can be solved with another wave of commodification – or is it epochal, i.e. its solution lies on the transition towards a new way to produce “wealth, power and nature” (2015, p. 65)? In both cases – and we are in moment B) of our exploration of Moore's thought – what to do from the perspective of post-capitalism is at stake. The author goes directly to the point in the last two chapters of the book (2015).

Firstly, he recalls the above mentioned *oikeios*. In terms of critical analysis, it has been a matter of passing from “capitalism on nature” to “capitalism in the web of life” in order to grasp its abstract-concrete mystifications. Now, the same goes for critical action and transformation. The project of the latter should be grounded on a concept “that moves from impenetrable and independent unities - nature and society - to one that seeks to reveal the dialectic of the combined, interpenetrating and disorderly interdependent relations of human and extra-human natures. What is needed, in other words, is a concept that allows for a prolific vocabulary of humanity-*in-nature* rather than one based on humanity *and* nature” (p. 125). The *oikeios* is such a concept, one which refers to “the creative, historical and dialectical relationship between, and also within, human and extra human natures”. That perspective – Moore continues (p. 126):

“should frame the creative and generative relationship between species and environment as *the ontological linchpin of historical change*. [...] Through the *oikeios* the relationships and conditions that create and destroy humanity's mosaic of cooperation and conflict are shaped and re-shaped: what is generally called “social” organization. The concept of nature-as-*oikeios* is not proposed, then, as an additional factor...instead, *it becomes the matrix in which human activity takes place and the field on which historical action operate*”. (Emphasis added).

If, as far as critical analysis of capitalism is concerned, such an approach has proved to be very fruitful in showing how the city and nature-as-external worked, the same goes now regarding the imaginations of a post-capitalist world-ecology (2015, p. 129). *Oikeios* is a concept which wants to understand and act the transformation of environment in a non-alienated way – i.e. without objectifying non-humans' spectral excess.

Firstly, as for Lefebvre and Morton, Moore as well seems to think in terms and aims of *meta-philosophy*. In fact, his critical ecology entails, leans towards a coherent *world-praxis*. The former wants to become-world, to envision, *orientate*

(a key word for figuring planetary urbanization), and produce social change as “transformation of environment” (2017a, p. 47). That is the meaning of the next-to-last chapter’s subtitle, “from object to Oikeios” (2015, p. 124). On the one hand, Moore proposes there to move (analytically) from two alienated and geographically inscribed virtualities (the city and nature-as-external) to a hyper-object of relations, clashes, and transformations. But, on the other, he also directly interrogates praxis. Indeed, the *oikeios* becomes “*the matrix in which human activity takes place and the field on which historical action operates*”. It is a radically immanent perspective: politics emerges (or should) – the author says – from the web-of-life (conceived of “field”, as the Urban to Lefebvre, 1973b, pp. 31-54). In turn, political action must not relate to an ecological “other” or “ground”. It *should be* ecology, it should entail, presuppose, and be aware of the symbiotic real where cannot but take place through an endless organic exchange. (Alternative) politics and transformation of environment, (alternative) politics and organic exchange, (alternative) politics and more-than-human life tend - in such a perspective – to coincide. After all – as Moore writes (2015, p. 128) - “human action is always in, and dialectically connected to, nature as a whole - that is, human action is not purely human at all. It is, rather, combined with the rest of nature”.

Secondly, and consequently, to conceive of the *oikeios* as “historical linchpin” seems – again – to involve an urban imagination, an operative ecology (*oikos-logos*) constantly at the trial of environment. One oriented to the co-production of cooperation through the web of life. Such a “mosaic” is – in fact – said to be “shaped and re-shaped” *with-in* the latter. But, how that common, endless work can be done? What would it mean to pass from “humanity-*on*-nature” to “humanity-*through*-nature” as far as historical, post-capitalist practice is concerned? Beyond capitalism, if ever, there still be - and cannot but be this way – transformation in the web-of-life. Precisely since “human action is always in, and dialectically connected to, nature as a whole - that is, human action is not purely human at all. It is, rather, combined with the rest of nature” (Moore, 2015, p. 128). The latter, with its material turbulence and creativity will not stop or finish with capitalism, the author argue. However, a post capitalist world-praxis *through* nature involves considering how non-human natures act. To that regard, Moore is sharp: “if nature is a historical protagonist, its actions can be properly understood only after getting out of the Cartesian binary scheme” (2015, p. 127), i.e., through the *oikeios* as a concrete abstraction which *breaks and acts against* the capitalistic fiction of Nature and Society. The author leaves a series of open questions: how does climate and extra-human natures act? “Are the 'acting' of human and extra-human nature ontologically independent of each other or are they interdependent? Does climate

'have' a mode of action in the same way that classes or empires 'make' history?" (Ibid., p. 127). Climate change is, in fact, a good example (Ibid., p. 128) of a planetary transformation vector where such questions must be urgently asked and – as far as possible – answered.

In that scenario, as far as us humans are concerned, *metabolism* is – to Moore – the crucial, operative concept (2015, p. 132):

“The decisive concept is that one of *creation-of-environment* [emphasis added]. Nature can neither be saved nor destroyed; it can only be transformed. In this sense, *oikeios* represents a radical elaboration of the dialectical logic immanent in Marx's concept of metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*) (1994 I, especially Foster, 2000). *Stoffwechsel* means 'a metabolism of nature [...] in which neither society nor nature can be stabilized by the fixity implied by their ideological separation' (Smith, 2006a, XIV). In this dialectical elaboration, species and environments, at the same time, will create and destroy each other, always and continuously. All life creates environments. All environments create life”.

What one might call “Moore’s *alter-urbanism*” is here deployed. Firstly, nature “can only be transformed”, not “reached”. It escapes. At a first (ontological) glance, it is said to act as such, as hyper-object. It remains a totality which exceeds measure and complete rational control. It is the tragical context of the context (Brenner, Schmidt, 2015) through which “all life” develops through by means of environmental creation. Therefore, the post-capitalist *world-praxis* which has the *oikeios* as operative matrix *through which* to inscribe social practice, geographically, economically, and politically, grounds on such a productive moulding. The former does not preserve, nor destroy “nature”. Contrary – with Lefebvre (2016 [1965], p. 316) – “the site of a *plasticity* without assignable limits” discloses. One where the ontological distance of the non-human is “reached” – i.e., inhabited – through practical *approximation*.

If metabolism in analysis showed why and how Society and Nature have been separated, it now opens to, and is employed for, referring to the material production of environments in practice beyond that separation. At stake, indeed, there is “creation-of-environments” (not of *other natures*). Ones which are composed of and includes not only fields and forests, but also: “houses, factories, office towers, airports, and all sorts of built environments, rural and urban” (Moore, 2015, p. 133). In other terms: Moore is taking seriously all the dialectical consequences involved

in conceiving of every product of human activity as a metabolism. As the oikeios overcame “nature-as-external” in analysis, now the latter does not re-appear in practice. Here, the “organic exchange” passes from “disclosing” an obscured reality, to ground the world-praxis beyond that alienation. The point is crucial. Indeed, the author does not fall in the representational trap. He does not offer another *ideological project of Nature*, another fixed or fixable “it”. Rather, his claim is about crossing the threshold of techniques and *living environmental production*: not on it, nor outside, but through, as endless, creative, organic exchange.

On the one hand, first consequence is that opposing capitalism would not be about “preserving” or “saving” the planet, neither would be about “destroy” it. *Better, it is a matter of creating a new metabolism* (see Moore, 2017b), *of producing new environments in the web of life*. This level of totality is pivotal. Indeed – always remaining in the above-mentioned passage – Moore is looking from the perspective of humanity-in-nature. There are no traces of new separations or invention - by means of ideological representations - of “*new Nature(s)*”. Environments are to be created – not ideology, and hence its territorialized project (Tafuri, 1973). *Metabolism* – as Moore uses it – appears the productive, practical terrain where, by crossing the threshold of techniques, such traps can finally be overcome. The potential appears of a planetary oeuvre made through the web-of-life. One composed of more-than-human infrastructures which may support and reproduce creative, cooperative, metabolic life-in-the-oikeios. One organized through such a concrete abstraction, which is both a turbulent materiality and works as a matrix for thinking of social life, of her re-appropriated plenitude, without re-entering back the capitalist world-ecology.

On the other hand, second and correlated consequence is that those new environments have to retain, to embed, to fix, to historically and spatially inscribe something beyond “Society and Nature”. Therefore, to me, Moore’s argument involves – stronger than Morton – a new productive, *urban logos*. One able in allying with exceeding non-human natures, without re-introducing the class-measure externality through which the “ecological surplus” was accumulated. In other terms: to Moore, the acknowledgment of the oikeios – or symbiotic real (in Morton’s terms) – in analysis and its historical emergence (as climate change) in practice seem to need projects and a subjective Bildung up to its novelty. “It” needs techniques and political imagination able to think-within its turbulence, distance, and creativity to *infrastructurally approximate* it and pass through capitalism and exiting beyond.

Might the *metabolic life of the multitude* be the perspective (and the collective subject) from where such a *constellative* world-praxis⁴⁹ and common oeuvre can be imagined? Of course, in order that to happen, decisive acts of political initiative and re-appropriations are needed.

After all, metabolism has proven to be a productive concept that can update the Lefebvrian "approximation". At the time of climate change, the former can come to terms with the ontological tragedy that (according to Morton) hyper-objects reveal and - at once - with the opening of a post-capitalist horizon. So, it seems a good operative category to continue envisioning radical democracy during climate change. Indeed, it preserves the inaccessibility, the *opacity* (Glissant, 2007) of the non-human (the latter can only be transformed, neither destroyed nor preserved) and works with-in the *oikeios* matrix. Which, in turn - according to Moore - seems to play the unifying role of "field", as the Lefebvrian urban did, without falling in the "methodological citysm" (Angelo, Wachsmuth, 2015) trap. There, non-human matters as material excess, but nonetheless should be approximated to both face such an ontological tragedy and – at once - pass beyond capitalism. In the *oikeios* - in fact – the effort is to be made for uniting operationally what escapes, for building infrastructure of cooperation in the web of life. Therefore, the former may become

⁴⁹In the *Dialectics* Horkheimer and Adorno (2010 [1948]) show that Enlightenment operated as a regime of equivalence. The infinitely distant, the magical, the unspeakable was – they argue - ever more closely grasped by the transcendental legislating subject. This way, the latter saw himself again in the former. There, he properly (re)knew not the object, but his own traces that he had left before surreptitiously removing himself. Italian Einaudi's 2010 edition includes a long essay by Carlo Galli as introduction. *Dialectics* is - for the Italian philosopher - "a critical theory of disintegrated reality" (Galli, 2010, p. VIII), an attempt of self-critique done by reason itself (p. XXXV), i.e. an effort of laying bare the secret complicity of myth and Enlightenment, but without opening up to barbaric regress, nor to the inevitability of domination, but rather to its non-necessity in virtue of the opacity of reality (p. XXX). The Dialectic's horizon is rather - again with Galli (Ibid.) - "the reconciliation of the subject with nature". The Enlightenment did not arrive here. Rather than reiterating its mythical horror for the myth (Ibid., p. 36), *Dialectics* is hedonistic (Galli, p. XIX), "it proposes to save instincts from their sublimation, to rehabilitate the material concreteness of pleasure" (Ibid.). Facing such panic sublimated into mathematization (Ibid., p.32), the asymptote to all knowing and understanding, *Dialectics* "takes upon itself to save reason in general from itself as well, and suffers the constraint of being a thought that, like the great art of the 20th century, must accept being, in addition to being open to totality, at the same time also incomplete and tragic not out of irrationalism but in order to remain true to itself" (Galli, 2010, p. XXXIV). *Dialectics*, Galli continues (Ibid., p. XIX), does not "oppose the necessity of *ratio* to its impossibility, as is mostly the case in 'negative thought'. Rather, it recognizes as *ambivalence* the contradiction of reason, i.e. its being *ergreifrein*, the subject's grip on the object. The jump, the gap, the positive dimension of this nature would consist for the philosopher in not thinking then of reason as mediation but as *constellation*, as solidarity, non-hostile proximity.

the terrain where environmental creation (i.e., the production of infrastructures for cooperation in the web of life) and post capitalist politics tends to coincide.

Hence, for the moment at least, another element of answer can be added to the guiding research question: "how to bring the 'urban revolution' concept back to its revolutionary origins amid the Planetary Flood?". And it is: for envisioning anew Urban Society during climate change, the former might be organized as *metabolic life* through the *oikeios*. As a productive approximation in/of hyper-objects, being traversed and co-produced by their excess: "all life creates environments. All environments create life" (Moore, 2015, p. 132). *The becoming-world of philosophy in times of climate change should consist of such an infrastructural making, of similar kinships to be built.*

I suggest closing here the process of updating for entering – in Chapter 3 - the last theoretical step about "reassembly".

Conclusions.

In previous chapter, I showed how envisioning planetary urbanization has been – to Lefebvre – a matter of reappropriating and socializing (time)space-production praxis. Thus, the urban-political project of the multitude (Negri, Hardt, 2000, 2004, 2010; Negri, 2008) has been offered as a preliminary way for updating the French philosopher's proposal.

Instead, throughout this Chapter 2, I suggested and discussed Morton's (hyper)object-oriented ontology and Moore's world-ecology for filling the previous formulation's ecological gap. Indeed, on the one hand, the English philosopher takes seriously non-humans' distance-proximity and their un-predictable, turbulent materiality. Moreover, in so doing, he seems getting closer to some Lefebvrian insights exposed in *Metaphilosophy* (2016, [1965]). On the other hand, the American environmental historian offers a productive perspective (the practice of metabolism) through which – while taking care for the *oikos*' exceeding materiality – to think and move beyond capitalism. The terrain of *creation-of-environment* has in fact appeared the open, creative, and endless horizon (and field) where a new *urban logos* might finally be envisioned without considering nature as something which simply escapes (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 72). Rather, the common

world that the French philosopher calls *urban* - where culture, desire, and nature reunite and blend, as in rural eras! (1973b, p. 195) – may there emerge as a collective, more-than-human oeuvre. One where non-humans matter. Where they act *withdrawing* (even though open questions remains in that regards) and we cannot but infrastructurally approximate them.

Therefore, the process of *figuring* planetary urbanization under climate change – which means to debate *nowadays* the former before a horizon of emancipation – has reached a second stage.

How the intelligence of the multitude, her *logos*, could be up to that new oeuvre? Might her *metabolic life* be the way through which to imagine the urban revolution's meta-philosophical practice at the trial of climate change? Which *urban-political project* could orient such a metabolic life in decision-making, in crossing the threshold of techniques and in socializing the creation-of-environment?

In order to start answering, the last step of figuration has to start. Namely, to finally reassemble the urban revolution concept, a new *figure* should be offered for grasping and orienting that space productive, urban-political, metabolic logos. For this purpose, in the next chapter I propose the Archipelago (specifically, Cacciari's conception of it) as a possible *project* for thinking of and producing *infrastructures in the web of life*. Its logos – indeed – makes constellations not equations. As I will show, it is oriented to thinking-producing the effort of the Common and care despite the distance: *metabolic life in the ontological thrownness*. At the time of Planetary Flood, the Archipelago shows the immanent possibility of a collective oeuvre, of a *world-architecture* mutually shaped by the liberated human and non-human multitudes (Moore, 2015, p. 137) through their reciprocal excess and *stellar friendship* (see next chapter). There, the turbulent interconnection and interdependence of human and non-human exoduses may find a common path towards a common world. No more “*pars social pars natural*”, it should be grounded on the effort of a true, more-than-human cooperation for the plenitude of life.

“[There is] a primordial unity of the urban form and of its content, of the philosophical form and of its meaning [...] The logos of the Greek city cannot be separated from the philosophical one. The work of the city continues and concentrates in the work of philosophers, which gathers opinions, views, and different works, to reflect them in a simultaneity. Then, it brings them together in a totality: the urban places of the cosmos, times, and rhythms of the city in those of the world (and inversely)” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 42, trans mine).

Chapter 3

The Archipelago

Introduction

According to Assennato (2018), Magnusson (2011), Amin, Thrift (2017) and many others the (planetary) metropolis is a plane of immanence which does not provide for outsides. All this research has developed – since the very beginning – under such a preliminary assumption. As planetary urbanization debaters have widely shown (Brenner, 2014) – it is not about believing that “the city” is everywhere. On the contrary and more simply, it is nowhere. It has disappeared by dragging with her all the related putative externals. The urban society is the emerging hyper-object (Morton, 2018) after that shipwreck. It is a concrete-abstraction (Lefebvre, 1973, 2014). Moreover, it holds and reproduce, at once, exploitation and freedom, death and good life in common as opposite potentials embedded in its very morphology. To put it with Amin and Thrift words (2017, pp. 58-59):

“cities are viscous; that is, *it is impossible to get away* from the field of concurrences they generate. Cities stick to us: like it or not, we are a part of them. Then they are nonlocal in the sense that everything existing in them has ties to other locations; they are the embodiment of action at a distance and, at the same time, hyperconnected so that they cannot easily be separated into distinct but interacting parts or into the general and the particular – everything overflows, everything is wrapped in something else, *everything that exists always coexists*” (emphasis added).

Indeed, many other studies have shown that the network (Moore, 2015, 2017; Morton, 2012, 2018; Haraway, 2019) of human and non-human life on the planet is all together captured through metabolisms that do not involve outsides.

Moreover, they extend from the air (Vegetti, 2017) to large mining areas (Arboleda, 2020) via consumption centres (Brenner, Schmidt, 2015; Brenner and Katsikis, 2020) and extended hinterlands (Keil, 2017) through intertwining logistical (Grappi, 2016; Khanna, 2016), connecting, communicating, and transporting infrastructures that - in turn - densely traverse the sea (Campling, Colas, 2016; Couling, Hein, 2020; Alimahomed-Wilson and Reese, 2020) and rely on port hubs (Hein, 2011). That is – to quote Cuppini’s (2017) very thoughtful image – the *planetary construction site* we are inhabiting. Beside those insights, in recent years the field of Ocean Studies has emerged. In particular, Steinberg’s (2000, 2011, 2013) and Steinberg and Peters’ (2015, 2019) arguments are worth of attention. Indeed, the authors argue that the Sea is not a metaphor, but a multi-temporal turbulent materiality which is always given in excess. Moreover, they add, it matters as such – as such an Hypersea - also in its more-than-wet states (poetry, law, imagery etc). In addition, that *mattering* involves and cannot but entails politics up to the task.

In light of those debates, first two chapters of the research have disassembled and updated the “urban revolution” concept. 50 years after its first formulations, major novelties to be faced are two: the Imperial stage of capitalism, and the ecological crisis. Then, aim of this section is to *reassemble* Lefebvre’s proposal, in the wake of Keil’s (2018) claim about debating planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation. Namely, I now explore the possibility of using a new figure for pointing to, envisioning and fight for the Urban Society (the telos of the urban revolution). As suggested in the general Introduction, *Planetary Flood* is the name I advance for fixing the historical encounter between currently existing planetary urbanization, rising sea levels, the growing in rain intensity and flood risks. It is an analytical strategy for putting the theoretical advancements at the *trial of environment*, to let them react within the historical materiality of climate change. On the one hand, the Planetary Flood reveals the ubiquitous wetness (da Cunha, 2018a, 2018b) our urbanized life lays within. It is immanent in the planetary metropolis. On the other, it puts the Hypersea on the agenda of radical urban democracy.

Hence, guiding questions of the chapter are: which figure could replace the lefebvrian Urban Society for seeing, taking care for and realize the immanent, emancipatory potential the Planetary Flood is in the grip of? Which virtuality, which *theoretical hypothesis* may orientate, nowadays, the metabolic life of the multitude beyond capitalism and the State? Which project could support her urban-political, creative practice at the trial of climate change and its turbulent materiality?

Will the intelligence of the multitude be able to take charge of the latter and go beyond capitalism and the State?

The Archipelago (Cacciari, 2017, [1997]) is the *figure* I offer for setting sails towards and navigate those (epochal) questions. It stands for a *place* where the turbulent materiality of both the ocean and the urban are co-essential and – at once – co-essential for the Common to be realized and built.

3.1 - The Archipelago is not a metaphor.

L'Archipelago is an essay written by Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari in 1997, three years after *Geofilosofia dell'Europa* (1994). The considered edition has been published in 2017, 20 years after the first one. Compared to the latter, the new volume adds four small chapters (*Addenda*) - which supplement the original text without transforming its conclusions - and a foreword (*Avvertenza alla nuova edizione*). This section serves the author to place the work in the changed European political context and to see the limits of his proposal. In the last 90's, he writes (2017, pp. 11-12), the idea of the Archipelago could have been useful to point to the form of a new political Order. It would have meant to reach the authentic etymology of *logos*, which is - for Cacciari – about the “effort to gather and care for those who are separate” (Ibid., p. 11). But – 20 years after – that suggestion seems to the author completely ineffectual. To him, it is now a matter of enduring and understanding its vanishing. Nevertheless, he writes (Ibid., p. 12): “if nowhere do we see working traces of that idea today [2017], that does not imply that it has simply cracked”. In our *language*, Cacciari says (Ibid.), it is still alive.

Through the original reading I am going to offer, the actuality and possibility of that idea is repropose. To me, it can be reborn as *figure* for debating the *planetary flood* before a horizon of emancipation. Namely: as a project for realizing the *absolute democracy* of the multitude - or “planetary commune” - at the time of rising sea levels and the growing in flooding events. In my opinion, Cacciari’s proposal has such a potential, but it must be unleashed. In order that to happen, I read and discuss its crucial arguments through the lens prepared in Chapter one, two and in light of Steinberg’s (2001, 2011, 2013) and Steinberg and Peters’ (2015, 2017) arguments about the ocean. Nevertheless, a preliminary consideration is needed, which more precisely allows the analytical move I propose.

L'Arcipelago is not “a” geo-philosophy⁵⁰. It is about that *place* where philosophy as geo-philosophy was born: the Aegean archipelago. Its thinking develops from the latter’s *climate* and geographical configuration. Indeed, as the author explicitly writes (2017, p. 13), it takes up and develops - especially in the first chapter - the crucial issues of *Geofilosofia dell’Europa*. There (1994) a philosophical and political “anamnesis” (1994, p. 17) is offered of the idea of Europe and its logos. Even though the geographical element was already pivotal in *Geofilosofia*, Cacciari deemed it necessary to devote a whole book to that environmental condition. Moreover, the first chapter of *L’Arcipelago* is entitled exactly *L’Arcipelago* and strongly focuses on its spatial characteristics. Therefore, to him they deeply mattered, they concerned the original spatial trial through which

⁵⁰ The fourth chapter of the last book written together by Deleuze and Guattari in 1991 – *Che cos’è la filosofia?* (2002) - is entitled *Geophilosophy*. It serves as the minting of the word (Bonesio, 2006). To them “thinking is neither a thread stretched between a subject and an object, nor a revolution of one around the other. Rather, thinking is realised in the relationship between territory and land (p. 100). According to the authors, land is “not one element among others: [but] brings all elements together in a single grasp” (Ibid.). Therefore, that cogent connection wherein philosophy can be born takes place through an endless and two-way exchange: the land is de-territorialised and de-territorialising. Deleuze and Guattari’s proposal hinges on this relationship between place and the forces which it is moved by (the state, the city, geological events, the thought): philosophy is geo-philosophy because it depends on, insists on, is produced through and within such a both localised and de-territorialised, spatial-based immanence. This way (2002, p. 111, emphasis added) “geography... wrests history from the cult of necessity to assert the irreducibility of contingency. It wrests it from the cult of origins to assert the power of an ‘environment’ (what philosophy finds with the Greeks, Nietzsche said, is not an origin, but a climate, an environment, an atmosphere: the philosopher ceases to be a comet)”. Thus, geo-philosophy is when and what takes care for the “power of an environment”. That is why – for the Greeks, which invented philosophy as geo-philosophy - the Aegean Sea with its non-metaphoric archipelagic set of de-territorialised cities (from the 5th century BC onwards) has been essential. Indeed, those poleis were united in an extended “bath of immanence” (2002, p. 103) by the sea and their spirit of association, sociability, friendship, and rivalry. In Chapter 2 (2002, pp. 44-45), authors write: “concepts are like multiple waves that rise and fall; but the plane of immanence is the single wave that envelops and unfolds them. [...] The concepts are the *archipelago* or skeleton, a spine rather than a skull, while the plane [of immanence] is the respiration that bathes these islands” (emphasis added). Such an archipelagic nature of thinking is rooted in the real Aegean archipelago. The “bath of immanence” and bathing waves of concepts are as well. The archipelago and the Archipelago appear to be more-than-materially entangled. The sea – in Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of philosophy - matters, its currents make philosophy and politics breath. Indeed, that has been the Salamina’s miracle (2002, p. 103), when – with the Delian League (478 b.c.) – Greeks re-territorialised at sea. Deleuze resorts to the same more-than-wet idea of the archipelago in *Critica e Clinica* (1996) for discussing Melville’s pragmatism. Thus, Bonesio (2006, p. 4637) is only partially right in saying that - for Deleuze and Guattari - geo-philosophy means “to bring the land to the thought” (IT: *portare la terra al pensiero*). On the one hand, they argue that the thinking happens *through the relation* between land and territory. On the other, they add that it is a climate to be brought to the thought, not a telluric matter. A more spiritualistic and telluric-oriented conception of geo-philosophy is offered by Italian philosopher Caterina Resta (1996, 1999, 2002, 2022). See also Deleuze, Guattari (1994); Bonta, Protevi (2004) and Goda (2018).

philosophy developed, the *wetness* where “the primordial unity of the urban form, and its content, the philosophical form” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 42) laid. In that, Cacciari follows Deleuze and Guattari (2002, see note above). The point is crucial since it is exactly by virtue of such geo-philosophical nature of *L’Arcipelago* that I ventured to read it with the lens I prepared. Indeed – as deeply shown – they all ground on the proximity (and tendential coincidence) between thinking and space production (*urban, metabolic practice*), between politics and architecture. With Cacciari’s words, one can say that they all offer a “common foundation of thinking and praxis” (1994, p. 16) as far as urban-political transformation and ecology are concerned. Thus, I advance them as productive tools for exploring *L’Arcipelago*, the very first, initial room of the Logos-metropolis. Just for these reasons, the book seems a good starting point to let “philosophy take [again] charge of the issue of the city”⁵¹ (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 118), but amid the Planetary Flood.

Therefore, the reading I suggest is developed through literatures that only at first glance seem distant from Cacciari’s essay. Rather, by navigating its pages and reasonings, they gradually find a convergence. They rediscover the “power of its environment” – as Deleuze and Guattari (2002, p. 111) say precisely about the Aegean archipelago where philosophy as geo-philosophy was born. In fact, the nature which – to Lefebvre – faded enters there again and productively in the urban logos. The turbulent materiality of the ocean and the urbanistic life of the multitude find out in the Archipelago an unexpected sisterhood, an unprecedented world-oikos-logos (world-ecology). The intelligence and the infrastructure of the Archipelago will finally appear as a possible *figure* – i.e., project – for envisioning the Urban Society (a Common oeuvre) amid the Planetary Flood. To that extent, I offer it (see also the second part of this research) as an instrument for debating currently existing planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation.

Finally, as the name might suggest, I do not claim for a renovated, wet, State-based ratio by means of which islands (out of metaphor) will replace cities or up-scaled telluric territorial units. Contrary, I argue that concretely turbulent, materially wet movements of water which we are globally facing (together with the geo-physical consequences they have) may be an opportunity to think stronger of urban liberatory politics *beyond the State* (and capitalism). Namely, I offer the hypothesis that the Planetary flood might be the chance *to work at, struggle for and build* the common oeuvre Lefebvre talked about. One where *all the political is absorbed in and coincide with the endless re-creation of the cooperative overall*

⁵¹ As it did, according to the author (Ibid., p. 118-120), in Plato’s *Atlantis* urban myth.

infrastructure. Where – with the French philosopher’s words (in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206) - one “tend[s] to overcome the contradiction between the work [œuvre] and the product: [...] where it will be a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called art”. In such a *place* beyond the State, urban democracy develops through and consists of the production of infrastructures. They describe a *morphology* by means of which the multiple is urban-politically saved, singularities pop up, meet themselves, circulate and reproduce that very common artificial environment. In the Archipelago, water’s currents materially contribute to such acts of creation. The latter are stirred by and productively approximate the former. The *field* they transform and lay within is the *web of life* and not telluric-based forms of identity and politics. The Sea should roar – wetly and more-than-wetly - in that archi-polis or planetary commune.

Thus, I take seriously the geo-philosophical roots of *L’Arcipelago* (Cacciari, 2017 [1997]) to envision the urban-political infrastructure of the Archipelago (i.e., urban society amid Planetary Flood). I have imagined the former as a *polis* where I entered as a stranger (with all my unreducible distance), but where to find a common *logos* to let us communicate. By navigating its routes, listening to its voices, and observing the space-productive life of its human and non-human inhabitants, I let my *language* and theoretical perspectives develop a conversation with them. Nevertheless, I have remained very close to text and its movements. Lateral references are given only where needed, in order not to exit interpretation and setting sail towards invention. Which, anyway and to be honest – according to Cacciari – would be the very essence of the Archipelago: the forbidden (*nefas*) navigation.

What if rising sea levels were the opportunity and the historical momentum for the currents of the multitude to realize the Archipelago?

Answering is up to social practice. With my reading, I hope to only breathe a bit life back into the Archipelago.

3.2 - The truth of the sea: names which build, bridges which fade.

The journey starts with an etymological enquiry upon the names of the sea. It is supported by references to two major works: Semerano's *Le Origini della cultura europea* (1984) and Matvejevic's *Mediterraneo. Un nuovo breviario* (2020 [1991]). The first small paragraph contains in a nutshell the core themes of the essay. Indeed, the etymological perspective are crucial for grasping the role the sea and the polis have in shaping the Archipelago as a material context and a political vision. Together, they are the main characters of the *tragedy* Cacciari discusses.

For the Greeks – the Italian philosopher begins – the sea was firstly *Thàlassa*, a feminine person name (2017, p. 15). It is the most usual since it is the maternal one. To them, it represents “the womb where they grew up”. Instead, *Pelagos* stands for the endless immensity of the high sea. It ascribes to the latter the characteristics of “a desert” which “protects and threatens us” (Ibid.). *Pelagos* is limitless and serves as strong counterpoint to our stuttering. It is a “difficult, bitter and restless road”, it is – at once – the “movement and the taste of the sea, its wave which soaks us” (p. 16). But, when a path there can be found out, its name becomes – Cacciari says – *Pontos* (ibid.). Therefore, it can also be such a “ventured bridge”. Instead, *mare* – the Italian for “sea” – is a word which the Greeks ignored. The author argues that it probably comes from the Sanskrit *maru* – which means the “infecund desert” (ibid.) – or from the Akkadian *marru* or the Hebrew *mar* which both refers to the “brackish taste” of the sea.

Then, Cacciari's attention falls on two adjectives the Greeks used for referring to the sea: *atrygetos* and *polyphloisbos*. The first one points to the fact that it is not arable, nor harvestable (*tryge* is the harvest). The second one stands for the crowd of voices which “conspire in naming it without ever exhausting its meaning” (Ibid., p. 17). The two – the Italian philosopher writes – are not contradictory since the former does not exclude “the intelligence of the sea”, nor refers to absolute aridity. Rather, it blends with *atrytos* which stands for the “tireless” movement of waters. Indeed, those adjectives seem to contribute to define the same idea of the sea. One which postulates that its intelligence consists precisely of that restless movement. The latter only enables the congeries of voices, their continuous “interplay of echoes and references, of elective affinities, correspondences and distances” (p.17). In fact, as Cacciari writes in the *Avvertenza* (p. 11), the figure “Archipelago” is a way for grasping the deep etymology of *logos*. To the author, it consists of “[the] effort to collect and cherish those who are distinct, to understand how the same intrinsic movement of each one can desire such a collection and *common care*” (emphasis added). That is why the two aforementioned adjectives are needed together for describing the *logos*-generating action of the sea. Moreover, it is in this

light that the far-reaching force of the final etymology can be grasped (Ibid., p. 18, trans mine):

“This is not a fruitless Sea first and foremost because it is *rich in islands*. Even when it appears in all its immensity, the trust does not fail that a path is there, leading to one of them. From the Sea neither vine nor olive tree is born, but the islands, yes, that give them root. This Sea is not, therefore, abstractly separated from the Earth. Here the elements recall each other, they have nostalgia for each other. And the Sea par excellence, the *archi-pélagos*, the *truth* of the Sea, in a certain sense, will then manifest itself there where it is the place of relationship, of dialogue, of confrontation between the multiple islands that inhabit it: they all are - at once - distinguished and intertwined by the Sea; they all are - at once - nourished by and ventured at the Sea”. (emphasis in original)

The passage defines the logos-Archipelago. Crucial knots seem to be three: the nexus between trust and immensity; that one between roots and the calling each other back of Land and Sea; finally, the fact that not *pontos*, but rather *pelagos* is the name which leads to its truth.

Indeed, the moment or dimension of the sea which is pivotal in making the Archipelago is that one of immensity, of the limitless strength of waters. A path there can be found out, the latter can become *pontos*, but such bridge always remains open, temporary, exposed to the movement by virtue of the sea's restless movement. It is *archi-pelagos*, not *archi-pontos*. Thus, water's and currents' turbulent materiality matter as such (Steinberg, 2011, 2013; Steinberg and Peters, 2015; Peters and Steinberg, 2019). It is crucial for materially fostering the logos-generating movement. Its hyper-objectuality (Morton, 2018) as well: the sea can become *pontos*, measure, but only for letting differences encounter. That bridge never fixes a unity, nor such an illusion should be rationally pursued (see below). The sea-*pelagos* is given in excess, it never stops moving (Steinberg, 2000, p. 210) and always partially *withdraw*: this way the Archipelago may appear. Moreover, that is why nostalgia is what distinguishes the different islands according to Cacciari. The sea is described as something which never become a homogenizing bridge. Rather, it connects its own multiplicity by venturing the islands one toward the other. They are intertwined but in their irreducible difference. Movement towards and nostalgia for the Other make them different through a mixture of land and sea, of roots (which are possible only on land, the sea is *atrygetos*) and *pelagos* (a restless, not telluric matter). Therefore, relation, *dia-logos* (dialogue) and

confrontation seem to be possible by means of singularities which are never satisfied with themselves. The *pelagos* – not the *pontos* - makes always alive such a common desire of meeting the other by venturing the islands (or poleis, see below) it hosts in its embrace one toward the other.

Nevertheless, all that happens under the banner of “risk” and “effort”. Indeed, Cacciari uses a lot these words for describing such a becoming-with of opposing forces. Those terms are often accompanied by the adjective “thankless” (lat., *improbis*, 2017, p. 34 and elsewhere) and together they characterize the difficulty of a common hosting in the difference. But, before entering the actual discussion about the Archipelago, a last dimension of Cacciari’s sea must be pointed out. It has – the philosopher says – a “direction”, it “flows as a vast river” (p. 19). That is why one of its names – *pelagos* – echoes the Ebrew *peleg* and the Akkadian *palgu* which both means “river”. Indeed, the sea proceeds from the Archipelago towards the sunset, its currents “drag and transform” towards “no-place” (Ibid.)⁵². As one can see, such a conception of the sea continues in echoing Steinberg’s and Peter’s argument about the turbulent, exceeding, matt materiality of waters. Moreover – with Morton (2018) – the sea appears in Cacciari as a hyper-object which shadow side always fades towards an immeasurable distance.

Nevertheless, it is precisely by virtue of that impossible-to-be-grasped immensity that the Archipelago may take place. To put it differently – and that is what, to me, is worth to notice: only if the sea is recognized, inhabited, and approached in its pelagic dimension, in its abyssal and ultimately inaccessible ontology the Archipelago can be envisioned. Indeed, on the one hand, Cacciari’s argument assumes the hyper-objectuality of the sea. Namely: he develops an ontology of the ocean close to that one proposed by Steinberg *et alia*. But – on the other – the Hypersea and water-thinking seem to find (in the Archipelago) a *project*. A possible direction to be chosen, I mean, starts appearing of that multi-temporal, non-telluric and constellative thought which the sea inspires. Such *telos* – according to the Italina philosopher - is a common abode (pp. 20-21, trans mine):

⁵² In the first *Addenda* (2017, pp. 171-175) – which is added at this point of the main text – Cacciari explains that such “direction” entails a tragic condition. Namely: it cannot be mediated once and for all by means of telluric deals. Contrary, only “armistices” (Ibid.) are possible. The Air neither will be the place of the synthesis. It as well “will have to come to terms with land and sea....to know how to mix and mingle with the earthy, dark energy of the root and the swirling colors, the crashing, the roaring of the sea element” (Ibid. p. 175). The Archipelago, author concludes (Ibid.), is where powers never stop in “contaminate” themselves.

“Is there a *logos* of the many islands I encounter? Of the many voices roaring in the *Agora*? What element makes those islands an Archipelago, those voices a *polis*? Is there an ethos of the many, namely, a *common sedes* of them, where they dwell together? [...] It is not a matter of a 'method' to nullify the manifold as a mere phantom...this is, for the West, the 'forbidden way' - that of a return to the *apeiron*, to the Limit-less, which is, yes, the womb of all our *kosmoi*, of all our worlds and forms, but from which they have irreversibly *de-cided* themselves [...]. The manifold will therefore have to be 'saved,' but in order to 'save' it, it is necessary to understand and preach it.” (Emphasis in original)

Therefore, how can the *logos* appear, how can the Multiple be saved? At which climatic conditions? In Moore's (or Lefebvre's) terms, the question could sound: the co-production of which *environment* (or space) should produce the Archipelago? In fact, to Cacciari, the latter appears – firstly – more as a potential than an actuality. The *Logos* implies a “calculation” – he writes (p. 21) - and “excludes any revelatory immediacy” (ibid.). “The thing” – he continues (Ibid.) – “does not have name if not because it is seen, grasped in a glance, i.e. if not theorized”. Therefore, one can say that a kind of project-*figure* is needed. An effort of concrete-abstraction is necessary for letting the Archipelago stirring. The latter is not a destiny, but that what can be given after a theory and a *decisional practice* of “saving” the multiple. The same goes for the “common abode”: it must be chosen and built. The sea *per se* goes no-where, and the different islands without a named relation cannot know each other. Indeed, *Logos* entails “relation” between “the one and the multiple” (Ibid.) – it is dia-*logos* (dialogue). That is why such a project started to be envisioned and possible only after having taken the sea (p. 21, trans mine):

“and the idea of the Journey will be born from all the journeys in the Archipelago (in order to gather, to connect, to choose: always the sense of *logos* resonates there) [...] toward the common-to-all *Logos*, toward that unity which the manifold shows, yes, but as lost, which it reveals yes, but in its absence.”

As one can see, the sea matters as such. It is the moving matter which allowed the multiple to be seen. It is crucial for the rescue project of a common abode. Moreover, again, the *logos* as world-praxis appears to be produced sailing and saving the differences by “sunsetting from every fixed identity” (Ibid., p. 162). Nevertheless, that journey has not an end, the arrival is not a localised unity or

possible homogenization. The One is impossible, it is absent. What is to be done, instead, is the effort of connection. According to Cacciari, the common logos exists – only - *thorough* such a *ponos*, *as* such a *ponos* (Ibid., p. 57).

Thus, at this level of reasoning, the sea remains out of metaphor (Steinberg, 2011, 2013). It is a turbulent materiality made of water and currents; it can become *pontos* (a path towards the other) but only by virtue of its restless movement. Currents make the logos-generating journey possible; they connect the “logoi” (islands, poleis), the singularities (p. 23) of the Archipelago precisely because they are *atrygetos* – not harvestable. To take roots is impossible on the sea, and it is precisely thanks to that if a common path can be at stake. Indeed, the intelligence of the Archipelago consists of – firstly - “dividing and separating” (p. 21) and – consequently - in making materially possible the project of Logos, its effort (*ponos*, p. 21) of connection and mutual knowledge among those who are different. Such an intelligence cannot but recall that one of the *Multitude* (Negri, Hardt, 2000, 2004, 2010, 2018). In fact, as shown in Chapter One, the latter is exactly about conserving differences but in a shared immanent *telos*: the Common. As Negri and Hardt write (2004, p. 123) “by singularity we mean social subjects whose differences cannot be reduced to any identity: they are differences that remain different ... [not] absorbed into the indifference of the whole”. Moreover, for the authors, the multitude shares a “common substance” (p. 151). Elsewhere (p. 166) – giving some elements for “figuring the multitude” – they write: “languages combine and interact to form not a unified *koinè*, but a common power of communication and cooperation between a multitude of singularities”. Therefore, the relation between (the multitude of) singularities and their common substance (the absolute democracy she is in potency of) seems to find in the Archipelago a pertinent figure.

Let us look at what Cacciari argues in a very clear passage (2017, p. 23):

“The space of the Archipelago is by its very nature intolerant of subordination and hierarchical succession; no island constitutes its firm axis, capable of structuring its whole in the form of a *State*. In the mobile and changing space of coordination and cohabitation - which is also the meaning of *polemos!* - singularities of the Archipelago belong to each other because none brings in herself its own Centre, *because the Centre is actually only that impetus, which compels each one to 'transcend herself'* [emphasis added] by sailing toward the other and all toward the absent Homeland”.

And a bit after (p. 24):

“The European Archipelago exists by virtue of such twofold danger: to solve itself into a hierarchically ordered space, or to dissolve into ‘idiot’, inhospitable individualities which are incapable of seeking and recalling each other, into parts that have nothing more *to divvy up*. Instead, in the Archipelago truly *autonomous* cities live in perpetual navigation *towards/against* the others by means of inseparable distinction”.

The absence of a centre, the movement beyond the State, the coordination and co-habitation in a mobile space, and finally the becoming-other as the very essence – the *common impetus* - of such a condition: all these are core themes of Negri and Hardt’s argument around the Multitude and the Common, around the project of the former to take completely back the latter (see chapter one). Moreover, what Cacciari says about “idiot individualities” echoes the crucial distinction between the common and the community advanced by the two political philosophers. Indeed, as they write (2004, p. 238-239) “the common is based on communication between singularities [...] While the individual is engulfed in the viscous substance of the community, singularities lose nothing in the common, but rather express themselves freely there”. Nevertheless, Cacciari adds a crucial dimension: the sea through which *singularities navigate*. In other terms, to him, not only the non-human element of roaring water matters. Rather, it is crucial for the Common world-praxis to take place and not “to solve itself into a hierarchically ordered space, or to dissolve into ‘idiot’, inhospitable individualities” (above). Here, it is worth to remember how Negri and Hardt define the multitude. To them (2004, p. 224), ontologically, her flesh “is pure power, a life force without any particular form, a social being constantly aimed at realizing the *plenitude of life* [emphasis added]”. It is “an elemental energy that continuously expands social being and produces in excess with respect to any normal measure of value. No matter how hard we try to harness them, the wind, the seas, and the earth will always escape our grasp” (Ibid.). Therefore, such more-than-human exceeding and restless movement which composes the multitude seems to find in the Archipelago’s organic exchange its own abode. Roaring waters stimulate there her navigation and exodus, which telos – Hardt and Negri write (2004, p. 236) – consists of realizing a “democracy rooted on free speech and life in common”. The Archipelago echoes that project, it seems to *be* that project if gained to ecology. Indeed, there, singularities and the Common represent the “possible foundation for a peaceful planetary cohabitation” (2004, p. 243) but thanks and through the turbulent materiality of water.

Nevertheless, the Italian philosopher reasoning go further. He shows *how* that more-than-wetness permeates the common logos *and* – that is ecologically crucial - its supporting infrastructures. In this regard, to me, Cacciari suggests something like an encounter – or the starting point for offering a synthesis - between what seen in previous chapters about the urbanistic life of the multitude, her urban politics, and the environmental productive ecology advanced by Moore. In *L'Arcipelago*, the effort and project of a common care entail – beyond Negri and Hardt – the turbulent materiality of water. Notwithstanding, the “democracy of the multitude” - according to the cross-reading I am offering - is not only a matter of “telluric multiplicity” plus sea. Of course, the Archipelago is *immanent* in the archipelago - the logos, Cacciari says, *assume the truth* of the Multiple (p. 22). But the former is a potentiality, not a destiny, and thus *must be chosen* (p. 22). That choice is – for Cacciari – embedded in the ship, in the forbidden navigation, and the planetary infrastructure they entail. That decision *coincides* – as I am going to show - with the very making and creation of the Archipelago in its morphological, environmental components. That is why, at the end of the chapter, I will argue that such a *socialized navigation* – together with its project – can be considered an interesting figure. One which could be help us in debating (and fight for) planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation during the planetary flood.

In fact, the *ship* becomes crucial to develop the intelligence of the Archipelago (its ecology, i.e., oikos-logos) and, mostly, its related overall infrastructure. Indeed, as for waters, that navigation neither is a metaphor in Cacciari’s argument. On the one hand, the Italian philosopher himself (2017, p. 28) is aware about the fact that the “ship” allegory has been widely used for describing cities (and politics, see for example Blumenberg, 1985). But, on the other – being *L'Arcipelago* a geo-philosophy – the former cannot but find there its material correlative. After all, to the author, the Archipelago appears precisely in such an endless circularity, a dialectics between the logos and the climate, where the two coproduce and come constantly one into the other. See for example what Cacciari writes (2017, p. 23):

“European harmony is *dia-logos* and *polemos*: a tragic dialectics. Its seas are archipelagos, its cities are archipelagos, its *topoi* are archipelagos, i.e., those places, those forms, those questions that bounce there from age to age.”

Who can say where the metaphor starts? The sea, the polis, politics, philosophy, and literature are all blended up in a more-than-wet (Peters, Steinberg, 2019) vortex. Waters are said to roar in the Agorà, but also in culture, in political issues from the Antiquity to Middle Age (Cacciari, 2017, p.24), “from classical letters to the

romance ones” (Ibid.). The intelligence of the Archipelago, the effort of gathering those how are different, grounds precisely in such an Hypersea (Steinberg, Peters, 2019) *to be sailed* – that in turn finds there a possible destination, a politics. The former might be possible by means of the latter’s “perpetually [being] beyond itself”, of its “totality that exceeds its (wet) materiality”, and “is already and always in excess” (Ibid.).

But, in order that to happen, *an urban-political, metabolic choice is needed*.

3.3 - The *nefas* navigation: planetary urbanization as ambivalence.

The “truth of the sea” – Cacciari says – appears when it is full of islands. But, if Logos can save that multiplicity, it is not sufficient in seeing the latter. The material experience of navigation, of encountering the other is needed. Even for discovering the archipelagic nature of the city itself and take seriously the currents which immanently roar in its agora (Cacciari, 2017, p. 19). The sea must be taken, its pelagic hyper-objectuality which goes towards no-place must be faced, the polis has to be materially transcended in its unity *through* the ship, through – one could say - its *shipness*. That is necessary even if such journey “breaks away from [the polis] and goes beyond its form” (p. 24)⁵³. This moment of *hybris* is co-essential to and immanent in – Cacciari writes (pp. 25-26) - the Archipelago. In the essay, excerpts from Seneca’s *Medea* are now quoted where that *nefas* is outlined as a kind of prototypical *planetary urbanization* (pp. 31-32, trans mine):

“He who first *'rate tam fragili'* [with a too much fragile boat] dared to break *'freta...perfida'* [treacherous waves] and turn his back to his land forever, was too bold (*hybris*), too *'avidus'* since...he dragged into one,

⁵³ For exposition reasons, I prefer to remain close to *L'Arcipelago*. Nevertheless, it is worth to say that Cacciari has addressed urban issues since the very beginning of his career. His first publication – *Metropolis* (1973) – contains four essays by Sombart, Endell, Scheffler and Simmel together with a long introduction by the Italian philosopher himself. Core theme is exactly the historical emergence of the metropolis, the *Großstadt*, and the philosophical problems it entails. Specifically, Cacciari faces – among others – the issue of Form. Namely, of the coincidence between function and form which gave to the city its value. More recently, he has returned on the same *problematique* in *La Città* (2004). Before present-day degrees of urbanization, the author writes (Ibid., p. 50): “the city is everywhere, so there is no more city”. In fact – he argues – “the contemporary city is the big city, the metropolis [...] every traditional *forma urbis* has been dissolved” (p. 29).

confusing them, the covenants that held the world distinctly in its elements. Starting from that gesture, a fever, a delirium grasps the world, from the voyage of that first ship: '*terminus omnis motus*', every boundary is uprooted, the ancient god Term is eradicated; cities themselves sail, and '*muros terra posuere nova*', they transfer their walls to other lands. The whole orb becomes a road, it is reduced 'to land', to a path, to a '*pervius orbis*' for the ships that 'cannot bear to pause (*stare querentes*)'".

The forbidden navigation is described as a delirium which consisted of letting the city sail. Indeed, it is presented exactly as the practical, concrete, engineering movement of "putting walls elsewhere", of eradicating the "old god Termine". Such a process appears - as one can see - as a kind of bad planetary urbanization. One which produce a homogenized Whole. The Earth is reduced "to land" because the telluric-based Nomos of the latter is extended also to waters. In turn, they become *pontos*, a path, a bridge. Fault of ships - and of the souls of their philosopher-sailors - is not to manage in standing still. Their willingness of knowledge, their inquietude and desire of "the too much" (2017, p. 34) ends up in a catastrophic avidity and bad hybris. More than the "project of the Multitude" or "for the feast of the Common", the planetary metamorphosis of the city is - at this stage - given as the planetary extension of a city⁵⁴. Waters of the *pelagos* roar in its agora only to let it

⁵⁴ The issue of the city par excellence - Utopia - is addressed in chapters 3 and 4 of *L'Arcipelago*. There, Ulisse is the main character. Referring to the reading Dante gave in the *Divina Commedia*, Cacciari firstly shows why his flight was "insane" - in-sane, without possible cure. Indeed, Ulisse's philosophical error consisted in believing that "the infinite towards which he yearns" - its sailing research, its geo-philosophical exploration and *inquisitio* - always appears to him as "*obiectum* to be grasped and *comprehendere*" (2017, p. 73). On the one hand, his shipwreck is possible in Dante - the author says - only because the Italian poet himself, in its Cristian culture, felt the danger of such a catastrophe as a possible end of its own journey. On the other - and it is what interests us the more - neither the modern idea of Utopia can redeem Ulisse at all. Even if the former would not have been possible without the forbidden navigation of the latter (p. 80), nevertheless it holds and represent all the aporias of the modern technical-scientific progress. One can better say - again - that the Archipelago lays (according to Cacciari) in the sailing towards Utopia as *ambivalence*. Firstly, for the Italian philosopher, "Utopia is that Island which invalidates the Archipelago" (p. 103). Indeed, in it, the modern technical-scientific project finds its (impossible) home. One where the Political and the Technical would find perfect conciliation (Ibid.). Utopia is - in such a vein and according to the author - the idea of reducing the globe to a smooth, homogeneous space perfectly ordinated, perfectly in state of a State. One without "the dangers of the Archipelago" (p. 104). Nevertheless, Technique fails in do that because it cannot *decide* itself from its own "tireless breaking away from the already-given" (p. 99). In turn, without such a "willingness of the beyond", the hybris of the "perfect State" would haunt the oikos. How to well navigate such a trouble without thinking it would be possible to solve its hazards? How to well navigate the double etymology of project, its need of a State and the contemporary, tireless, pelagic movement of *entwurf*, of getting-away from every *state* - i.e., the "already been"? Again, the Archipelago appears as such a logos, such effort of connection and navigation. On the one hand, it should refuse both the "perfect

become a homogeneous, cartographic (Farinelli, 2003, 2009) space with no currents in. That forbidden navigation replaces – one could say - a world made of “well divided elements” with the ontological occupation of the map (Mignolo, 2007; Escobar, 2018). More than a common Logos for collective care and connection between singularities, such a movement entails the absence of Logos. Its unity precisely removes the *Cum* (Cacciari, 2017, p.32) which makes the common a *dialogos*, i.e. a relation between differences.

Nevertheless, Cacciari arguments is not about the defence of “idiot singularities” against the bad planetary metamorphosis of the city. Rather the “truth of the sea” – the Archipelagos – lays as *ambivalence*, as possibility to be decided, produced, take care for, and defended in and through that forbidden navigation. The Italian philosopher writes (p. 32):

“But how could the Archipelago recognize itself without such audacity? How would the island know itself to be individual and autonomous if it did not discover in its own *logos* the *Cum*, that which unites-distinguishes it from the other? Certainly, from the same root that produced the Archipelago's *pluriverse*, its 'catastrophe' in one can also emerge - in the universal a-priori form, which nullifies in itself every *topos*, of the uniform and indifferent Space. That one where the dominance of the Means overpowers every 'invention of meaning,' where fidelity becomes calculation and truth a procedural correctness”.

Avidity and multiplicity, the One and the Common, the ontological occupation and the pluriverse lay – to Cacciari - in the same logos-generating journey as opposite possibilities or destinations. In that trouble the latter's *ambivalence* consists of. The effort of Logos – as both a Theoria and a project – should be that one of preserving the ontological truth of the Multiple, to take care of it as such reciprocal navigation and metamorphosis among singularities⁵⁵.

multitude of Utopia” and the archipelago of “static differences” (p. 98). On the other – since it is constantly pushed up by the pelagic desires of the multitude (p. 99) – it should be capable of orientating the less towards easement and the more towards *parrhesia* (p. 99) – or absolute democracy, as Negri and Hard would say. Therefore, it cannot but be supported by and be developed through infrastructures able to endure such a stress. One where the sea and the ocean of the Multitude can roar together. The same relation between project and *entwurf* has been discussed by Cacciari (1982).

⁵⁵ Therefore, according to Cacciari, there is also a de-colonial energy within the Logos, a *non-colonial tension and promise*. The author addressed it also during a conference with Cardinal Angelo

Therefore, for the Italian philosopher, there is also a good hybris, or a good use of hybris, a good and necessary form of audacity to be tempted. By virtue of this other side of the coin only the Archipelago can appear. *Its pluriverse in the Common, its togetherness of singularities in a common co-becoming is thus offered as a mixture of the sea's turbulent materiality, a good planetary urbanization, and the effort of a more-than-wet Logos.* That seems to be – according to Cacciari - the *political* of the Archipelago, its program, project, and ecology; its (to be socialized) urbanism and logos. In fact, the latter can – in Lefebvrian terms – become world, only through a productive circularity. From the archipelago the Archipelago can appear by re-producing the former, by letting the turbulent materiality of waters stimulates infra-structures, i.e., practical gestures of connection, of logos, of Common. After all, those operative acts may be – if chosen - nothing else then the very realization of logos, of its etymology: to link those who are different. The practical and theoretical labour of orienting towards and built that “common sedes” consist of metabolically, meta-philosophically co-produce it by means of the restless movement of waters. An artificial environment appears, one created by the *stellar* (see below) encounter between the ontological exodus of the Sea and the abyssal in-quietude of the sailing soul. Which – in turn - is the more-than-wet consequence of the former. According to Cacciari, her willing of the “too much” (2017, p. 34) comes directly from such, ontologically unstoppable, labour of the Hyper-pelagos.

Therefore, the effort and project of Logos itself seems to be partially a matter of hybris since it is rooted in that geo- and -philosophical traversing and questioning. The city is to be broken and overcome. In fact, the former entails a strongly spatial, urban (in the Lefebvrian sense) component. As a “mental form of association and encounters” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 84) the Archipelago stays at the “trial of space” not only by seeing it, but by producing the material infrastructure which supports its project of connection between differences. Ships and communing constructions (*muros terra posuere nova*) appear thus to be the *scaffold* (see Chapter 2) of a new institutional asset, the structure of the more-than-human cooperation. One which inhabits as ambivalence, as potency, in the colonial, capitalistic, homogenizing gesture of bad planetary urbanization. Then, to that extent, the Archipelago Cacciari envision consists of a *meta-philosophical gesture*. Namely: of a way to gain (more-than-humanly) the primordial unity between the

Scola (Le ragioni della fede - dialogo tra il cardinale Angelo Scola e il filosofo Massimo Cacciari, 2013).

philosophical form and the urban one (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 42) beyond the alienation of Utopia, of the State-form (see note above).

In addition, Moore's *oikeios* also - as a matrix for post-capitalist, historical social action - seems to find in the Archipelago a coherent world-praxis. Indeed, the latter *Theoria* appears during - and can be chosen through, by virtue of - a process of environmental co-production. There is not - in Cacciari's formulation - the logos *and* the environment, *and* the sea. The two are not a binary. Rather, the common project of care and connection - the Logos - emerge there from within the web-of-life. The former *is* - for the Italian philosopher - an *ecology*, a proper *oikos*-logos, a way to think and act with such a turbulent materiality, an *oikeios*⁵⁶. Indeed, the device of "nature-as-external" which abstractly and concretely grounds capitalist world-praxis as (alienated) logos-praxis appears in the Archipelago completely overcome. There, logos thinks-with exceeding natures and exactly by virtue of their excess it can choose to take care for the multiple. There would be no *archi-pelagos* without those turbulent hyper-currents which always expose the logos to its needed multiplicity. But the *pelagos* only is not sufficient. In fact, on the one hand, in Moore's terms (2015) one could say that in the Archipelago an ecology "beyond the nature-as-external" is drawn out.. The restless sea is not conceived as an alienated, external measure. Rather, it is assumed for co-producing the metabolism - i.e. an environment, a product of work through the labour of arms, legs, techniques (Cacciari, 2017, p. 25) and minds.

But, on the other hand, precisely that work is needed. "*The love which let us know the Archipelago*" - Cacciari writes (Ibid., emphasis added) - "is really a-oikos. Only aboard a ship it could find abode". For the Common to be built, for taking care of differences and going outside the close environment of the home (*oikos*), a mixture of currents, activity and oceanic momentum is needed. That is what the author refers to with the formula "*nefas argonautico*" (p. 24) - the forbidden navigation. Such pragmatic, space-productive, architectural, and engineering dimension of the Archipelago is thus pivotal. "Philosophy" - Lefebvre says (2014, p. 41) - "was born from the city". So it is in the Archipelago, one might say, from the ship, which is nothing but a "moment" in the former's logos. Indeed, it is by virtue of that *shipness* that the primordial unity among the urban and the philosophical form is gained to a more-than-human level of totality. Namely, it is

⁵⁶ Moore and Cacciari refer both to the "oikos". Nevertheless, in a very different manner: for the former it is the common home co-produced by human and non-human excesses (see chapter 2). For the Italian philosopher, instead, *oikos* is almost the opposite of the Archipelago (see below in this chapter).

by means of such infra-structure that the former assumes the web of life as matrix. The logos as common logos, as effort of care for those who are different, develops as *organic exchange* between humans and the non-human nature “water”. Ships – one can say – are the *metabolic solvents* (Moore, 2015) through which the Archipelago can emerge from the archipelago. Consequently, the concrete materiality of turbulent waters and infrastructures can be conceived as the *decided* morphology of the Archipelago’s ecology. They are the *chosen* support and syntax of such oikos-logos, conceived as common logos, as common *sedes* (abode) for those who are different: humans among themselves, and together with respect to non-humans.

Therefore, Logos, Common, Urban and Archipelago navigate towards the same etymology, the same meaning, the same urban-political engineering. But there is more: the first three gain – in the fourth one – their ecological trial, their meta-philosophical *sedes*, their – with Lefebvre – *limitless plasticity* in the web of life. The ground, continuing with the French ([1965] 2016), for redefining “socialism and communism, as perspectives (possibilities) of the historical movement” (Ibid., p. 309) but taking seriously non-human restless movement. This way, Lefebvre’s, Negri’s and Hardt’s argument are integrated in a very productive way. Indeed, the Italian philosopher adds the non-human turbulent farness-proximity of the ocean as a core, constitutive element for thinking about what I called the *urbanistic life* of the multitude. In addition, here in the Archipelago – as Moore’s ecology only announces – she can be conceived and appears as *metabolic life* leaning toward a common logos-democracy, a common *archi-polis* made of human and non-human exceeding currents. In order to strengthen this interpretation, what Cacciari argues throughout Chapter 2 (2017) might be useful. Indeed, the conflict is there discussed between those who want to undertake the nefas navigation and those who, instead, defend the autonomy of the oikos (home). The Archipelago – the Common oikos of singularities – finally appears the way through which avoid opposite risks of homogenizations and alienation (from human and non-human currents).

3.4 – Oikos → Polis → Archipelago → Common Oikos.

As already said, in the Archipelago – according to Cacciari (2017, p. 19) – waters not only face the city but permeates it by roaring in its streets and

singularities: “the stirring of the Sea is immanent to the cities of the Archipelago; the Sea does not stop at their shores, but echoes in the voices of the Agora”. One could say that it makes them – the political multitude together with her infrastructural *corpus* – “bodies of water” (Neimanis, 2017). Indeed, the Archipelago is not only the urban-political infrastructure which divides-connects islands by partially transcending them. The city itself is irrevocably divided and infiltrated by the *pelagos*. On the one hand, the former is said to exist precisely “in the process of its own dividing” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 29). “Every city which faces the sea” is twofold – author writes (Ibid.) – since only by navigating beyond itself the former can *see* its unity. And that is immediately no more as such, being that putative definiteness observed from the ship, which has just *de-cided* from the city. But, on the other hand, the *Polis* is already an archipelago (even before the Argonautic nefas) also because it is inhabited by “those who transform it, innovate it and want it *in itinere*, and those who claim its Nomos to be fixed; those who guard its traditions as authentic true words (*mythoi*)...those who see its root in the *oikos*, and those who exalt its strength in the ship” (Ibid.). Currents of water roar – wetly and more-than-wetly – in such a divided, multiple agorà.

The passage below (still from Chapter one) is very clear as far as Cacciari’s argument about such a *tragedy of the city* is concerned (2017, pp. 34-35, trans mine):

“At the apex of distinction, the relation - but, at the same time, will we find the 'community' at the apex of difference? For sure, it cannot be that one of the *oikos*, if the *logos* is *dia-logos*, and only the 'invention' of the Archipelago can generate it. It will not be that of an earthly *Nomos* neither, of immovable laws inscribed on Earth, if *Agathon* is the end, 'that' which is 'too much,' 'that' which exceeds all determination of essence (since the land from which I sail is the maximally defined). Can a 'community' be conceived of islands in permanent navigation one *contra-versus* the other? Only if each one will know itself and manifest to itself not as a simple individuality, not as a resolved, accomplished, satisfied unity to be imposed as the center of a hierarchically oriented space. Only if each one, knowing itself, will discover in itself the same complexity, the same variable and unpredictable 'geometries,' which form the harmony of the Archipelago. Only if each one will discover *in interiore* [within itself] that multiplicity of forms and *logoi* it has seen-heard about while traveling. The islands are distinct, as the languages that inhabit them. Truths dwell *in interiore*. It is a *societas* what we discover, a *societas* ventured to all possibilities”.

As seen before, the Archipelago is defined as immanent in difference and in the effort of navigating it. But that *pelagos* “flows as a vast river towards no-place”, it contains the possibility – not the destiny – of Logos. This is the *trouble* (Haraway, 2019) we need to “well navigate” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 34). The sea’s farness, its pelagic restlessness must always also remind us “the overwhelming power of the *Illimite* [eng: limitlessness, Apeiron, Open] over all our forms” (p. 33). Thus, we cannot but feel the “tremendous responsibility” of separating (*to decide*) ourselves from and take shape against the Apeiron (Ibid.). *Choosing and inventing* the Archipelago as a possibility to be activated and realized consists of precisely that *hybris*, by means of which only a *common societas* can be seen and organized. In fact, a catastrophe is always possible as well. In the above-quoted passage, the anaphorical recurrence of the “only if” seems to stand exactly for the continuous experience of that abyss, of that risk.

At the bottom, there are two excesses: the *pelagos*’ one, and the human will of “knowing oneself”. The former transfers its turbulent materiality, its ontological hyper-objectuality to the second. This latter – which represents the philosophical enquiry insofar as also a geo- navigation, exploration, and spatial production (an ecology, *oikos-logos*) – is in turn the terrain where and through which a practical Theoria of care and “well living” can emerge. But such an “invention” – such a “saying” and “rescue” of the Multiple – is never about “cure”. It is not a *pharmakon* (p. 26) which brings a kind of healing. Rather, it is about a risky care (see also Haraway, 2019). It concerns the “*improbis labor*” (ENG: thankless labour) of “arranging the absolute distinction of the figures with the necessity of their relationship” (p. 34). That *dia-logos* (i.e., metabolism, world-ecology), that *common societas* remains composed of – Cacciari says – a double multitude: in *interiore*, and outside. To be preserved, each singularity should feel the ocean roaring in itself and be aware of being also such a multiplicity, a “body of water” (Neimanis, 2017). At the same time, also the archipelago of singularities is.

Second chapter of Cacciari’s (2017) essay delves into the urban-political consequences of that only apparently abstract trouble. Some figures of women in classical Greek culture are considered. Aristophanes’ comedy, Sophocles’ *Antigone*, and Euripides’ *Alceste* are all example the author uses for discussing the conflict between polis and oikos (home). They serve to show what stress the Archipelago (i.e., the common project of and for a multitude of singularities) has to manage – urbanistically and politically – to orient, produce and navigate its ecology, its metabolism.

“The polis is manifold” – the Cacciari repeats (p. 41) – “it is not reducible to one”. It is not only the movement towards the sea, a “pro-ject” (Ibid., LAT: *pro-iacio*, to throw in front) in the direction of the unknown and more freedom. The polis is also *oikos* (home): no journey can forget the port from where it started (that would be the maximum of bad Hybris!), no navigation can *de-cide* itself completely from its own “interior” (p. 43). That is “the precondition to be suffered” (Ibid.). The a-logos, mythical root of the *oikos* always will re-draw to itself the ship and its movement of *entwurf*⁵⁷ (get-away). The tragedy – Cacciari says – consists precisely of that: on the one hand the polis exists in its own growing, thanks to the multitude which receives more-than-wetly the restless sea and ventures the latter materially. To this extent, the author is very clear and very close to Negri and Hard’s argument:

“The multitude - precisely since it mixes in itself maximum servitude and maximum *parresia* - is continuous, irreplaceable nourishment [of Technique]. They are her needs, her 'instincts' that push the *logos* forward, that force it to go, to be *wandering*” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 99).

But, on the other hand, the polis – its logos, its impetus – cannot eradicate from themselves that mythical power which would like to make it One, a home (p. 47). That one which retains from the journey out and reproduces itself in its homogeneity. “The city is *polis* and *oikos*” – Cacciari writes (p. 46) – “and cannot be their peace”. A new dimension of hybris thus emerges. Beside the external-oriented one of the bad planetary urbanization, the *oikos*’ one now appears. It consists of thinking that it would be possible to also reduce the interior to a single home – destroying its internal walls between houses (p. 45). “Dis-measure” – the Italian philosopher writes (p. 46) – “physiologically threatens the *polis*, but it also threatens the *oikos* when it claims to reduce the nature of the *polis* to itself” (p. 46). Again, the tragedy, the trouble is given within and develops through the “trial of space”, the production of environment. Ships, ports, and mobility infrastructures on the one side, hearths, and homes on the other.

Nevertheless, a crucial difference appears. While the polis is and cannot but be manifold, the *oikos* cannot. Namely: while the polis can accept itself as an

⁵⁷ Cacciari discusses directly such aporia of the project in his Cacciari, M., *Progetto*, in, Laboratorio Politico, *Critica del Progetto*, Einaudi, Torino, pp. 88-119. There, he shows how – on the one hand – the “to be thrown” (IT: *pro-gettati*) marks the overall human condition. On the other, it entails an endless, contradictory movement. While, in fact, we look constantly for an impossible perfect state (embodied in the city of Utopia), we at once reproduce that gesture by getting away (*entwurf*) from a given situation. Such is, the author argues, the tragedy we inhabit and live through.

archipelago and find the logos for saving it, the oikos – according to Cacciari - does not (pp. 47-49):

“the *oikos* is the place, as opposed to any space [...] the laws of this *oikos* are intractable as far as the orders and conventions of the *polis* are concerned. Simply intractable, in fact - and this principle makes them absolutely strangers to the *polis* - since the *polis* can only sustain itself to the extent that the many who inhabit it are willing and able to mutually understand each other... Antigone affirms the opposite, that the *oikos* is radically *autonomous*.”

In other terms: the Archipelago can emerge only (as *ambivalence*) from the audax movement towards the other, by setting sail from the city and “every fixed identity” (p. 162). It can be chosen by revealing the latter non-autonomy, their dependence, their multiplicity *in interiore*, their being archipelagic singularities in a common society. Contrary, the former can never arise from the walled oikos. The latter does not hold the Common, the Multiple as an immanent potential. That is precisely what is impossible in the oikos, which place is the “inner space”, not the “going-away” (p. 44) – which is needed for encountering the other. Instead, the risk of planetary urbanization, of *muros terra posuere nova*, is to be tempted. The former is not, it is to be avoided for the Archipelago to be realized. As one can see, Cacciari is not talking about two different physical entities: the polis here, the oikos there. Of course, in discussing Antigone, references go specifically to the home (which is *in* the urbs). But the two can be better conceived as so many dimensions or poles which stir the same urban-political object: the city. The latter, in fact (see above), is divided between *those* who want it *in itinere*, and *those* who want to preserve unchanging traditions. The ground is the same, to be divided is the multitude. But, to preserve that multiplicity, not to let the *place* oikos to enter the hybris of its own One, the *space* polis takes priority. Its tendentially open horizon, its eagerness to take the sea, its portuality and the fleets it hosts are crucial for the Archipelago to be tempted. The latter, one might say, gains the polis-pole to its deeply manifold nature, and preserve it by means of a coherent, more-than-human infrastructure. It is the urban-political project and route which constantly reproduce the effort of communication, of a *common societas* to be built, of *making multitude* as an endless strain of care (2017, p. 57):

“The Archipelago cherishes *oikos* and *polis*, in the renewal of their polymorphous and inexhaustible conflict. The Archipelago can only navigate to the Good of their Harmony, a Good superessential to all its islands, its

cities, its languages, the moments and means of its journey. Such is the *Impossible* telos of its effort.”.

Therefore, the Archipelago can be conceived not as a togetherness of physical (and political) objects – more or less big oikos, home-city or home-State. Rather, it appears a very new (planetary) infrastructure and morphology which organizes the *common societas* among singularities without letting the latter coincide – spatially and politically – with a walled place. In the former, poles do not tend anymore to territorialize themselves as such (the polis as a homogenized whole, the oikos the same). Differently, the Archipelago reveals and care for the multiplicity of every “island” (see above, 2014, p. 34-35) by allowing their reciprocal navigation. Clearly, that is a metaphor. Islands do not navigate. Nevertheless, it is telling since shows that – to Cacciari – Archipelago is a circulatory territory where the State and the city as areally defined unity disappear. They leave space to a new common, more-than-human space, a planetary metropolis made of, for and by that very *common societas* in endless navigation. It is the infra-structure of cooperation chose and produced through the moving force of the Sea which animate her own energy, desires, and morphologies. There, a new *urban logos* operatively and metabolically arises in the web of life, which completely overcomes the “methodological citysm”. The multitude may finally find a *sedes*, a territory.

That appears to be the needed *Bildung* Cacciari offers for being up to the invention of the Common he calls “Archipelago”. Each oikos – in order not to fall in its homogenizing hybris – has to assume the multiplicity which it is already composed of (the *societas in interiore*). Each singularity is an (archi)polis, unreducible to One, and as such it should see itself in the multitude of archipelagos which other singularities are.

But, at the maximum extension of the Archipelago, we discover nothing else than its being our common home (the *societas*). The self-awareness journey started denying the oikos, setting sails from it, just to re-find it at the end but renovated, revealed in its reality. In fact, what argued for the polis can be repeated for the oikos as well. “How can it be one if not by denying himself? How could it want to be free, if it kept its nomos firmly rooted, earthly?” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 30). In the same (reversed) vein, at the very bottom of each wannabe singular identity, at the maximum of loneliness, the archipelago cannot but appear as the theoretical pre-assumption from where such a putative “one” can be seen and said through a *dialogos*. As the oikos is (and was) already at sea, out of itself, when says “I am”, so home and polis can finally coincide in the Common Archipelago. Such a *planetary*

collective oeuvre is immanent where and when the metropolis encounters the restless, originating movement of the ocean. To the intelligence of the multitude, to her metabolic logos the task of realizing and navigating that mixture of *entwurf* and *project*, of separation and common care. To her, the decision of “venturing that Sea which can turn out to be Archipelago” (p. 166). As such can sound one among the most interesting of Cacciari’s messages. As he writes: “at the peak of distinction, the relationship - but, at the same time, at the peak of difference will we find ‘community’? [...] Only if each one discovers within itself that multiplicity of forms and logoi that she has seen and heard while travelling” (pp. 34-35).

According to Cacciari, we have retrieved from the turbulent materiality of the sea “our ontological impotence to stand still, our not being able but to strive for the ‘too much’” (p. 34). That is what we live for (p. 33): the plenitude of life. Currents’ restlessness made us build the first ship, with which we took the sea. This way we started observing the polis from the outside, we saw its form and ventured to know the others’ ones. The possibility, to be constantly chosen, of a common infrastructure started then to arise. An urban political one, which logos is philosophy in practice, dia-logos as project-of-environment. But, in turn, it emerged precisely from that experienced environment, abstracting from the very pelagos, its very currents and islands. Geo-philosophy and meta-philosophy enter here in a productive, endless circularity. They gain the primordial unity of the urban and the philosophical one at their ecological determinations. That indefinite navigation is always exposed to the risk of homogenization (of both the interior and exterior *societas*) but there only a Common project and logos is possible. Other singularities had to be discovered to understand how the exterior archipelago and its waves where already roaring in the interior one. Thanks to which only – in turn – we took the sea that previously had transferred its ontology to us⁵⁸. By means of such a *ubiquitous wetness* (da Cunha, 2019), fixed identities cannot but disappear, together with their walled structure: the home-city, the home-State. Not-telluric, archipelagic singularities take the stage, which are able of remembering and rediscovering the water, the otherness which always roar in their interior or exterior agora. As Cacciari writes in *Geofilosofia dell’Europa* (1994), cities in the Archipelago appears to be “crowns of bridges” (Cacciari, 1994, p. 14), they are more “ports and passages” than walled identities (Ibid.).

⁵⁸ “How could the city be one, without denying itself? And how could it wish itself free, if it kept its Nomos firmly rooted, earthly?” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 30)

Finally, that possible *destination* emerges also from the last chapter of the book, where the community of those who are perfectly different⁵⁹ is announced.

The author refers to it with the Nietzschean ideas of sunset and *Oltreuomo*. To him, the latter is not a “super-man” but a “place” of “new measure and reciprocal hospitality” (2017, p. 158), place which “host and gives”, which does not “detains or capture, but release everything to its own sunset” (ibid.)⁶⁰. Such a beyond cannot be projected, but the Archipelago appears to be – at once – the best way to yearn to it and the figure for pointing to the stellar friendship it gives place. Indeed, the Archipelago or *Oltreuomo* is where those who are perfectly different decide (p. 164) to wanted each other as such (p. 162):

“It is friendship to believe that 'there really is an extraordinary, invisible curve and stellar orbit, in which our so many different paths and goals could be encompassed, as if they were narrow stretches of road’”.

Firstly, the author admits that the idea appears to be practically and politically unmanageable (p. 160). However, he adds, it can somehow work to point to that “community of those who do not have community, and thus are perfectly responsibly of their own distinction and of their hospitality, immanent in that distinction” (p. 161). The pelagic, restless movement of the sea is still there: friends are ships which “can meet and celebrate feasts together, but can never stop, never become-one, never reduce to the same” (Ibid.). And the logos remains as well: friends have *to decide* for that navigation, to want it despite their perfect difference (p. 162).

Nonetheless, the archipelago as a geographical environment, with which the book started, arrives here at its maximum more-than-wetness. But those “roots” cannot be forgotten. Even at the end, it is crucial to remember the port from where we set sail from. In the productive circularity between geo-philosophy and meta-philosophy, there is no possible room – as showed - for pure abstraction. There, theory is always at the *trial of space*, everything is thought-with the environment by means of productive and operative gestures of urban-political construction. Therefore, since Logos exists thanks to the Archi-polis where the multitude and the currents of the sea unfold, also stellar friends cannot but already have – or will have - infrastructures and ships to support their risky navigation. Indeed, their *societas* is described as the continuously repeated decision of venturing toward the turbulent

⁵⁹ Cacciari retrieves the issue from Derrida (2020).

⁶⁰ For a partially different use and reading of the “oceanic Nietzsche”, see Resta (2002, 2022).

materiality of the sea, to the *hypersea* (Peters, Steinberg, 2019) of the web of life. By virtue of latter's distance and strangeness only, the multitude of singularities can avoid entering the hybris of a bad planetary urbanization and setting sail not for the *archi-pelagos* but for the *archi-pontos* (the One). But then – in the Archipelago - also the Sea and the multitude are stellar friend. After all, their distance is what grounded the *project* since the beginning. The former excess permeated the polis, which in turn navigates always in excess with respect to herself precisely thanks to water's "going no-where". They cannot meet if not by means of a human effort of *approximation*, of infrastructural approximation: that are the feast they celebrate, and by means of which the multitude of singularities can celebrate hers. A *stellar metabolism* appears, where human and non-human friends meet and leave again in their infra-structured absolute distance. Thus, crucially, till the end – according to Cacciari – the Archipelago exists because of a double, reciprocal excess. On the one hand, the Sea's hyper-objectuality stands which always withdraw from the multitude grasp. On the other, it is by virtue of that escape only, that the latter may choose and invent the common *societas*, the *politics* of the Hypersea Steinberg and Peters claim for (2015, 2017).

3.5 – The Archipelago: envisioning the Urban Revolution amid the Planetary Flood.

I began from what is going on, nowadays. A series of images has been presented in the Introduction for showing what I propose to call the *Planetary Flood*. Indeed, because of climate change, the *ubiquitous wetness* (da Cunha, 2019) our infra-structured life lays within is turbulently revealing. Its immensity is violently appearing throughout our planetary metropolis. From the Mediterranean to South-East Asia, the increase (in quantity, intensity, and duration) of floods, together with sea level rising, is directly threatening millions of people. Moreover, lots of studies indicate that the change is epochal, partially unpredictable, and far-reaching in time. By 2300, we could expect up to 5-7 meters increase. Various scenarios have been deployed for envisioning what to do. In turn, the former depends also on how we will be able to act, as well as on other uncertain trends, such as those concerning population growing and its placement. Facing that arriving – and partially already here – Planetary Flood I asked: *how to debate currently existing planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation?* In order to offer an answer, I then

proposed a process of disassembling, updating and reassembling of the Lefebvrian concept “Urban Revolution”. Indeed, the path followed a claim Keil (2018) advanced five years ago about the need to “go back” to the revolutionary origins of the formulation. Thus, according to Lefebvre in methodology, I decided to start *re-figuring* it out but under partially changed historical conditions.

First, in chapter one – cross-reading the French philosopher, Negri and Hardt – I offered the figure of the *social architect* and the *urbanistic life of the multitude*. They proved to grasp the authors’ urban-political immanent conception of social change within the socialization of society.

Indeed, both formulas take care for and point out the *tendential coincidence* between the spatial productive praxis and the political decision-making which the three philosophers advance. For Lefebvre, to realize the *planetary oeuvre* he calls “urban society”, it was a matter of assuming the potentialities of capitalist-oriented urbanization and exceed it. The *residue*, to him, was the method to see and left open such a “non-homogeneity between the common becoming (the making-multitude of singularities) and the communism of capital (i.e. global domination in the figure of financial capital)” – to put it with Negri (2011, p. 28). Moreover, the French philosopher conceived of that movement-beyond as a becoming social of *urbanisme*, as a practical and productive coincidence between the project of the Urban Society and the material construction and defence of its morphologies, services and joyful, encounters-oriented climate. Therefore, to that extent, Lefebvre offers a meta-philosophy: a perspective for philosophy to become world *through* the reappropriation of the production of space. Arguing that “the future of art is urban” (2014, p. 129), he conceives of architecture *as technique and battleground*, means and aim for the common oeuvre to be built.

Negri and Hardt’s thought have thus added a larger (and updated) perspective to that proposal. At the imperial stage of capitalism – they say - the multitude lays as ambivalence throughout biopolitical production. In fact, beside producing the capital, she has been recognized also as the productive energy through which the planetary common metropolis can be inhabited, transformed, and completely realized. To her, means and aims tend to coincide in the production of cooperation, which infrastructure – to the authors – tend to announce the scaffold of a new institutional asset of society. One which is beyond capitalism and the State. Therefore, her project for an absolute democracy and exodus from capital finds in the metropolis a fertile territory. For these reasons, I have argued that *her urbanistic life* gives *historical flesh and body* to *the social architect*. The Common-World, the

planetary oeuvre has finally appeared as the infra-structured potential that the productive singularities enhance and make restlessly alive. Nevertheless, a strong ecological perspective was still needed for continuing in updating the “urban revolution” concept. Indeed, to Lefebvre, nature was – at once – what escapes human rational control and what, in the Urban Society, will find a unity with culture. Currently existing climate change necessarily requires to deepening such apparently contradictory assumption.

Thus, first, Chapter two presented and discussed Morton’s anti-animist and materialistic ontology of non-human hyper-objects. They are described as something which always withdraw and remains far from us. Nevertheless, they also are very much stuck in our face. That creates a troubling condition. While the English philosopher gives only general proposal as far as action is concerned, I show how he elaborates a perspective close to that one advanced by Lefebvre in *Meta-philosophy* (2016, [1965]). There, the French describes the Universe as a hyper-objectual totality which a new science only can inhabit. Moreover, he adds that it would be a matter of “creating the Being” by means of acts of “approximation”. Subsequently, Moore’s world-ecology has been offered as an interesting instrument in that regard. He argues that present-day ecological crisis can be conceived as the end of nature-as-external. Namely, the author claims that capitalism is challenged from the ground up since non-human natures deny themselves as measure. They enter with their excess the process of production. Therefore, Moore continues, to overcome capitalism, we should *create* new environments with them and conceive of social change precisely as such a production-of-environment. He thus offers the *oikeios* (the ever-changing web-of-life) as both *a critical lens* (to disclose capitalist alienation mechanism) and the *matrix* where to situate historical, post-capitalist change. Hence, he as well suggests a meta-philosophical perspective through which, on the terrain of production, of creation, means and aims tend to coincide. As to Lefebvre, a *limitless plasticity* opens up, where “approximation” with-in the web of life is given as metabolism. That is crucial not to fall back in Cartesian mystification. Producing in the *oikeios* has thus appeared – according to Moore - a matter of *crossing the threshold of representation* and gain the ground of techniques, of creating infra-structures. Then, I offered the metabolic life of the multitude as the hypothetical subject in charge of such a transformation.

Finally, to delve into that hypothesis and thus reassembling the “urban revolution concept”, a reading has been developed (throughout this Chapter 3) of Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari essay’s *L’Arcipelago* (2017, [1997]).

There, the *metabolic life of the multitude* has appeared what makes a planetary common infrastructure possible. She reproduces as effort of care, approximation, and connection of sailing singularities by means of the pelagos' exceeding, restless, unstoppable movement. Moreover, such destination – the Archipelago - is not a destiny. It must be *chosen* through an urbanistic movement of *decision*, of preservation. One which has always to be renovated, re-done to allow the multiple to be saved. It may emerge from the risk of Logos. It is immanent in, but to be completely realized through, the gesture of infra-structuring. Indeed, it is the *project*, the *orientation* to well navigate amid two major catastrophes the former entails. On the one hand, the planetary polis may enter the asymptote of Utopia, and sailing towards the impossible One of homogenization. On the other, the oikos, in order to preserve its acknowledged singularity, might strive not to encounter – and be opened by – the Other. It is here that the *good hybris* of venturing to the Archipelago is needed to preserve the Multiple, the pluriverse by means of which only the dia-logos is possible. Indeed, as above widely shown, the multitude is precisely that *power* of letting singularities encounter in a common co-becoming through a common morphological, technical, and thus political, metabolic effort of environmental production. Therefore, in the Archipelago, a new urban logos may emerge and become world. One which – according to Lefebvre – might foster the creation of a common *societas* as common oeuvre.

Moreover, water matters there, the Sea *acts* – echoing Moore's open questions - in a specific way. In fact, the common logos can appear only by virtue of the sea's turbulent concreteness, distance (it goes nowhere), movement, and hyper-objectuality. It co-generates an *oikos-logos*, an ecology, which – in turn - takes care of it in order to reproduce itself. That way, it embeds and acts the not-alienated movement Moore's world-ecology (2015, 2017) advances to overcome capitalism and the false cartesian binary through which the former hits the ground. Therefore, a productive circularity also arises between geo-philosophy and meta-philosophy. Indeed, in the Archipelago, politics and the metabolic life of human and non-human multitude tend to coincide. There, the common-logos is means and aim – as for the *social architect* Lefebvre imagined. It is both telos and battleground, both the *intelligence* and the *material infrastructure*, the material endlessly journey and navigation which preserves the Multiple against its manifold, possible catastrophes. Hence, again with Lefebvre (2014, p. 42), such a project brings back the urban form and the philosophical one at their primordial unity. Moreover, the Archipelago gains it at its ecological conditions of existence. Indeed – echoing Steinberg's (2000, 2011, 2013) and Steinberg and Peters' (2015, 2019) arguments – that project grounds and depends on the Hypersea. The *pelagos* in its exceeding, restless, multi-

temporal, ever changing movement is a constitutive engine of the urban logos. Thus, the authors' recent claims around a new *politics* of such an Ocean may find there an answer. In fact, their "ocean theory without an outside" – as I propose to call it – reaches in the Archipelago a productive encounter with the only apparently distant (or opposite) insights about planetary urbanization. There, an urban-political project emerges which, at once, preserves the hyper-objectuality of the Sea and, thanks to it, sails and build beyond capitalism, modern cartographic conception of nature, and the State.

Hence, such an urbanistic and metabolic effort proved to link logos and poiesis-production but in a *costellative* way (Galli, 2010). Indeed, the Archipelago thinks and might be organized in terms of proximity and encounters, but recognizing and assuming the ontological distance, the hyper-objectual nature of the sea and of other human (and potentially non-human) natures. There – tendentially – *friendship is always stellar*. Nonetheless, the city - Cacciari says (2017, p. 55) - is writing, syntax. In fact, such an engineering-oriented conception has been crucial for understanding the Archipelago and its politics. The latter offers a way through which the oikeios can work as a *matrix* for historical change. The risk and labour of the Archipelago consists precisely of materially and productively grasp such an un-graspable, of building-thinking through such a Sisyphean effort of relation and approximation in the web-of-life (Moore, 2015).

For all this reasons, it should not be conceived as a descriptive tool, it does not say a "state of the art". Contrary, it concerns a *possible project* immanent in, but to be realized completely through, currently existing infra-structured world and logos. As for the Lefebvrian Urban Society, the former as well announces the potential of a common project, of a project of the Common as *societas*, as *archi-polis*. On the one hand, it radically overcomes the methodological citysm in analysis and practice. For the Archipelago to be built, the *place* "city" is an obstacle, as fixed identities are or up-scaled telluric-based containers. In the former's dimension, singularities produce a common infrastructure to be inhabited and sailed through. On the other, that project emerges from the ontological tragedy of the Logos which the concretely turbulent Sea materially grounds and always renovates. The former's good *hybris* offers the route, the practical *orientation* to live it better, to preserve – against that tragedy – the human, more-than-wet momentum towards the plenitude of life. Therefore, it is not – nor alludes to – a Form to be reified and finished onto the ground. Better, it has appeared as a program for an *urban-political movement through the climate. One realized by means of infrastructural approximations, of building gestures of common production*. Indeed, after the first ship which sailed

for “*muros terra posuere nova*” (building elsewhere, anew), such “shipness” is to be preserved in every metabolic effort of connection and approximation. In the Archipelago, every ship can be conceived as an infrastructure, and every infrastructure as a *ship* which allows singularities to live in common and navigate one contra-versus the others.

Nobody has never represented that idea better than Canadian surrealist painter Rob Gonsalves;



Figure 20: Gonsalves, R., *The Sun Sets Sail*, 2001.

Indeed, in the Archipelago, *the Common emerges precisely as such a productive journey to be chosen. Namely: as a logos-generating movement which arise immanently at the encounter between the planetary metamorphosis of the city and the Sea. It can be realized only through an urban-political, metabolic movement of creation, of making multitude in the web-of-life. It does not have – as in the painting – a clear starting point, it can only be renovated by inhabiting in excess the metropolis and the Ocean. Its only “picture”, its only horizon and image, is the political effort of always deciding, choosing, and producing such a care-oriented, cooperative, more-than-human infrastructure. It emerges within, but against the tragedy, the “nowhere” towards which currents of matter drag. There, it creates the Being as Urban Feast, as the engineered possibility of encounters, of a common oeuvre. An ephemeral invention to fight for is announced not to fall in the Utopian (impossible) One trap. Whether it was that of a planetary extended*

homogenized polis, or that of a walled, impenetrable, autonomous oikos. Names, like ships, arise always as societas, as dia-logos in the Archipelago.

Therefore, for all these reasons, I offer it as a figure for envisioning the Urban Society amid the Planetary Flood. Indeed, nowadays, rising sea levels, the growing in rain intensity and flood risks are violently revealing the ubiquitous wetness our urbanized life lays within. It is emerging and threatening again the planetary metropolis, its construction site in process. In such scenario, the Archipelago seems helpful for seeing again – 50 years after Lefebvre - the immanent potential of an urban revolution, of alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019). One through which to transform currently existing overall infrastructure into a more radically democratic one. One which may urban-politically *orientate* the metabolic life of the multitude in *producing* the Common and cooperative-use values through the web of life.

Amid the Planetary Flood, at the *historical conjuncture* where and when the urbanization of society encounters the turbulent materiality of the Hypersea, the oeuvre Archipelago might be at stake. In light of the deep discussion I developed since now, its *theoretical hypothesis* may at least be put at the fore for continuing in debating planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation. Of course, its realization depends on social practice. In the *routes* of the Archipelago – as in metropolitan services (Negri, 2008, p. 16) – the Common is alive. The Multiple is true, Cacciari writes (2017, p. 22). But its rescue is to be *chosen*. A *Bildung* up to the task is needed, and decisive political events (Negri, Hardt, 2004, p. 411):

“A political body has to be formed. It will be manifold in all probability and be traversed by a variety of drives and desires...In short, *the body of a multitude [...] a common multitude, because within it singularities play, like waves of a common sea preparing for the storm, the storm of transformation*”. (Negri, 2008, p. 94-95, emphasis in original)

May be the Archipelago the project for orienting such a transformation? The offered theoretical exploration laid at least the premises for continuing in asking the question.

Conclusions.

If – since now – all reflections may have appeared partially general, *what if we take seriously the historical contingency of the planetary flood?* As showed in the general Introduction, current rising sea levels and growing in rain intensity seem to let emerge (or show) - and to some extent accelerate - the archipelagic nature of our planetary oikos, its *ubiquitous wetness* (da Cunha, 2018, 2019). Materially speaking, hundreds of million people will see their environments transformed. Could it be the Archipelago the political figure for negotiating and orienting nowadays social transformation (i.e., social urbanism) beyond capitalism and the State? The Urban Society appeared – to Lefebvre – as a figure for envisioning (and fight for) radical democracy during and by virtue of planetary urbanization. Can the Archipelago *actualize* such a project but under changed geo-historical conditions, i.e., amid the Planetary Flood?

Since now, I hope to have shown how that question is considerable - at least theoretically. To that extent, I suggest closing here the process of *reassembling* as far as the “urban revolution” concept is concerned. After all, to Lefebvre – and also for Cacciari (2017) – philosophy and urbanization are, compose a single *ecological effort of plasticity* (Lefebvre, 2016, p. 316):

“The logos of the Greek city cannot be separated from the philosophical one. The work [oeuvre] of the city continues and concentrates in the work of the philosophers, which gathers opinions, views, and different works, to reflect them in a simultaneity. Then, it brings them together in a totality: *the urban places of the cosmos, times, and rhythms of the city in those of the world (and inversely)* [emphasis added] ” (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 42, trans mine).

Is the Archipelago the lying *ambivalence* in our socialized world, which the planetary flood is going to reveal as nothing but a world-archipelago? Could – under the planetary flood - philosophy become world as archipelagic urbanism and politics beyond capitalism? Could philosophy – this way – *continuing* through and *focusing* on such an urban-political *orienting* project? Will the metabolic life of the multitude take the chance of that historical contingency for *crossing the threshold of techniques* and building the Archipelago? All that are questions which answer is up to social practice. Indeed, the ocean goes nowhere, and only the decisive, urban-political, infra-structural act of logos can generate the Archipelago, by assuming the truth of the Multiple and taking the risk and effort of its care.

Notwithstanding, in the next Part 2 of the research, I present and discuss the results of a period of fieldwork I did in the Netherlands, between January and July

2022. There, I have looked directly at some plans and visions of environmental production. I also deeply discussed with some involved architects, geographers, and engineers. If one read them in the ubiquitous wet context of Dutch Delta urbanism and before the *illuminating virtuality* of the Archipelago - i.e., by means of *transduction* (see the methodological section) - some interesting suggestions arise. The intelligence of the multitude – as since now described - appears there partially at work, under production. In the Netherlands, she is crossing the threshold of techniques, and engaging a new world-praxis to move beyond the “ecological surplus” and the State. One where infra-structures maintain different degree of *shipness*, and artificiality and nature “find each other during a mutual self-criticism that interweaves passionate dialogues” (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 196).

To the ships, geographers!

PART TWO

Chapter 4

Dutch Delta Urbanism under climate change.

Introduction.

In this Chapter, I provide an historical introduction to the Dutch Delta Urbanism. Then a focus is given about the international laws regarding floating cities. Finally, the methodological scaffold of the fieldwork is deployed.

Firstly (4.1), I show how till a thousand year ago the land where the Netherlands exist today was completely different. Centuries of engineering have radically transformed the terrain. It passed from an expanse of swamps to a highly artificial landscape where the overall social life grounds on large-scale works. Nowadays, the country is composed of thousands of kilometers of dikes, thousands square miles of polders where hundreds thousand people live. Nonetheless, in recent years something has changed. Because of climate change and huge flood events (1993 and 1995), a new approach is in the making: Dutch urbanism is moving from struggling to building with nature. That involves imagining different scenarios for the future.

Secondly (4.2), I focus on international law as far as floating cities are concerned. Starting from the work of Lin *et alia* (2022), the legal void they lay within is addressed. Indeed, the UNCLOS – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – gives them no clear status. That is why I propose to talk about *Unidentified Floating Objects*. Then, specifically Dutch legislation is addressed. Since 2010, in fact, every floating house or houseboat moored in the country's internal water is legally (and technically, by definition) a ship. Together with 4.1, the paragraph aims to give contextual information regarding the fieldwork I carried out (to which Chapter 5 is devoted).

Thirdly (4.3), I provide the methodological scaffold of this piece of research. On the one hand, the latter has consisted of a navigation through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness (5.1 and 5.2). Specifically, it passed by the Europoort of Rotterdam, its more ancient docks, the city of Dordrecht, Gorinchem and Rotterdam itself. Then, it focused on floating houses and floating city's developers. On the other, as for the theoretical part, in this case as well a "going back" to Lefebvre took place. In fact, it is by means of transduction (Chapter 6) that the Archipelago is finally offered and used for orienting the detected built ambivalences towards and within the *becoming-port of society*.

4.1 - God made the world, but the Dutch made the Netherlands⁶¹: a thousand years of cyborg urbanization.

About 26% (10,500 km²) of the currently existing Netherlands lays below mean sea level, and the 60% is vulnerable to floods from the North Sea, rivers, or lakes (Fig. 21). The 60% of Dutch population of 17 million people lives in such *poldered*⁶² areas and produces about 60% of the national (GDP) of about 800 billion euros (Alphen, Haasnoot, Diermanse, 2022). Meanwhile – as shown in Chapter 3 of Part one - the 2019 IPCC special report on the oceans and cryosphere (Portner *et alia*, 2019) states that the global mean sea level (GMSL) is rising. An increase in water's levels of 0.43 m (0.29-0.59 m, likely range) is possible by 2100 based on a low emissions scenario (RCP2.6) and of 0.84 m (0.61-1.10 m, likely range) on a high emission one (RCP8.5). However, there is a 17% chance that the GMSL will exceed 0.59 m with RCP2.6 and 1.10 m with RCP8.5 in 2100. At the same time, a GMSL of 2 m in 2100 cannot be ruled out, as well as one of 5.4 m in 2300.

⁶¹Dutch proverb.

⁶²*Polder*, in the Netherlands, denotes an area located below sea level but protected by dikes and made fertile and inhabitable through water pumping systems. It originally referred only to reclaimed salt marshes, but it has acquired a more general meaning over time.

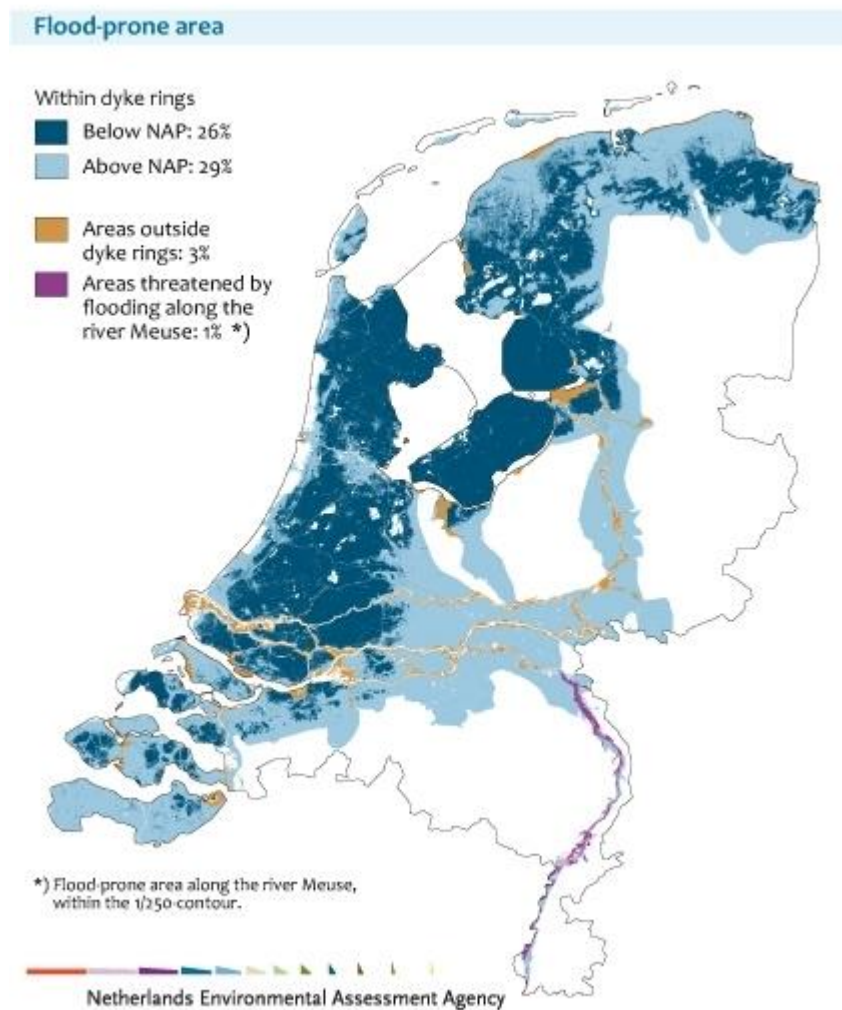


Figure 21: Dutch elevation map - PBL, *Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency*.

Nowadays – in such a geo-historical context - the Netherlands host key international institutions (such as the International Criminal Court in The Hague), the world's eighth-largest cargo port (De Langen, De Kruif, Voerman, Vries, 2015) - the Europort of Rotterdam - and as of 2021 boasted a per capita GDP of \$58,000. But, until about 1,000 years ago, the very land probably barely existed where the Dutch State insists today (Wolff, 1992). In fact, the history of the Netherlands – of its “urbanized polder landscape” (Meyer, Nijhuis, 2013) - is that one of the engineered interactions between its human inhabitants, wind, and water. This latter

is *ubiquitous* in a country which faces the North Sea and is located in the Rhine, Meuse, Scheldt and Ems delta. Therefore, since Middle Age, human people which decided to live there had and still have to come to terms with water (Lambert, 1971; Van de Ven, 2004). One could say – keeping on Neimanis's (2017) argument – that water in the Netherlands is an integral part of its cyborg (Swyngedouw, 1996) *body*. In windmills country, water is really – as I show in this Part 2 - “what we make it” (Linton, 2010, p. 3, quoted in Neimanis, 2017, p. 19 and following). Indeed, no “naïve constructivism, as though this wet stuff were somehow conjured by human minds” (Neimanis, 2017, p. 21) is there possible. In the Netherlands water has a strong materiality, it is not a metaphor (Steinberg, 2011, 2013). Whether it is salt or fresh, whether it remained stagnant in wetlands or swamps, or flowed down through rivers, whether it appeared in lakes or violently from the sky or the North Sea, eroding the dry lands and soaking bodies and streets, water reveals always its ontological unknowability (Neimanis, 2017, p. 144). One could say that currently existing Netherlands are, and future Netherlands could be imagined as a political, ecological and urban continuous effort of staying in that gap between human people and water. Since Middle Age, they are such an engineered encounter, such an example of “urbanization of water” (Swyngedouw, 1996), one where the latter’s liquidity insinuates within, permeates, and discusses – not metaphorically – the very materiality of “the city” (Steinberg, 2011).

In fact, as Wolff (1992) shows, before 1000 A.D., most of the currently existing Netherlands was composed of wetlands. Only higher land areas were inhabited, such as the dune ridges along the coast and the highest levees along the major rivers. Pivotal reclamations of marshes began with the new millennium. They had been made to make land cultivable and to protect agriculture. Indeed, the first written evidence reporting a dike dates from the second half of the 11th century (Ibid.). At that time, they were still isolated works that consisted mainly of erecting dams and digging canals. Systematic land transformation operations began in the following century and are still going on today. The construction of the Europoort involved - for example - the addition of 2,000 hectares of land to the Dutch state (De Langen, De Kruif, Voerman, Vries, 2015). But already in the 12th century alone, several thousand square kilometers of land were secured and about 4,000 square kilometers of moors and swamp forest (10 percent of today's Netherlands territory) were reclaimed (Wolff, 1992). The century after, people started to reclaim wetlands by constructing drainage systems. This way, lots of cities were founded in new protected areas. Still today, their names recall the dikes they were surrounded by: Rotter-dam, Amster-dam and Schie-dam (Meyer, Nijhuis, 2013). However, such a practice has over time resulted in a growing subsidence of the country. Nowadays,

in fact, many areas rests till five meters below mean sea level also for that reason (Ibidem). The 16th century reclamation of salt marshes and lakes also contributed to that effect. The first one is dated 1564, and later many others followed (Wolff, 1992; Hoeksema, 2007). The Haarlemmermeer (180 square km) and the Zuiderzee (four polders with a total area of 1680 square km) *polderizations* have been the most relevant. They were developed during the 19th and 20th centuries (Wolff, 1992). The latter is the most impressive reclamation in Dutch history. Approved in 1918, it consisted of four polders (with a total area of 2300 km² of drainage) and a dam. The latter (completed in 1932) is the Afsluitdijk, the Great Northern Dyke traversed today by the A7 highway. It is a completely artificial barrier that connects Den Oever to Cornwerd and separates the present freshwater lake IJsselmeer from the Wadden (salt) sea. Instead, among the four polders, only three were built: the Noordoostpolder (1942 - 480 square Km), Oostelijk Flevoland (1957 - 540 square Km), and Zuidelijk Flevoland (1968 - 460 square Km). The Markerwaard polder has never been implemented for ecological and economic reasons (Wolff, 1992). Excessive claiming of wetlands, in fact, had at that time prompted opposition to such projects in order to preserve the few still not then engineered by humans ecosystems. However - in 1953 - the first Delta Act was enacted, by which substantial dike construction work was undertaken following the flood of the same year. In the recent volume *Dutch Dikes* (Pleijster, Van der Veecken, 2014), the authors give back a comprehensive mapping of the currently existing network of dams that stretches for more than 22,000 kilometers. It is a huge infrastructure, if compared to only 880 kilometers of coastline. Some of that dikes are also roads; others are wide enough to accommodate buildings. To sum up, it can be said that - for centuries - the Netherlands has been fighting against the sea and water. However, many things have changed from the last century to the present.

After the 1993 and 1995 floods, issues arose about the capacity of rivers to hold large amounts of water. The idea for a *Room for the River* program (van Staveren, Warner, van Tatenhove & Wester, 2014; De Bruijn, De Bruijne, Ten Heuvelhof, 2015; Mosselman, 2022 – see also the interview with Ralph, below) - which is presented in Chapter 5 - was born precisely in that occasion. It has consisted of 39 specific interventions in rivers courses transformation. Some of them were dug deeper, others have been widened or - as in Nijmegen - split. Elsewhere - that is the case of Noordwaard, a before polderized area previously used for farms and housing - has been completely transformed into a floodplain. Meanwhile, in 2008, a new planning strategy was set up for the Delta and the Second Delta Committee was established (Delta Commissie, 2008), the first one having been founded in 1953. Although the former did not become effective until 2014, six years earlier the

radical change in horizon was already clear. Indeed, Professor C.P. Veerman - Chairman of the Delta Committee – writes (Ibid., pp. 5-7):

“Through the centuries, and still today, the inhabitants of our delta have made great efforts to *struggle out* of the grasp of the rivers and the sea and it is this that sets our country apart. [...]. The sea and the rivers have shaped our identity and the country itself: its nature and landscape, its prosperity and economy, and the way it is governed. [...] [But] Climate change is now forcing itself upon us: a *new reality* that cannot be ignored. [...]. Changing the way our country is managed creates new options; *working with water* may improve the quality of the environment and offers excellent opportunities for innovative ideas and applications. Where there is water, new forms of nature can arise”. (Emphasis added).

As one can see, the paradigm shift is clear. At the begin of the millennium, few years after two huge floods and in light of 2007 IPCC projections (Ibid., p. 25), a radical decision has been made. The Netherlands, after centuries of struggle, had to develop a new strategy: *working with nature*, as the title of the considered document itself says. Of course, it was not a matter of completely giving up on dikes construction and reinforcement. Rather, a new, flexible balance between human necessities and nature's ones had to be found. On the one hand, protection levels of all diked areas had to be raised by a factor of 10. On the other, coastal flood defense could also be implemented through beach nourishment and the relocation of tidal channels (Ibid., p. 12). Moreover, new space for water had to be organized. Indeed, the Delta Committee recalls here the need for a Room for the River Program and the aim of combining flood protection, fresh water supply, urban and natural development (Ibid., p. 13). In a nutshell, key concepts of the new strategy are: developing with climate change, gradual action, flexibility, knowledge of natural processes and cost-effectiveness (Ibid., p. 45). It is now a matter of working with nature, no longer struggling with it (Ibid., p. 5-7). The strategical aim of “building with nature” (Ibid., p. 12) has been brought to the forefront. The shift has been from resistance to resilience (Moreno Sanz, 2021), even though such a concept has many interpretations and keeps the debate open (Holling, 1996; Walker, Salt, 2006; Comfort, Boin & Demchak, 2010; De Bruijn, De Bruijne, Ten Heuvelhof, 2015;). Architecture historian and port cities expert Carola Hein has introduced the idea of “port-cityscapes” to grasp and act within the porosity (Hein, 2021) of such an urbanized delta where natures (especially waters) and flows of people, goods and materials cannot but live together. To her (2021, p. 4), a port-cityscape is:

“a networked space that extends from land to sea, including ships and pipelines, port facilities and warehouses, industrial and logistic structures, headquarters and retail buildings, but also housing and leisure facilities. This port cityscape is administrated, planned, imagined, and represented by multiple institutions and rarely as part of a shared vision”.

In Hein's vision and proposal, sea level rise and planetary urbanization should move politicians, designers, and dwellers to develop a new awareness in the relation between the water and the city. The article title itself sounds like a Manifesto: *planning for porosity!* In a time of shifting coastlines – she continues (Ibid.) - “could we borrow sponge-thinking to imagine port cities as sponges for maritime activities...where the ports of the future are designed as places that benefit all stakeholders involved (and not only a few select decision makers)?”. As one can see, water is already penetrating in Hein's view. She is thinking water and with-water in envisioning the port-cityscape of the future, one where – as in Middle Age – ships and port activities, vessels and the city melt within the same urban everyday life and space (see also Eriksson, 2014). To her, water entails “to plan with her” in a radical way, one which not simply allows the presence of amounts of “liquidity” in “the city”. Rather, Hein points to a deep change in planning and politics able to recognize the turbulent materiality of water while considering social justice as well. She envisions – to some extent recalling Brenner and Schmidt's (2015) point – an inhabited, porous, watery operational portcityscape where human and extra-human exodus may be taken into account together.

If one briefly looks to some plans for facing sea level rising, it appears evident that such an approach – towards sponge-thinking, to use Hein's words – is already partially underway in the Netherlands. As Alphen, Haasnoot and Diermanse (2022) shows, different strategies are possible. What they all share are premises and the same, implicit ontology. Indeed, on the one hand, IPCC projections for the country state that a sea level rise of 2 m by 2100 and of 5 by 2150 cannot be ruled out (Ibid.). On the other, the four considered solutions assume and show that matter matters, that - in any case – water turbulent and unpredictable materiality cannot but enter as such human activity. The very fact that they are four and so technically different testifies precisely how rising water matters in its concrete uncertainty and creativity.

Alphen, Haasnoot and Diermanse (2022) argues that main alternatives in general terms are: to retreat, to accommodate and to protect. The latter consists of continuing the current land conservation policy of the Netherlands by raising dikes. It is in turn divided into two cases. "Protect-close" implies closing the country

completely with barriers, navigation locks and sluices. "Protect-open," on the other hand, maintains a connection to the sea. In this strategy, sea level rise extends its influence upstream along the rivers by flooding non embanked areas. The "advanced" scenario, instead, involves the current coastline being extended seaward to build a more robust flood defense. Finally, the "adaptation" strategy is based on the "living with water" concept. It would mean combining a partial horizontal "retreat" from the coast and a vertical one, creating mounds, raising buildings, rings for urbanized areas or floating solutions. As one can see, the last and the Protect-open one seem involving a porosity-oriented approach.

Unfortunately, the *North Sea 2050 Spatial Agenda* (Abspoel, Vis, 2014) – the Dutch national strategic vision for planning at sea – gives no room for floating solutions with living purposes. References to that regard appear only as far as the production of energy is concerned (Ibid., p. 27 and 64), and in the final “tips” (Fig. 21). There, some drawings made by a group of young students are reported. One of them represent the future Netherlands as an *archipelago* with floating turbines and floating hotels (Abspoel, Vis, 2014, Appendix).



Figure 21: the future Netherlands (Abspoel, Vis, 2014, p. 81).

The suggestion is interesting. After all, currently existing Netherlands are already surrounded and permeated by waters, were they internal (rivers, lakes, canals) or external (the North Sea). Moreover, as Couling and Hein (2020) show, the latter is undergoing a process of deep urbanization through the installation of extraction platforms, pipelines, cables, wind farms etc. Therefore – amid the *Planetary Flood* – an archipelagic scenario for the Dutch future cannot be ruled out. One characterized by a *ubiquitous wetness* where a proper distinction disappears between internal and external waters, between the sea, the rivers, and the mainland.

Nevertheless, as far as living (and building) on water is concerned, international law deserves attention, as well as some legal changes which occurred in recent years in the Netherlands. Next paragraph is about such issue. Then, I provide some methodological insights before showing – in Chapter 5 - how the Dutch country is already going an *archipelago*.

4.2 – U.nidentified F.loating O.bjects: international and Dutch national legislation about floating cities.

Lin, Spijkers and van der Plank (2022) offer us an in-depth study about the legal issues one faces if wants to build on water. The urban population growth and rising ocean levels have prompted – authors say – many companies, coastal cities, and States to envision and plan structures at sea for the coming future. Crucial point is that – materially speaking – such floating cities are composed of two layers: a superstructure and a substructure. The former is the part above the “ground level” (buildings, solar panels, wind turbines, etc). The second one is the “foundation” (i.e., floaters), the part built below. In terms of construction, that is not a problem: both parts and their components can be made elsewhere and brought in site where to moor the substructure. But the legal status of the latter remains unclear. The variety of names are telling: “artificial islands, installations, platforms, structures, perhaps even vessels or ships” (Ibid., p. 437). Therefore, key questions the authors ask and discuss are:

“which of these terms or categories do floating cities belong to? What are the legal consequences? Are these substructures considered movable or immovable properties? What legal consequences do these different labels have? And does it

matter, again from a legal point of view, whether they are to be connected to the coast, to be situated in internal waters, the territorial sea, the EEZ, or even in the high seas?” (Ibid.)

Lin *et alia* (2022) start their exploration by noticing that “floating city” or “floating island” are something which do not exist in – and thus is still not regulated by – International law (2022, p. 438). Indeed, those terms never appear in the UNCLOS – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (in force since 1994). Therefore, Flikkema *et alia* (2021) are right in saying that floating islands bring a new type of structure into the ocean and that – in light of such a novelty – regulations for using and inhabiting floating islands will need to be developed. So, crucial void is that – considering the present legislation – such a new object is impossible to be clearly labeled. For example, Article 1 of the UNCLOS states that “dumping” does not include “the disposal of wastes or other matter incidental to, or derived from the normal operations of vessels, aircraft, platforms or other man-made structures at sea and their equipment”. Could floating cities be conceived of as “platforms” or “other man-made structures”? Lin *et alia* (2022) say that – as far as the former case is concerned – it depends on whether platforms are floating or fixed to the seabed (p. 438). And what about the latter case? Can floating cities be considered – for example – “artificial islands”?

Articles 87, 81, and 60 of UNCLOS states that a State has the exclusive right to construct “artificial islands” within its specific Exclusive Economic Zone⁶³ (EEZ – Art. 60) and on its continental shelf⁶⁴ (Art. 81). Whereas, instead, every State can construct artificial islands on high seas⁶⁵ (Art. 87). However, the convention does not clearly specify what an artificial island is. Elferink A. O., (2013), states that – according to Article 121 of the UNCLOS which is about natural islands – an

⁶³ Art. 55, UNCLOS, states: "The exclusive economic zone is an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established in this Part, under which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal State and the rights and freedoms of other States are governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention".

⁶⁴ Art. 76, UNCLOS, states: "The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance".

⁶⁵ Art. 86 and 87, UNCLOS, state respectively: "[high sea are] all parts of the sea that are not included in the exclusive economic zone, in the territorial sea or in the internal waters of a State, or in the archipelagic waters of an archipelagic State". And: "The high seas are open to all States, whether coastal or land-locked. Freedom of the high seas is exercised under the conditions laid down by this Convention".

artificial one should be considered as “an area of land that is above water at high tide that is not naturally formed” (Ibid.). In light of such an interpretation, “floating cities could be considered as artificial islands, since they are not naturally formed and lay above water” (Ibid.). If wanted, one could also add that – since Article 87 states that at high seas every State can build artificial islands – the construction of floating cities is always possible there. Flikkema *et alia* (2021) recognize that – to this extent – the concept of *Mare Liberum*, which describes international waters, leaves room to confusion above authority. Who would decide – in terms of right and rules – above such cities? In this regard, the example of Italian engineer Giorgio Rosa's “*Isola delle Rose*” is fitting. It has been an independent State founded on a platform fixed to the seabed in international waters, offshore of the Italian coast in the Adriatic Sea but beyond the former's territorial waters⁶⁶ (Bisulli, Naccari, 2009). The construction began in 1960, and the “micronation” (Graziani, 2012) self-declared independent on May 1, 1968. The experiment-experience ended with a military operation led by the Italian government, a naval blockade around the island and its destruction on June 25, same year. No other State in the world had recognized its independence.

However, considering currently existing UNCLOS and its above-mentioned interpretations, one can say that also such an example testifies to what extent floating urbanization discusses and challenges current land-based, state-related laws and their “breadth” (Art. 2, UNCLOS) upon the sea. Indeed, Lin *et alia* (2022) states that floating cities cannot be labeled neither as “platforms” (see above), nor as “artificial islands” since they are “not made of land-like materials, and [are] thus not an 'area of land'” (Ibid., p. 440). Author's effort in finding the right name is due to a twofold void: on the one hand, UNCLOS does not speak specifically about floating cities. On the other, the same word one could use to fit such an undecidability can refer to different object depending on the considered treaty (p. 439). That is the case for “installation” and “structure” as well, which are not defined in UNCLOS although used. Lin *et alia* (2022) – reading the *travaux préparatoires* of the same convention - note that (p. 441) there had been explicit claim from US and the Netherlands not to include floating structures under the category of “installation” because – normally, and according to the Convention on the Continental Shelf concluded in Geneva, 1958 – such a label was used to refer

⁶⁶ Art. 2 and 3, UNCLOS, state respectively: "The sovereignty of a coastal State extends, beyond its land territory and internal waters and, in the case of an archipelagic State, its archipelagic waters, to an adjacent belt of sea, described as the territorial sea". And: "Every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention".

to “fixed structures”. In that regard, authors also quote Soons' (1974) distinction between “artificial island” and “structure” based on materials. Indeed, Soons states that the difference among the two is that the latter is not made of “land materials”. But, since that definition does not rely to the purposes a structure is made for, Lin *et alia* (2022) conclude that the category of “installation” and “structure” might include floating platforms which have been (temporarily) anchored onto the seafloor with mooring lines (p. 442).

Another core void in law appears when one considers floating cities possibly connected in some way with a State's mainland (p. 444). Crucial question is here if such a city should become or not an integral part of that mainland. Indeed, the case arises issues on property and sovereignty. Unfortunately, again, UNCLOS is not clear about that, and more research is (urgently) needed (p. 457). Flikkema *et alia* (2021) proposes to assign floating islands with a State flag whose authority decides above the island. That is why they also claim for an adjustment in maritime law in order not to allow - for security and political reasons - foreign States to create large floating islands in others' EEZs. What if, for example, a State decided to build a floating city and anchor it outside its own EEZ (if possessed)? According to the UNCLOS, that case should be possible everywhere beyond territorial seas, since EEZs fall under the rules of international waters as far as “operation of ships, aircraft and submarine cables and pipelines” are concerned (Art. 57). Moreover, as I am going to show (Chapter 5), also the relation between “ships” and “floating cities” is unclear. In fact, the former can be defined - Lin *et alia* (2022) argues – as a floating object “used primarily to navigate from one place to another” (p. 444). So, its status is grounded on movement. They start falling under UNCLOS' Art. 60 – which is about installations and structures – only since they are “moored, submerged, or anchored for purposes other than what falls within 'the normal activities of ships'” (Ibid.). Therefore, from that perspective as well, floating cities – which are partially built elsewhere and then brought on (sea)site – participate in another moment of such a legal undecidability zone. On the one hand, authors suggest they could fall under the “ship” or “vessel” category till they are on the move towards the assigned location. Then, when moored, they should become “installations” or “structures” and be regulated through the related law. But, on the other hand, a floating city would be “non-movable” only till it has been detached again.

Therefore, such an object lies on a suspended condition, it testify and act within a void in law. It is kind of a U.F.O: an *Unidentified Floating Object*. It can neither be identified as a case of piracy, since this latter is defined as “any illegal acts of

violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft ... against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft” (UNCLOS, Art. 101). Indeed, a floating city cannot properly fall under the category of “ship”. Anyway, movement and mobility are its key characteristics: it moves and discuss maritime land-based laws thanks to the material movement (mobility) it receives from water. Therefore, Lin *et alia*'s (2022) statement should be taken seriously and brought to the forefront: “they are *a new category, unregulated* in the LOSC” (emphasis added, p. 445). “There is the possibility” - they add (p. 457) - “that floating cities may have different status when in different states”. What if a floating city moved among and pass through different EEZs? There is no clear answer to such a troubling question. All that reinforce the radical undecidability we are facing. In order to deeply delve into the issue, Lin *et alia* (2022) thus focus on the Netherlands and on its national laws. Specifically, they investigate how a floating city would be possible in Dutch territorial or internal waters.

There, key point is the difference between movable and immovable property. To the extents of my research, the reading they offer is crucial for situating the still legally unclear context in which floating urbanistic studios or companies work (see next chapter). The EEZ is not considered because – according to present Dutch Civil Code and UNCLOS – the Netherlands do not have property rights on the seabed under that zone (Lin *et alia*, 2022, p. 448). Until 2010, according to Dutch law, every floating object anchored or fixed to land or to the seabed was considered as an immovable property. That is why – for example – when works for Ijburg (a floating neighbor in Amsterdam) started, its houses were supposed to be defined as immovable property (Lin *et alia*, p. 449). But in 2010 a deeply significant change occurred. The Dutch Supreme Court stated that floating structures fall under the category of *ship*, according to the Dutch Civil Code (DCC). Indeed, article 8 states that “vessels are all things, other than aircraft, which, according to their construction, are *destined* to float and which float or have done so” (Ibid., emphasis added). Therefore, from that moment on, in the Netherlands – i.e. in its territorial and internal waters – each houseboats is a movable property, even if it is fixed, anchored or blocked in a canal. Two huge issues arise here.

On the one hand, since according to DCC movable properties are a unity and cannot be divided (Lin *et alia*, 2022, p. 450), floating houses in the Netherlands cannot but have – for the moment – only one owner each. Namely: it is not legally possible – for example – to build a floating building which has, on the same platform, different apartments with consequently different owners. That is a crucial

problem for developers. On the other hand, floating houses in the Netherlands are ships but – according to UNCLOS (see above) – by the moment they are fixed or anchored they should become “installations” or “structures”. That is to say that not only all floating, inhabited object at this moment in the Netherlands are kind of ships: IJBurg is an assemblage of ships, as Scoonship is, as all other floating houses and houseboats are. Moreover, this way they all participate also in the legal zone of undecidability, in the legal void discussed above. Facing such an issue, Lin *et alia* (2022, p. 451) trust in a coming amendment of law which allows floating platforms to start being treated as land. Nevertheless, other questions remain and keep the problem open: “what criteria must be met in order to be considered as a floating plot? Can one have land (i.e., the floating building plot) on top of other land (i.e., the water plot)?” (Ibid., p. 451). May the owner above differ from the one below? (Flikkema *et alia*, 2021). For all that question to be answered – Lin *et alia* (2022, p. 458) peremptory conclude - “it would require the Dutch land registration to be changed entirely”.

Finally, issues arise if one observes such U.F.Os from the perspective of planning practices. As far as the Netherlands are concerned, and specifically referring to their internal water, no big new problems come up. It is a matter of permits to be required at the national and/or at the local level (municipality). But, if floating structures have to be put in territorial waters or EEZs (see next Chapter), maritime law must be taken into account.

4.3 – From the archipelago to the Archipelago? Navigation and transduction as a way for figuring alter-urbanization potentials.

The Netherlands and its delta urbanism (Meyer, Nijhuis, Bobbink, 2012; Meyer, Nijhuis, 2013), seems a good ground where to explore if and how the Archipelago can work as a productive figure for *orienting* social change during the Planetary Flood. Indeed, in the Dutch country, a surplus extra-human nature (water) strongly and deeply interacts with our urbanized society. That is why – after the theoretical enquiry developed in Part One - I now propose to firstly direct attention to some landscapes, urban plans (or metabolic fixes) and visions for the Netherlands. Then, I offer the Archipelago as an *urban-politically productive*

figure. It may help in releasing the there (and elsewhere) embedded potentials for the urban revolution during the Planetary Flood, i.e., the coming “monsoon season” (Merrifield, 2006) out of metaphor.

Thus, crucial question are: *could water challenge – through its “superweed effect” (Moore, 2015, 2017) – the Capital’s capacity of control and predict it, and hence to take economic advantages (ecological surplus) from its unpaid work?* Namely: does the Planetary Flood open a post-capitalist and post-statal scenario in the Netherlands? How, if yes, is it materially in the making nowadays? How to prolong it towards alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) to be chosen and produced?

On the one hand, this second stage of the research still falls under the effort of bringing the planetary urbanization argument back to its revolutionary origins (Keil, 2018). Moreover, on the other, the specific fieldwork I carried out has implied some preliminary methodological choices to be explained.

To begin with, it has been a matter of *navigation*. Namely, of exploring the Dutch Delta from the perspective of its ubiquitous wetness. There, in fact, as above shown, water surrounds you. Whether it comes from the sky, rivers, or the sea, whether it flows beside the railway or the cycle track, beneath the plane or one of the million bridges you cannot but cross, water will simply be everywhere, at every time, *permeating life*. Thus, navigation (properly or more-than-wetly intended) seemed to me a coherent and productive way to conceive of movement in the Netherlands. It takes seriously the tendentially disappearance of differences between walking, cycling, living, taking a train, a bus, or a boat. From such a view, the becoming porous of the country appears in all its turbulence. Therefore, I collected data, feelings, notes, information, and precious conversations through such a sailing life I conducted between January and July 2022. By means of boats strictly conceived, books, trains, and walks I have been able to experience, dream with and be afraid of Dutch ubiquitous, engineered wetness. All that is reported in Chapter 5. Paragraph 5.1 takes the cue from a three-stage journey I did from the Europoort of Rotterdam till the inner city of Gorinchem, passing by the former’s ancient docks and Dordrecht. Instead, paragraph 5.2 is about the relation between boats and “the city”. It focuses on ship traces in urban space and on floating urbanism.

Specifically, I observed (5.1) the “Room for the River Program” (R4R) and the work of Blue21 (5.2). I chose these two examples starting from the hypothesis that – since they concern Dutch (and not only) society as a whole – political and

ecological issues would there be taken in major account than in purely private cases. Indeed, some of these latter examples - like the super-rich city-yacht *The World* - are used as counterpoints while discussing Blue 21's concept of "Blue Revolution". The R4R has been a national-scale plan (concluded in 2013) which consisted of 39 interventions of river courses transformation developed under the broader Delta Program political and planning framework. The related literature is presented and discussed together with three interviews I did with Frans Kljin (geographer, Q-Team R4R); Ralph Schielen (mathematician, Rijkswaterstaat - executive agency of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) and Pieter Schengenga (landscape architect - H+N+S Landscape Architects, Utrecht). Instead, Blue21 is a company developing floating urbanization projects ranging from private houses to future-oriented solutions for flood prone territories. I delved into their proposals by looking at their publications and by means of a double in-depth interview I did with the co-founder (Rutger de Graaf, Civil Engineering) and an employed architect (Barbara Dal Bo Zanon).

After this navigation, it has been time of *transduction*. Namely: as in Part One the Archipelago has been presented as a potential virtuality (at a high level of generality), now it works the same way. But, differently from before and as far as the Netherlands are concerned, it illuminates specific landscapes, urban practices, and spatial condensations. It helps in imagining and visualizing *how* the considered urban-political space-time is "in the grip of the possible" (Lefebvre, 1973a, p. 156), i.e., materially *open* to alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) which are not driven by the "nature-as-external" capitalist ecology. As Stanek (2011) has showed, Lefebvre himself used to discuss this way some architectural and urbanistic projects, such as Fourier's or Constants'. Thus, to that extent as well, the usage I offer of the updated "Urban Society" figure (the Archipelago) falls under Keil's (2018) claim about bringing the topic back to its revolutionary origins. Indeed, to me, the Archipelago - if put at work within the Dutch environment - could *orientate* the production of environment towards a post-capitalist ecology up to the Planetary Flood and where both human and non-human exoduses find *infrastructures*. That is why the way I observe the Netherlands is partially different from - for example - Swyngedouw's (1996, 2006). In fact, I do not only show that the Dutch geography is a cyborg one, i.e., a territory made of humans, technologies and non-human forces and "actors". Rather, I strive to suggest *how* - that way - it is *ambivalent*, how it is materially powerful of alter-urbanizations during the capitalist ecology's crisis we call "climate change".

Moreover, such a methodology also moves away from the widespread usage of “planetary urbanization” as a lens for visualizing capitalist-oriented transformations of time-space. Indeed, I do not provide the Archipelago as a new “name” for currently existing capitalism. Rather, *I offer it as a project for realizing radical democracy beyond the latter*. Here, it works as it did to Lefebvre: a meta-philosophical claim (and pro-proposal, see Lefebvre, 1972, in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 196) to reappropriate urbanism and build a different life after capitalism and the State, i.e., the urban revolution to be realized through and against contemporary planetary urbanization. Thus, in my argument, critique does not stop to description (diagnosis), nor that blocks its imagination (bad prognosis) into pure negative mazes. On the contrary, my major claim is to add – to the multitude of studies about contradictions – a small voice on potentials and possibilities, to bring critique till its *affirmative moment* (prognosis). By assuming – as deeply discussed in Chapter 1 – the general ambivalence of the urbanization of society, I now show how *non-human excess enters that process fostering and boosting the latter’s openness to a post-capitalist metabolism*. Of course, such a double-faced production of space-time will not be offered – progressively – as a sort of “destiny in the making”. Rather, I argue that in the Netherlands some urban-political visions, operations and techniques are deployed that can (and should) be appropriated. *Urban-political decisions* should be taken *about and through them* to produce a swerve beyond capitalism. Indeed, looking towards the direction – with Moore (2015, 2017) – of social change as production-of-environment, the Netherlands appear as an interesting lab. Moreover, being the (hypothesis of) metabolic life of the multitude a productive and architectural-oriented subjective tension which permeates social production, the Dutch context deploys a plethora of operative knowledge and instruments to be considered. The Archipelago is thus offered to *orientate* this urban-politically turbulent materiality. It is provided as something to be tempted, to be realized and built. It will not work as a tautology, nor as a destiny or a new name of capitalism. Rather, it is announced as a *project* for social practice to be collectively chosen.

That is why I have not only focused on some urbanistic projects by referring to the related scientific literature, but I also directly discussed them – through four interviews - with architects, geographers and engineers involved. *Indeed, I moved from the hypothesis that the latter professionals may embody – better than others (such as politicians tout-court) – traces of the social architect’s urban logos as I offered it in Part One of this research*. Namely, I suggest that such a *metabolic intelligence* may be observed “at work” in those practitioners’ subjectivity, visions, ethics, and fears. Even more since they operate in a country where the nexus

society-nature is a matter of civil engineering since a millennium. Of course, that is not to say that elsewhere – such as in social struggles – the urbanistic life of the multitude could not appear. Rather, I chose my exploring path for focusing and deepening (according with theoretical insights advanced in Part 1) the importance of techniques in order to imagining, and fight for the Archipelago (as an urban-political project). It is neither a matter of saying that the projects I studied and, mainly, the people I encountered are something like revolutionary avant-gardes consciously struggling an epochal war against capitalism with bridges and dams. For the moment at least, that could sound comic. As both the literature and the interviews show, the considered projects are not “socialist utopias” like those ones Lefebvre discussed (see Stanek, 2011). They are developed and/or supported by ruling institutions and powers. Nevertheless, there is a *residue*. They exceed capitalist ecology and question telluric, State-based forms of government. Such an excess is fostered – that is the point I advance – by the material excess of water and spatially fixed by landscape architects, engineers and geographers who work and think with its turbulent materiality. Therefore, the Archipelago is offered as an urban-political figure for visualizing and completely realizing that *openness*, taking care of its political, ecological, and technical features.

Some other methodological issues are worth to attention. Mostly, why I chose specifically the Netherlands (among lots of other wet countries/urbanized areas in the world) is to be explained. To begin with, that has not been the first choice. In fact, initially, I planned to do almost the same research – in terms of methodology and aims – in Singapore. Indeed, as it is well known, Koolhaas coined the idea of Bigness (1997, 2006) exactly starting from the recent urban history of the Asian island-State. The *Red Dot*'s extreme urbanism - which exceeds architecture itself by dismantling all forms and giving power to pure, endless transformation – appeared to me unprecedentedly interesting under climate change condition. In fact, in a thoughtful excerpt from *S, M, L, XL* (Koolhaas, 1997, p. 1083), the author writes: “the only tropical authenticity left is a kind of accelerated decay, a Conradian rot: it is the resistance to that tropicality that explains Singapore's uptightness. It corresponds to a deep primordial fear of being swallowed up by the jungle, a fate that can only be avoided by being ever more perfect, ever more disciplined, always the best”.

Such an image was, to me, a brilliant door from where to enter – also beyond Singapore – the historical encounter between climate change and the urbanization of society. Namely, it seemed to me that the Bigness in urbanism would be enlightened by new meanings while – worldly - non-human natures materially

threaten human life and infrastructures. Therefore, I planned to do a period of fieldwork in the Red Dot for offering an unprecedented reading of its urbanism. Aim would have been to show the latter as an *ambivalent* urban-political answer to non-human ontological excess. I would have liked to highlight the emancipatory, post capitalist and post-statal tension which inhabits within and stirs the Bigness. But unfortunately, because of Corona reasons, I have been stuck home. Nonetheless, the quarantine period has been useful for deepening theoretical knowledge upon the relation between planetary urbanization and ecological issues. Specifically, I then started focusing on Ocean Studies and the Dutch environment. Moreover, I began thinking of Cacciari's Archipelago as a productive figure for updating Lefebvre's argument around the urban revolution. At that point, I decided to do my field-work period in the Netherlands. In fact, as in Singapore, urbanism has there transformed an expanse of swamps into a rich, always *materially* in the moving country.

Finally, there is a last theoretical and methodological point to be stressed. Indeed, with my research, I suggest a perspective upon social change from *before and beside* what is usually considered a struggle. On the one hand, I do not focus on social or ecological movements, but on *if* and *how* their political claims are operationalized through urbanistic plans by politicians, engineers, and architects. What I am mostly interested in (in the Netherlands) is the technical dimension of the urban logos. On the other, *concrete, historically rising water is what* – in my hypothesis - *struggles*. In fact, according with Moore (2015, 2017), the former can be considered a “superweed effect” which deeply discusses capitalist world-ecology.

Therefore, guiding questions can be formulated as follows: are there, in the Netherlands, traces of urban-political, metabolic, infra-structured *alliances* between the non-human exodus (its going nowhere, which climate change reveals) and the human one (good planetary urbanization)? Are there ecological, political, and technical (in their tendential coincidence, see Part One) emerging suggestions for producing an urban-political *change in state* (Cuppini, 2023, p. 200) towards post-capitalism and alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) amid the Planetary Flood? Can the Archipelago be a productive figure for taking care of them and *orienting* – also beyond the Netherlands - the metabolic life of the multitude in such a direction?

As I show (Chapter 6), the *becoming-port of society* can be a possible – among others – path to be pursued for taking the chance of the Planetary Flood. There, in that project, in that movement of both *entwurf* from and immanent transformation

of the currently existing planetary urbanization, Hein's claim (2021) about planning for porosity may find a politics, an operative urban-political output.

Conclusions.

In this chapter, reasons, aims, and methodology have been introduced of the fieldwork I did in the Netherlands between January and July 2022. The present-day situation, together with a thousand-year long history of environmental engineering have appeared a good context where to let the Archipelago work. Indeed, the Dutch country and its landscape of polders offers an interesting perspective from where to observe the emerging Planetary Flood. Moreover, North Sea's increasing urbanization, floating urbanism development and huge civil engineering works to transform river courses give rise to an open, more-than-wet construction site (Cuppini, 2017a). One where the turbulent materiality of water matters and challenges established assumption in planning. *May that entail also deeper social transformations beyond capitalism and the State?*

In such a context, the research has been carried out by means of navigation and transduction. Firstly, I have sailed through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. That way, I observed, read, and discussed about currently existing urban configuration, plans, and involved political, economic, and social issues. Secondly, by means of transduction, the Archipelago is offered as an orienting project for envisioning the urban revolution and the Urban Society amid the Planetary Flood. As for Lefebvre, it is suggested as an immanent potential to be chosen and realized. The *becoming-port of society* – as I show in Chapter 6 - is one among others potential trajectories to be followed. Through it, Hein's claim about planning for porosity (2021) may finally find a politics, i.e., an urban-political praxis for building the Common during climate change.

Chapter 5

Navigating the Dutch archipelago.

Introduction.

This chapter reports the materials I collected during the fieldwork in the Netherlands, between January and July 2022. It is organized in two paragraphs. Both concern the navigating life I conducted there.

Specifically, 5.1 observes the porous Dutch landscape from the perspective of a navigable line (the Nieuwe Maas river) which connects the North Sea to the Noordwaard polder. I went along it by boat properly starting from the Europoort of Rotterdam. Thus, the paragraph shows how the ubiquitous wetness is engineered and water participates in the production of environment. Gigantic container ships seem to embody the turbulent materiality of the Ocean they traverse. Dordrecht appears stirred and bended by the water it is imbued of, while Gorinchem ironically encloses itself to protect from the slime. Then, the Room for the River program is presented, by means also of three interviews I did with as many practitioners involved. The former consisted of a “planning for porosity” (Hein, 2021) initiative through which a new production-of-environment was tempted. Indeed, crucial point and aim have been to create time-spaces which could host the turbulent, materially significant, and partially unpredictable excess of water.

Paragraph 5.2, instead, observes the Dutch porous landscape from the perspective of ships, ship-related infrastructures and floating urbanism. It reports materials I did not collect through a proper navigation, but along walks, cycling journeys and explorations by train. Nonetheless, in the ubiquitous wetness, those telluric-based movements get close to a sailing action. In fact, differences blur among boat, skyscrapers, canals, and streets commonly conceived. Specifically, I firstly show how ships still permeate the Dutch landscape. Whether they are floating

houses, floating commercial activities or proper boats. Then, I focus on the former and on Blu21's work. The latter is a world leading company in designing, envisioning and producing the blue metamorphosis of the city, i.e. what they call the "Blue Revolution". An exploration of their philosophy and vision is offered, also by means of a double interview I did with the founder and an architect involved. The *becoming-ship* of the urban space finally emerge. It points to a concrete scenario for the Planetary Flood.

5.1 – Archipelago Netherlands1: the Europe's door goes porous.

Navigating the Maas, three hours from the port and one from the city of Rotterdam is Dordrecht, a 600-year-old island. Born out of the St. Elisabeth flood (1421), you cannot tell whether it is land, sea, or river. The houses are curved, the alleys damp, the cobblestones wavy. (From my field-work diary).

5.1.1 - Navigating through porosity: the North Sea.

In the light of the existing literature on *porosity* as far as social and urban studies are concerned (Benjamin, 2007; Sennet, 2015; Stavrides, 2007; Viganò, 2018), Hein (2021) proposes to use that concept for thinking of and planning port areas. As she writes (Ibid., p. 2):

“Porosity can aid understanding of how sea and land, and port, city, and hinterland have interconnected over time. It asks whether the size, tightness, and durability of maritime pores and their permeability in a port city territory can predict adaptability in times of transition. Does the degree of porosity, the number of openings in dykes, the presence of maritime pockets in the city, and the territory lead to greater resilience of port city activities? Does the existence of porous borders allow for easier transitions?”

On the one hand, Hein takes into account sea level rising (Ibid., p. 5) and – in such a context - explicitly offers her argument as a way for “creat[ing] a new water awareness among politicians and citizens... where the ports of the future are designed as places that benefit all stakeholders involved (and not only a few select decision makers)” (Ibid.). On the other, she introduces the concept of “port-cityscape” for grasping how far port activities permeate the territory beyond port areas strictly conceived. To that regard, she writes (Ibid., p. 4): “the result is a port cityscape, a networked space that extends from land to sea, including ships and pipelines, port facilities and warehouses, industrial and logistic structures, headquarters, and retail buildings, but also housing and leisure facilities”. Elsewhere (Hein, Couling, 2020, p. 9), authors add: “the port cityscape is a conceptual framework that aims to overcome these divisions through a focus on the sea-land continuum”. Therefore, porosity is a multiple concept. Firstly, it is a *characteristic*, it points to the features of a space where things, materials, objects, and people can – in different ways - pass through. Secondly, porosity is offered as an *analytical lens* for unveiling currently existing sea-land continuums. Thirdly, it can be – Hein claims (2021) – a *planning figure* for facing climate change. At once, it could help in socializing port activities and infrastructures’ tentacular pervasiveness beyond the harbor not to leave the former in the hands of a few stakeholders. In fact, Couling and Hein (2020, p. 7), argue that the porous perspective on and towards port-cityscapes involves the shift “from conceptualization to design”. Namely: from analysis to (also) praxis.

In light of such a manifold concept, I firstly offer an exploration of the Dutch environment by weaving literature and insights from a three-step boat journey I did. The *navigation* started in the North Sea. It passed by the Europoort of Rotterdam, its ancient docks, Dordrecht (a city-island one hour on boat far from Rotterdam) and ended in Gorinchem. The latter are both in the “inland”, at the border with the province of Noord-Brabant. There, the Noordwaard polder begins. Then, at that point, I start focusing specifically on the *Room for the River Program*. It is introduced in the second part of the paragraph as an example of porosity and consisted of 39 specific interventions of rivers’ courses transformation. One among them was precisely about flooding Noordwaard. Even though the program was not directly related to port activities, it seems to participate in the construction of that networked port-cityscape which Hein talks about. In the interweaving of planetary urbanization and climate change, the former looked in fact for an infra-structured, not-alienated alliance (which has proved to be insufficient) with non-human excess. That is why, before considering the R4R, I show how – through porosity in analysis

- the Netherlands are becoming an *archipelago*, where differences between land, sea, rivers, cities, and ports are blurring.

Geo-physically speaking, the North Sea is a shallow sea. Maximum depth is around 70–80 meters, while large areas in the southern shelf are only 40 meters deep or less (Couling, Hein, 2020, p. 10). Moreover, this latter part has been a fertile plain settled by large numbers of people from 12,000 BC to 6,000 BC. Then, it was flooded around 8,000 BC (Ibid.). That is why, beside navigation, also extraction (initially of sand only) has been a widespread practice since a long time. Moreover, a dense network of commercial, cultural, and architectural (in the intertwining of these dimensions) exchanges developed since Middle Age among cities which surrounded the North Sea⁶⁷. Therefore, through centuries and, more recently, thanks to the discovery of oil fields in the 1960s (Ibid.), such a process of urbanization has increased. Followings maps and pictures shows that degree of infrastructures' pervasiveness which is rapidly transforming the sea in "an extension of industrial and urban settlements onshore" (Jørgensen, in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 167). The first one (Fig. 22, by Couling, in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 185) displays the petroleum grid, with its submarine pipelines, routes, and extraction platforms (which, legally speaking, are *vessels*. See Chapter 4 of this research and Couling, in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 197). Instead, the second (Fig. 23, Ibid., p. 179), the third and the fourth ones (Fig. 24, 25) are, respectively, about all current usages of the Dutch continental shelf, the future scenario (2050, Ibid., p. 182) in the most advanced case and the areas nowadays occupied by windfarms (Ibid., p. 180). Indeed, at present, less than 0.5 percent of the total surface of the North Sea hosts oil, gas, or other energy-related structures (Jørgensen, in Couling and Hein, 2020, pp. 166-167). But, before 2050, on the one hand, petroleum extraction may be end. On the other, it is expected that between 10,000 and 25,000 new wind turbines will be installed. For the Dutch shelf, the "Sustainable Together 2050" scenario states that energy-related activities may occupy almost 25 percent of the area (Ibid.). Finally, while the fifth image (Fig. 26) shows an already working windfarm (Ibid., p. 231), the sixth one (Fig., 27, Jocker Pictures) is about the offshore hotel where those working at the wind turbines' maintenance live.

⁶⁷ The Hanseatic League has been the most influent and important one among the associations of cities which emerged. See Maschke (1991) and Pichierrri (1997).

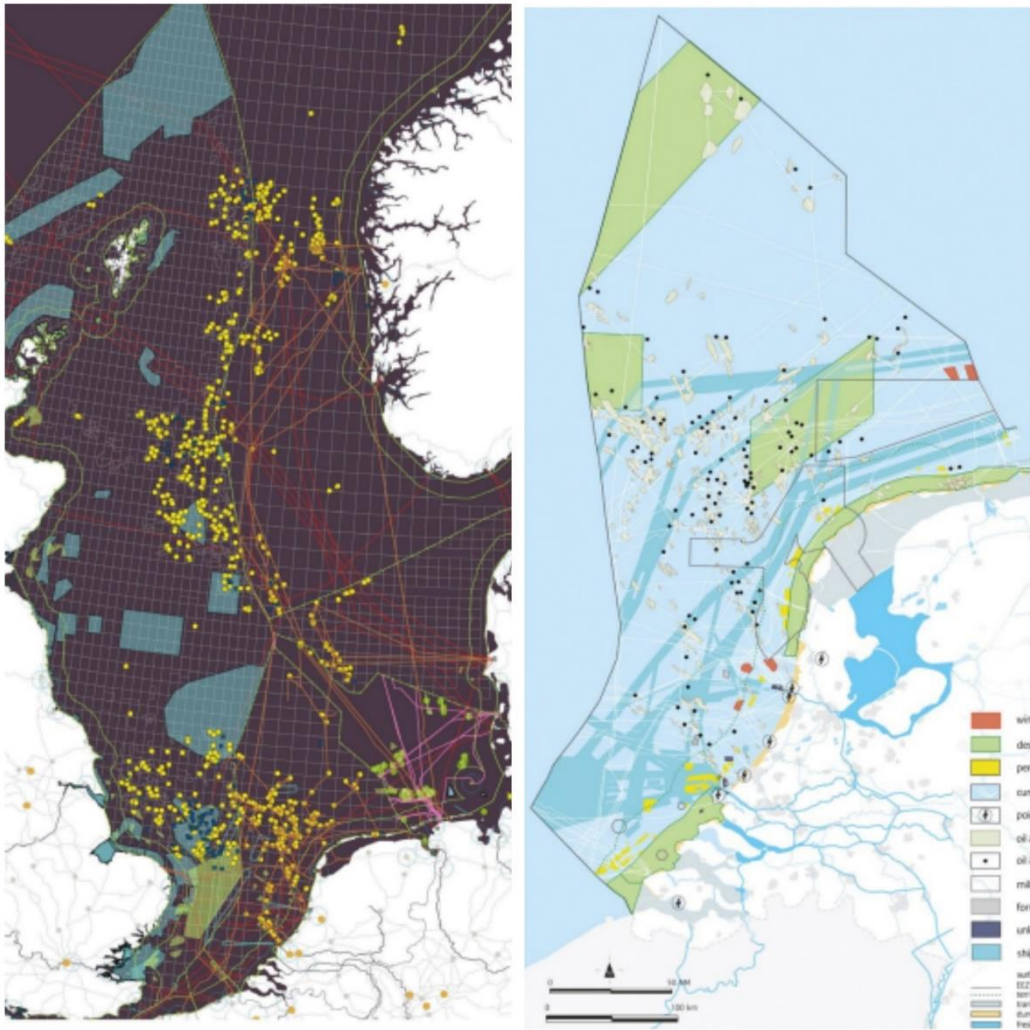


Figure 22: the petroleum grid.

Figure 23: current usages of the Dutch continental shelf.

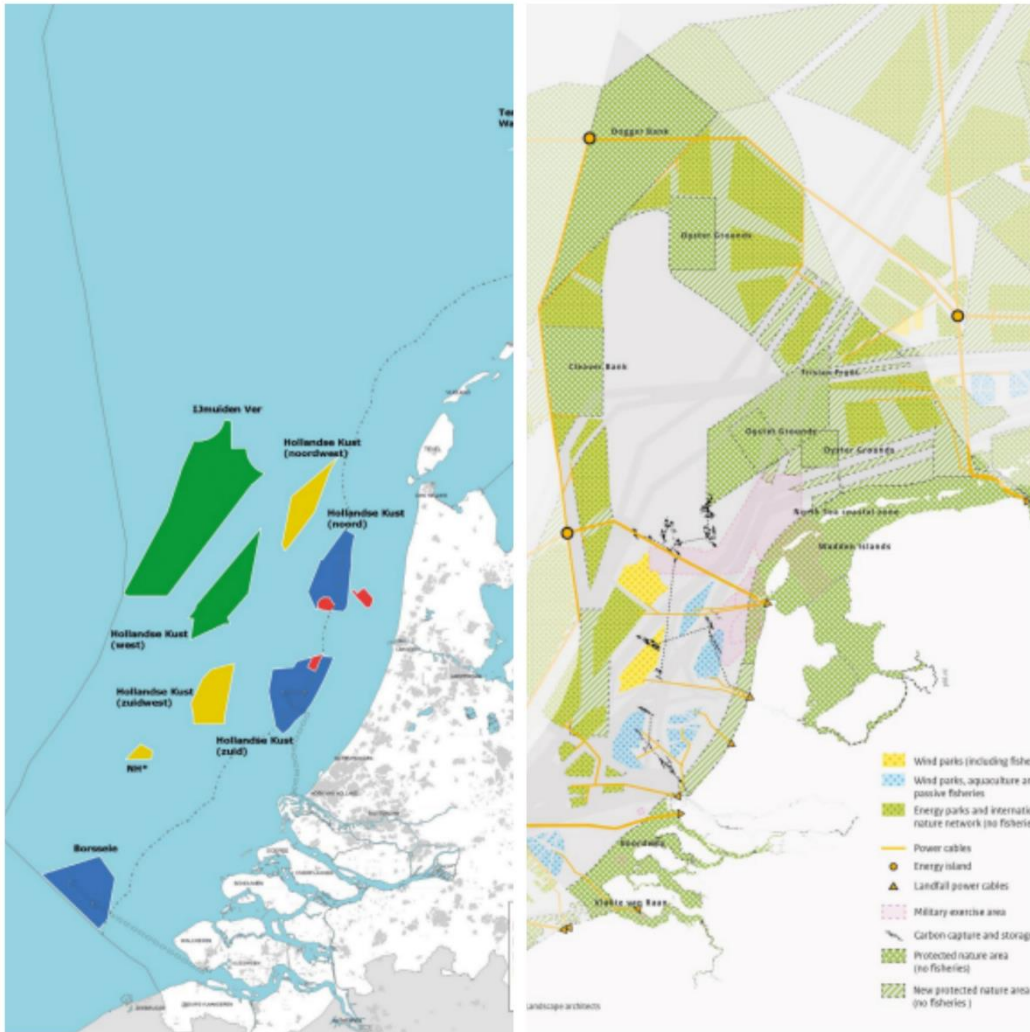


Figure 24: areas nowadays occupied by windfarms.

Figure 25: the future scenario in the most advanced case.



Figure 26: an already working windfarm.



Figure 27: offshore hotel.

Moreover, such a network of infrastructures is not (only) a kind of cold skeleton of machines. A more-than-human proto-metropolis is emerging. In fact, on the one hand – even though under very bad working conditions – about 60.000 people are still working on oil or gas platforms in the North Sea (Couling, in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 199-201). At the same time, other thousands are employed in the maintenance of wind farms and thus living offshore in dedicated floating accommodations (Ibid.). On the other hand, as Jørgensen shows (Ibid., pp. 167-

171), lots of ecosystems *have been created by and reproduce through* the interaction of those infrastructures and non-human natures. To that regard, the author writes (p. 168): “for *Lophelia pertusa* corals, for example, these installations seem to function as steppingstones connecting natural reefs that are otherwise isolated from each other”. That is why she thoughtfully adds (Ibid.): “interconnectivity is crucial to long-term species survival, especially in the face of climate change”. In fact, some colonies “have been shown to benefit from the supply of larvae from colonies living on oil and gas installations” (p. 172) – thus questioning the opportunity to remove the latter when their human-oriented utility will run out. Therefore, Jørgensen strongly criticizes those policies which consider nature as “permanent and static” (p. 171) and only human activity and infrastructures to be transient. Against such perspective, she claims for an “urban thinking” (p. 169) in marine ecosystems preservation able to think of them as “viscous and changing” (p. 172). It should be one up to imagining a multifunctional use of space where human activities and ecosystems are not conceived as mutually exclusive but co-productive (p. 169).

A proto *archipelago* is hence emerging which extends from the North Sea towards the Netherlands, Germany, UK, and Denmark through a techno-natural entanglement of human’s and non-human’s processes, artificial inhabited or energy-related islands, and more-than-humanly populated routes. Indeed, it stretches across various territorial waters and includes working and hotel-like platforms, natural islands (as the Frisian one), and man-made reclaimed areas. Flevoland is one among them: till the 1960s it was simply flooded, but now consists of an artificial huge island in the IJsselmeer where more than 400 thousand people live. If one looks back to the child drawing proposed above (chapter 4), that future does not seem so remote. In fact, as Ramos and Diekema argue (in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 128), currently existing Dutch landscape appears as one where “elements are woven...as an artificial, intelligent nature, seemingly *culled from the co-joined imaginations of a naturalist, a planner, and a scientist*” [emphasis added]. It deeply challenges ecological and critical imagination by offering *climate itself* as an “artifact” (Satellietgroep, in Couling and Hein, 2020, pp. 280-281). The latter – instead of being an external condition - is deployed as a created, engineered, and infra-structured metabolism where non-human and human’s movements and creativity are inextricably intertwined. A productive *approximation* seems to take place through the mesh, i.e., the field of biotic and a-biotic forces.

Therefore, while - in analysis – the lens of porosity is able to observe that condition, as far as practice is concerned, it should *coherently* orient – according to

Hein (2021) – decision-making in urban planning not to leave it in the hands of a few stakeholders. Indeed, even more facing climate change and rising sea levels, to her and Couling (2020, p. 73) it is a matter of providing “different methodologies toward planning for an expanded understanding of the urban, whether dry or wet”. That is to say, the need seems to emerge *to socialize* the production of the above-described metabolism as much as possible. Porosity should thus also take seriously the fluid and turbulent materiality of the sea/ocean in practice, and not to think of bringing it under control (Ibid.). “There will never be” – Ledgard says (in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 64) – “a Neil Armstrong moment in the ocean”, since it is “a journey inward, toward blindness...it is hostile to you” (Ibid.). Moreover, and consequently, porosity should also be able in working with and opening the space to *time*, to its multiplicity and partial un-predictability, which usual cartographic-based plans cannot take into account (Ibid., p. 77). “We need visions” – Couling and Hein argue (2020, p. 116) – “that can create awareness and inspire design research, extending the field of architecture beyond the shoreline and embracing the spatial challenges of the ocean. The sea is not a void or a tabula rasa, but a *moving volume*” (emphasis added).

Next picture (Fig., 28) shows the vision for the future *archipelago* Netherlands proposed by Professor Jan Rotmans (2021).

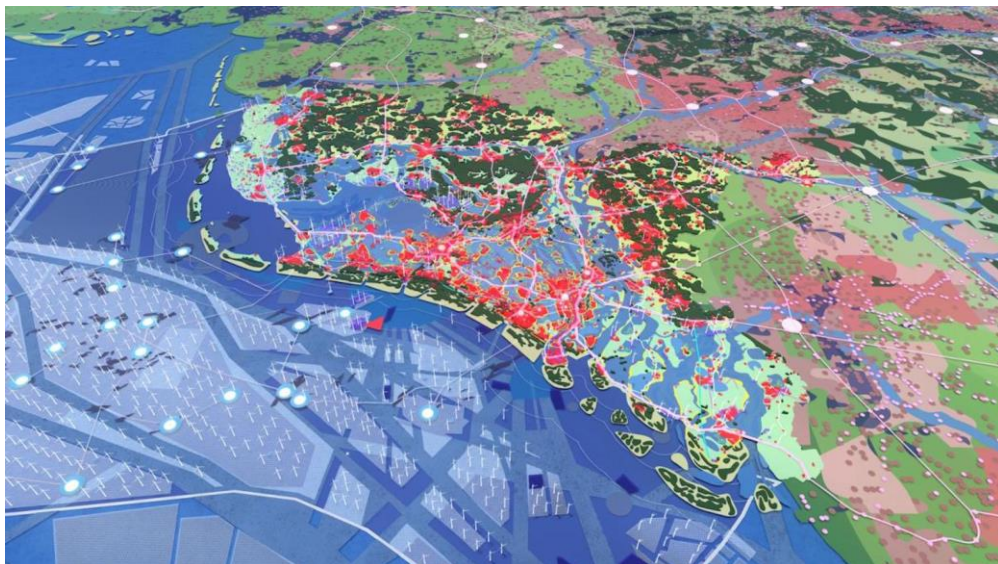


Figure 28: the future Netherlands (Rotmans, 2021, Credit: TU Delft / KuiperCompagnons).

As he says (Ibid.), it is an optimistic view, which displays how risks can be converted into expertise to be exported and profits. Social and ecological issues are there solved – to him - in a new Dutch heaven. On the one hand, it seems to embody Couling and Hein’s claim. On the other, at least for the moment and despite the technical interconnection, a proper urban life does not take place *through* the North Sea and the “inland” Netherlands. In fact, as Couling shows (in Couling and Hein, 2020, pp. 199-201) people living offshore do not properly “feel” the sea and heavily suffer the working day which regiments them as they were forced home (Ibid.). Moreover, it is not neither possible to visit or pass through the North Sea with public services, which further distances the opportunity to inhabit differently that archipelagic, circulatory, and techno-natural space. Therefore, amid Rotmans’ vision and the present, *the (time)space of urban-political negotiation is open* and may take different directions.

5.1.2 - Navigating through porosity: the Europort of Rotterdam.

Something slightly different happens if one considers the Europort. Firstly, as the map below shows (Fig. 29), it extends from the (artificial) shoreline on the North Sea to the inland city-island of Dordrecht. Indeed, on the one hand, it stretches continuously till the agglomeration of Rotterdam, which is about 40km far from the westernmost point. But, on the other, some more lots appear if one sails eastwards for a further 30km. Nonetheless, the hugest port of Europe and the eighth in the world for shipped tons (De Langen *et alia*, 2015 p. 27) permeates the Dutch hinterland also through a network of subsidiary ports and related transport infrastructures. This way, it reaches the city of Coevorden, Delfzijl, Moerijk and Alphen aan den Rijn. Moreover, a web of pipelines starts from Rotterdam to distribute the oil, related products, and various gasses from the port (where they are stored ore produced) towards elsewhere in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany (Fig. 30, from Ibid., p. 37).

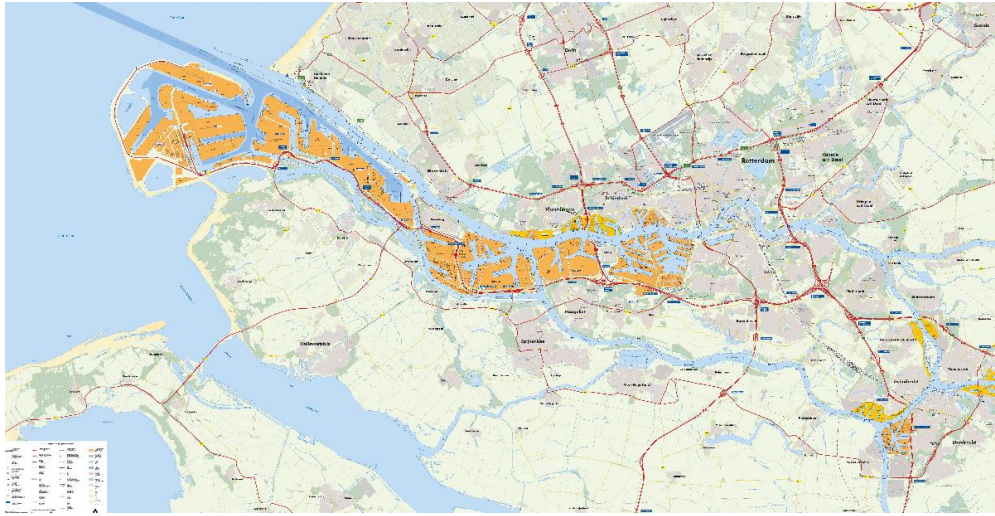


Figure 29: Port of Rotterdam (Rotterdam Transport).

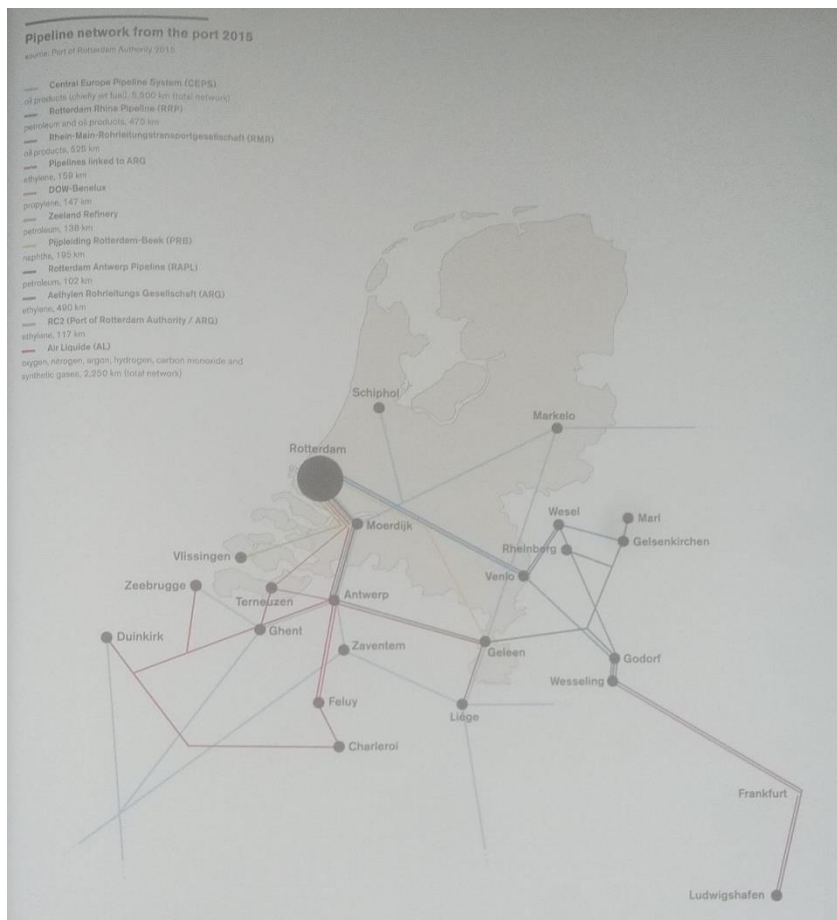


Figure 30: Port-pipelines infrastructure (De Langen et alia, 2015).

Therefore, canals, rivers, ships, and port-related facilities shape a kind of tentacular infrastructure which innervates the Delta region. With a private boat, it would be possible to navigate through all that territorial crumbling. Starting from the North Sea, after having wondered across the archipelago, one could enter the Maas in Hoek Van Holland and sail along such a network. There, differences would gradually disappear between mainland and sea, a Rhine branch and the extension of a sea's arm which surrounds an agricultural field, between floating houses, farms, and ships, between docks, artificial islands-neighborhoods, urban boat services and commercial ones. A new cyborg (Swyngedouw, 1996, 2006) *archipelago* would slowly appear, of course denser, but no less hybrid than the former. Indeed, one must remember that, even though nowadays it is no more used, it would be possible to follow the river route towards the Main and thus the Danube to then reach Costanza (Romania) for finally entering the Black Sea (De Langen *et alia*, 2015 p. 220). However, without a private boat, public services and visits can be used to sail - at least - from the Europoort to Dordrecht. But, unfortunately, because of the huge distance, one cannot get on the same ship at Maasvlakte 2 (the westernmost docks) to get off in Dordrecht. The journey has to be divided into three steps.

I started in Rotterdam. From there, one has various options to reach the westernmost point of the port: the bike, the car, and a mixture of train and boat. I chose the last one. Firstly, by the sub urban metro, I went to Hoek Van Holland, a small city on the North Sea shoreline. After the underground stretch, the railway almost follows – from the other side of the Maas - the more ancient docks of the port and then the MOT area. At this final step, it stops in small villages – such as *Steendijkpolder* – which, beside facing the oil storage infrastructure, are – as the name itself suggests – nothing but formerly flooded zones. They can be imagined as artificially made islands that are now inhabited thanks to a system of small canals and pumps to dry water out. Finally, in Hoek Van Holland, a public boat service is available to reach the Maasvlakte 2. Indeed, a museum has been installed there and 2-hours long visits can be booked to sail through the newly built docks and dunes. Cutting perpendicularly across the rough waters of the Maas' mouth with the stormy North Sea on the right, one faces a different dimension of water which in the “inland” appears more rarely. On the small boat, the river is not a canal: the turbulent materiality of its moving volume goes immediately out of metaphor - if there ever was (Fig. 31).



Figure 31: Nieuwe Maas mouth, Hoek Van Holland (my photo).

Only once the first docks have been reached, the navigation gets easier and in thirty minutes one arrives at the museum. There, the recent history, and current usages of the port are deployed. Images and models show how, since the early 2000s, feasibility studies have been conducted to enlarge the then biggest port in the world. Works started in 2008 and end in 2013. To build the Maasvlakte 2, an area of about 2000 hectares has been reclaimed from the North Sea. Needed sand (around 365 million cubic meters) has been mostly extracted 50km offshore. The total volume would be able to cover the whole city of Rotterdam, except for the top of few skyscrapers. Movements of materials have then inevitably destroyed some ecosystems. To cope with such issues, lots of other large-scale interventions have been done. As an example, new dunes to let those environments reproduce have been created south of the port together with a bird island in Massvlakte 2 (Van der Meulen *et alia*, 2015; Van der Meulen *et alia*, 2014). Moreover, architects, planners and politicians involved have considered the port-city integration issue. In fact, as previously shown, that is a crucial problem also for Rotterdam. If, centuries ago, commercial activities and urban ones strictly conceived were strongly related, now

– with the growing in ships’ tonnage – that is no more the case. On the one hand, port imaginers persist in people’s minds (Harteveld, 2021), and some projects are being developed to convert to urban usages some inner docks (Jansen *et alia*, 2021). But, on the other – as far as the westernmost port areas are concerned – some gaps remain. As Dunne shows (in Couling and Hein, 2020, p. 212), the Europoort is a heavily industrialized area which is difficult to inhabit:

“Europoort is conveniently hidden and inaccessible. There are buffers or landscaped borders all around it: fences, walls, trees, rivers, canals, roads and motorways (as there are around all the terminals and large industrial plants in the port), cutting it off physically and visually from the neighbouring towns of Pernis, Brielle, Oostvoorne, and Rozenburg. The towns function like little autonomous *islands*”. [emphasis added]

Therefore, the museum and the public visits to the docks look like a still shy effort to cope with such a bordered archipelago. At least, a connection is created which enable the people to start inhabiting the port and feel it as also their place. Nonetheless, further political and technical solutions are needed not to let it become – only – a wonderful machinic show. In fact, it appears almost as such when one sails through its piers and the hugest container ships in the world which are there moored.

Being completely automatized, Maasvlakte 1 and 2 seem devoid of workers. Highly specialized figures control from the distance trucks and cranes involved in the movement of cargos (Fig. 32, 33, my photos). From the boat, people can ecstatically (Fig. 38, 39, my photos) observe dozens of mammoth vessels full of container towers as they were multicolored, assembled skyscrapers. Extraction ships enrich the landscape with their various designs. They occupy the gaze as they never can, usually being far offshore. Their manifold levels wedged into each other appear as *industrial floating towns* (Fig. 34, 35, 36, 37, my photos) coming from another time. Huge cranes and other related infrastructures move all around these iron buildings enacting a kind of machinic dance. Gigantic arms and legs intertwine as they were moving bridges and escalators to charge, connect and go through such a sea-sky archipelagic metropolis. Being stuck in these thoughts, I started to forget that they are almost uninhabited. Nonetheless, it seemed to me that the show aimed to sublimate and integrate the sea’s strength I had previously experienced crossing the Maas. Strong winds, mortal waves, unpredictable weather events and water’s multiple currents appeared to be there more-than-wetly changed in state. At once,

the iron bigness of the Europort seemed to me *wet* of such a turbulent materiality: the former carried the latter's imprint deep inside.

At the end of the visit, an image hit me (Fig. 40, 41, my photos). It is the point where the sea touches a pier. Here, that kinship is symbolized. When the urban enters the sea, both matters change and goes *greener*: the former hosts new species and loses autonomy, while the latter covers and permeates it with new life. Chapter 6 will critically delve into the political and theoretical implications of such an encounter - in light of what discussed in Part 1.

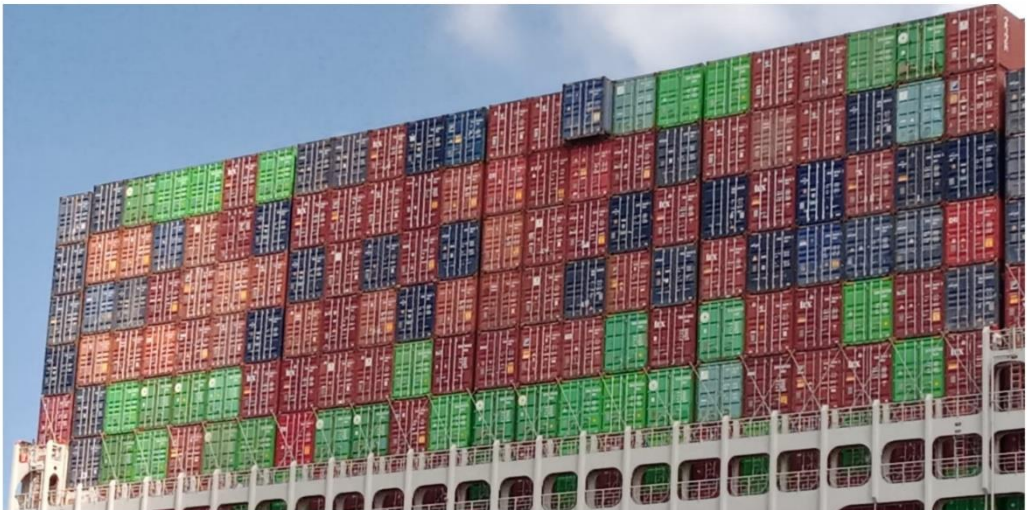


Figure 32: Cargo Ship, Europort (my photo).

Figure 33: Cargo Ship, Europort (my photo).



Figure 34: *industrial floating town*, Europoort (my photo).

Figure 35: *industrial floating town*, Europoort (my photo).



Figure 36: *industrial floating town*, Europoort (my photo).

Figure 37: *industrial floating town*, Europoort (my photo).



Figure 38: ecstatic port experience, Europoort (my photo).

Figure 39: ecstatic port experience, Europoort (my photo).



Figure 40: where the sea touches a pier, Europoort (my photo).



Figure 41: where the sea touches a pier, Europoort (my photo).

After this first step, my navigation across the archipelago Netherlands continued eastwards but, again, from Rotterdam city. As previously said, it is impossible – without a private boat – to sail from the North Sea to the inland. Because of the long distance, it is neither possible – during the same journey – to go throughout the whole port, from the Maasvlakte to the inner docks. Nonetheless, one can visit the latter starting from beneath the Erasmus Bridge, which cut across

the Maas and links Rotterdam Centrum with Feijenoord. There, boat tours are available for the ancient port.

Main differences are two with respect to the westernmost areas. Firstly, it is now impossible to get off the ship. Therefore, a stronger feeling of separation arises. One starts and ends from the “city”, while the boat ends up being more something like a protected vehicle which alienates from a deeper experience of the port-city continuum, rather than a connective infrastructure. Moreover, moored freighters and container ships are smaller than before, thus they do not stick too much to the gaze, making it even harder to get the port’s *Stimmung*. Nonetheless – on the other hand – a higher degree of integration appears. Indeed - as the pictures below show (Fig. 42, 43, De Langen *et alia*, 2015, p. 29 and p. 131) - while the *Massvlakte 1* and *2* are devoted only to container deposit and exchange, sailing eastwards, mineral or oil storage zones (the MOT, private lots owned by major companies which are not accessible to the public, *Ibid.*, p. 52) and housing gradually become more and more intertwined. The maximum of such integration is reached exactly in the agglomeration area of Rotterdam. At the Maashaven for example – as also De Langen *et alia*, 2015 p. 220 show – projects are under evaluation to even create new floating communities between the docks and the ancient vessels currently moored there.



Figure 42: map of an inhabited Port, Rotterdam (De Langen *et alia*, 2015, p. 131).

Figure 43: an inhabited Port, Rotterdam (De Langen *et alia*, 2015, p. 29).

Will it be, again, the *feast of the port*, as some paintings from Marseille seem to colorfully show? The iridescent colors and impressionistic brushwork give the first two paintings (Fig. 44, 45) a frenzied movement. One must feel in them the roaring of the harbor, the confusion, and the crowd-musician that marks such Stimmung. There, the port is revolution, exchange, clash, plenitude of life released to trade and exploration. It is a festive togetherness. Instead, the third painting (Fig. 46) is a montage. Actually, the cathedral in the background is located far to the west

of the small port of Vallon Des Auffes (foreground). The picture thus represents the port in its syncretic, cumulative, interconnective capacity. It is a celebration of the harbor as a productive machine of communal mestizo life, of architectural, ethnic, cultural, and political encounters.



Figure 44: Carrera Augustin (1876-1952), *Remorqueurs et bateaux dans le Vieux-Port* (Musée Regards de Provence, visited July 10, 2022).

Figure 45: Genin Lucien (1894-1958), *Embarcadère pour le Chateau d'If, Quai de la Fraternité* (Ibid.).

Figure 46: AstridB (1969-), *Le Vallon des Auffes sanctuarisè*, Musée Regards de Provence (Ibid.).

Back to the archipelago Netherlands, I now move eastwards again to reach Dordrecht and the Noordwaard polder.

5.1.3 - Navigating through porosity: Dordrecht and Gorinchem.

This final step of the navigation as well is publicly available. Along the journey on the Maas – which lasts less than one hour – one can observe the succession of various shipyards and encounter oil freighters, container, and mineral cargo ships. Approaching Dordrecht, and mostly once landed, I felt myself swallowed in an engineered landscape where differences between land and river, city and port, houses and ships strongly disappeared (Fig. 47 to 56, my photos). Again, the Stimmung was of an archipelago where bridges, routes, and railways melted in a kind of ubiquitous, more-than-natural, not-only-artificial wetness. Bikes along the streets lost their allure of green, future-oriented contemporaneity to pass it onto that intermingling of waters, ships and (re)productive life. As I wrote on my diary:

“The houses are curved, the alleys damp, the cobblestones wavy. Softly, she [Dordrecht] announces a secret from the future, being suspended like so many of her peers in the Netherlands. Passing ships on the water's surface ask her for sand, lots of sand to return it immediately back. What is going on is much more than a brushing against each other, given their mutual masses. Here, the difference is only lexical between earthquake, tide, and engineering. Their motions work at the same drawing. Common pencil made of wind. Those who arrive by train find not Dordrecht, but its past. The station stands still at 1421 (Saint Elizabeth flood); facing the flood, it still awaits wayfarers and goods from the ground. A line of containers crawls on the tracks, not caring for the cycling Middle Age”.



Figure 47: arriving in Dordrecht (my photo).

Figure 48: arriving in Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 49: inner Dordrecht (my photo).

Figure 50: inner Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 51: inner green river, Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 52: inner docks, Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 53: curved houses, Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 54: curved houses, Dordrecht (my photo).



Figure 55: navigating the Maas (my photo).

Figure 56: navigating the Maas (my photo).

Sailing a bit more eastwards, one finally encounters a river fork. On the right, continuing backwards, the Noordwaard area appears in all her extension. Instead, a little further on the left there is Gorinchem. The former was previously a polder, but, in the framework of the Room for the River Program, it has been converted into a huge flooding area. Here below I delve into that large-scale planning initiative. Before, an element is worth to attention about Gorinchem.

What strikes of the town is, firstly, her form (Fig. 65) and, secondly, the swamp which stands beside it (Fig. 62, 63, 64, my photos). Some cannons (Fig. 61, my

photo) recall ancient wars, while symbolically mark and defend the border. Instead, the preserved (and walkable) walls circle still fixes the city on the wet ground as a star surrounded by waters. Cozy houses, bars, two churches (Fig. 59, 60, my photos), and well-maintained canals – together with the aforementioned architectural outline – let the city seem a perfect whole in herself. But, in the meanwhile, the swamp pushes with her form-less wilderness, disturbing smells and flocks of mosquitoes. Thus, Gorinchem appeared to me as a built effort to refuse and deny hybridization: a sham mediation, a bad show which performs a false wholeness. It reminded me of Anastasia (Fig. 66), the invisible city Calvino talks about (2016 [1972], p. 12). There, kites in the sky and concentric canals on the ground surround the built environment, a unity where no desire is lost. But, Marco Polo says, that is an illusion. While, there, alienation in labor made that *trompe-l'oeil* possible, in Gorinchem, the inner effort of controlling and measuring nature obscures (and keep out) the latter's real wilderness. In both cases, inhabitants "inhabit their wish and cannot but be happy about that" (Ibid.). That is why I wrote on my diary:

"In Gorinchem one would say there is a war, and you would not be mistaken. Perhaps you may die, if one does not understand in time how to fight it. Mighty walkable walls are dam to the pressing muddy forest. Here, those who live floating [Fig. 57, 58, my photos] are almost pitiful. Blindfolded in your mosquito nets, rooms are to you prisons and agony, I have no doubt. You cannot mediate by rafts with the swamp. Nevertheless, Gorichem - useless, sclerotic in its walls, an indecisive island, neither fortress nor forest - allows itself to be followed in the fortified perimeter. This way, it grants its preserved show at the cost of slime and mosquitoes to expose. Cannons that do not thunder, stinking comedy. What game is that worthwhile to? You are swamp, Gorinchem, why this wretched lie?"



Figure 57: floating houses outside Gorinchem (my photo).

Figure 58: floating houses outside Gorinchem (my photo).



Figure 59: leaning steeple, Gorinchem (my photo).



Figure 60: leaning steeple, Gorinchem (my photo).



Figure 61: canons, Gorinchem (my photo).

Figure 62: walkable walls, Gorinchem (my photo).

Figure 63: the swamp outside, Gorinchem (my photo).

Figure 64: the swamp outside, Gorinchem (my photo).



Figure 65: Gorinchem (Mooi Gorinchem)

Figure 66: *Anastasia* (AI, cittAIinvisible)

Therefore, differently from Dordrecht, porosity found in Gorinchem little room. There, the Dutch operational archipelago seemed to be interrupted by an island which strongly wants to take care of its illusory autonomy.

Instead, that is not the case of those places and people covered by the Room for the River Program. Here below, after having brushed Noordwaard along my backwards navigation, I delve into that planning initiative. It represents an interesting example of how – amid the Planetary Flood - new *productive practices* may emerge for approximating water's exodus. That way, they crumble the ground and let the archipelago Netherlands enlarge through the folds of the territory.

5.1.4 - The Room for The River Program (R4R): people before profits!

In the 1990s, the Netherlands experienced two huge floods: in winter 1993/1994 and in 1995. On the one hand, the government decided immediately for a reinforcement of dikes and protections. On the other, it also started to envision a new strategy for rivers management in the medium-long term. In 2006, the national authorities formally approved the implementation of measures such as: excavation of riverbeds, the backward dike realignments, the lowering of floodplains, the removal of obstacles from the latter – i.e., bridge abutments, mounds for housing or industries – and the creation of ‘floodways’, i.e., temporary “green rivers” or bypasses (Klijn, de Bruin, de Hoog, Jansen, Sijmons, 2013; Mosselman, 2022). The *Room for the River Program* (R4R) was born and operative. The approval was anticipated by an evaluation process of more than 700 ideas and proposals. In the end, 39 projects were selected for as many specific interventions along the three Rhine branches (Ibid.). As Van Alphen argues (2016), these measures in particular – together with the Delta Plan in general - were not designed to reduce flood risks to zero. A margin of uncertainty could not but remain, since it is inherent in all mathematics (see also the interview with Ralph, here below) and because uncertain scenarios caused by climate change had to be taken into account. Rather, those measures embodied a strategic planning shift towards flexibility - i.e., to leaving options open and avoiding “lock-in” (Ibid.) decisions (and consequent infrastructures). What happened in terms of funding is also worth to notice. Indeed, as Van Alphen (2016, see also Van Alphen, 2013) argues, R4R resulted in a 25% increase in the budget allocated for flood protection adaptation by 2050. It rose from 15 billion EUR - when involved only dike reinforcements – to 19 billion EUR - when combined with the R4R. De Bruijn, de Bruijne and Heuvelhof (2015) show that – regardless the huge amounts of risks involved in such an investment – it had been necessary to make the country safer and more resilient under climate change condition. Frans and Ralph – geographer, Q-Team R4R; mathematician, Rijkswaterstaat (the executive agency of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) – would have confirmed that priority during our conversations. Indeed, as far as the Room for River was concerned, “people had to be put before profits”, they told me. This is also why a Q-Team was established. Few preliminary lines about that body are needed.

In 2006, when the decision was taken of implementing the 39 projects, the government pointed also out the necessity to improve their “spatial quality”. The afore-mentioned Team was founded for that purpose. It has consisted of a landscape architect, an urban planner, a river engineer, an ecologist, and a physical geographer. The latter was Frans Klijn, I met him in January 2022, and we had a long discussion, which most significant points and excerpts are given below. But: what “spatial quality” is about? Klijn *et alia* (2013) states that it is a difficult to define concept, all the more if confronted with practical and specific design issues. In order to grasp it, authors refer to the Roman architect Vitruvius (first century BC) and his three criteria for a good design: *utilitas* (functionality), *firmitas* (solidity) and *venustas* (beauty or attractiveness). However, problems arise when one has to face – with such a framework – practical and concrete design objects in concrete socio-spatial contexts. That is why authors thoughtfully argue that is not only a matter of hydraulic effectiveness, ecological robustness, and cultural meaning and aesthetics. Rather, spatial quality is that aura which surrounds plans and concerns everyday life. As they write (Klijn *et alia*, 2013, p. 291):

“We did, however, have to bother about the relationship between hydraulic effectiveness and form, as well as about all other functionalities of the site, such as housing, recreation possibilities, shipping, traffic, agriculture, nature conservation, cultural heritage, etc. These functions are everyday functions, in contrast to the hydraulic – or flood control – function, which is occasional and related to rare flood events only. The everyday functions are, however, what the local citizens and the public at large have to live with”.

During the interview, I asked Frans to delve into this strong qualitative element which entered the more usual quantitative approach in flood risks management. Interesting insights came out, also as far as the “wait-and-see” perspective is concerned. Namely, that view the Q-Team suggested in order to consider – beside a good design – also those properties which arrives with *time*: people interactions, non-human partially unpredictable movements and changes.

Finally, the idea of resilience is worth to notice where the R4R is rooted. As said before, the latter has been developed in the broader framework of the Delta Program, which had been (and is) about a radical strategical and philosophical change in planning practice. Indeed, it consists of moving from struggling with water to build and think with it. Therefore, Moreno Sanz (2021) is right when argues that the shift has been from resistance to resilience. But, what kind of resilience? De Bruijn *et alia* (2015) echo Holling (1996) distinction between “ecological

resilience” and “engineer resilience” to show the politics of resilience underpinning the R4R. While – they argue - “engineering resilience assumes a return of a system to its former stable state after a disturbance as quickly as possible”, ecological resilience – instead - “assumes the possibility that a system can return to a ‘stable’ state that does not resemble the original stable state” (Ibid.). Point is that in the second case a higher level of uncertainty must be considered. So, stakeholders, politicians and other actors involved in a project are more likely to prefer an “engineering resilience” approach.

Nevertheless, the R4R – as the authors show – represents a case in which uncertainty in water amounts (sea level rise and rain) did not lead to a mere reinforcement of dikes. On the contrary, that *unknown* had to be accommodated, to be hosted, to be approximated. The government had to do a huge work to let all the parts involved work together in finding an as much as possible a common direction. De Bruijn *et alia* (2015) call it a “game change”. Indeed, if – usually - especially ecological resilience is a win-lose game, political authorities have been able to transform the R4R from a single-issue game to a multi-issue one. It has been – author says – an opportunity to broaden the agenda, to put on the table more than only specific problems. Aim has been to find a broader costs-benefits system which was able to dampen uncertainty. In that regard, spatial quality marked the horizon of action. One where people, safety and room for water’s turbulent, partially unpredictable materiality had to come at the forefront. This point emerges also from the interviews. It is crucial.

This way, the Room for the River Program appears as an example of thinking and building *through porosity* (Hein, 2021) and *with the water’s* revealed exceeding materiality (Steinberg, 2011, 2013; Steinberg and Peters, 2015, Peters and Steinberg, 2019). In fact, the latter’s *ontological distance* (Neimanis, 2017; Morton, 2018) - its emptiness, its “going no-where” (Cacciari, 2017 [1997] - is not denied, nor ignored as a concrete, material opacity (Glissant, 2007). Rather – as also the interviews reveal - it is let to work affirmatively and productively. In the R4R, reason – the projectual reason of politicians, architects, and other negotiating actors – explicitly recognizes and think-with such an excess. Projects appear the output of that – partially unpredictable – encounter between water's exodus and the reason's one. Indeed, the latter does not deny its outside through the sham of a smooth time-space (Farinelli, 2003, 2009). Nor it abandons itself facing such outside, dismantling its own capacity. A multitude of other thirds are here *datur*: the logos – which means “to link” – works with and thinks with the time-space concreteness of water's unknowability. The former hosts the multiple temporalities of the latter

thanks to its own will and effort of (infra-structurally) connecting. Therefore, the space co-produced by such an encounter can be conceived as an *inhabited swerve* (see Merrifield, 2002, 2006): it embeds and is shaped by the (meta)philosophical awareness of being thrown in a rain of atoms which may collide and thus produce time-space. One where practitioners involved are more intensely pushed to think and build-with such an exceeding water which – in turn – transforms their own design philosophy. In that regard, the very existence of a Q-Team which had to go beyond the mere hydraulic effectiveness and the 25% increase in the budget (see above) for flood protections are together of utmost importance. They show how water insinuates the R4R Program in general and projects in particular with its very multiple temporalities (Steinberg, Peters, 2019). In such view, the “wait-and-see” approach (Klijn *et alia* (2013), can be conceived as the process through which also water itself participates - from within but *as excess* - in the production of environment.

To deepen knowledge about the program, three interviews have been organized. I had the pleasure to talk with: Frans Kljin (geographer, Q-Team R4R); Ralph Schielen (mathematician, Rijkswaterstaat - executive agency of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) and Pieter Schengenga (landscape architect – H+N+S Landscape Architects, Utrecht). All the interviews lasted about one hour and was conceived as open conversations. As a starting point, I prepared a script (the same for the three, here below) made of general questions and open points to delve into. Frans, Ralph and Pieter were all involved in the R4R program although in different ways. Frans was part of the Q-Team, so he has a bird's-eye view above the program. The same goes for Ralph. He – as a mathematician – participated in the calculations about expected water's discharges, river flow rates and so on. Instead, as far as Pieter is concerned, the case was different. He and his team – the H+N+S Landscape Architects – implemented the specific project for Nijmegen, where the river Waal was split, and a new inhabited island was this way created in the city center. All the interviews took place between March and June 2022. Other companies and people have been also considered for the interviews. Jos Van Alphen (which papers appear quoted in this section of the research) - Delta Programme Commissioner – has been contacted. Unfortunately, he could never find the time for an interview, since it is involved in lots of projects and programs. He suggested me to refer to his papers which – he said – contains all the crucial questions, aims and issues of his (and his team) work. I also tried to organize an interview with the founder of West 8, a landscape architecture company based in

Rotterdam which worked at the project for Noordwaard (here below. Fig. 67 is before, while Fig. 68 is after the R4R)⁶⁸.



Figure 67: Noordwaard (Landzine International Landscape Award).

Figure 68: Noordwaard (Siebe Swart, 2020).

⁶⁸ It has consisted in the de-poldering of 2062 ha (Klijn et alia, 2013) which were previously occupied by houses and farms. There have been a long and difficult process of negotiation among political authorities and dwellers about the real necessity of the work (Schut, Leeuwis, van Paassen, 2010). An agreement was found after long studies and the promise of money compensation for those who would have to change home and transfer their animals (Ibid., more about this below). See also Shut (2010).

Again, unfortunately, I could not interview anyone from West8 because they have a rigid policy about public declaration. At the end, I chose for the aforementioned three ones. Before and while preparing the script, I read their publications, websites, and other available materials. This way I was able to fit – when necessary – the plot with the specific interview. At the same time, I managed to envision and be aware about points in common between the three. Thereby, during our conversations, it was possible to make connections and deepen a particular point from – as shown above – partially different perspectives. As with Blue21 (next paragraph), questions have been mostly about the (design, ecological, urban) philosophy behind each practitioner involved, their team (if any) and the specific projects they work on (if any). Structure-wise, I have decided to report only those parts of the interviews that are truly relevant to this research. All that pertained to technicalities, daily work life, and more general digressions is not provided. Finally, interviews are given chronologically while a critical reading is offered in the final Chapter 6 of this Part 2.

Here is the plot I used as a starting point:

- What is from your point of view “the nature”? With which adjectives, images, examples would you describe/refer to it?
- To what extent R4R radically changed the historical Dutch approach to flooding? - Everybody speaks about climate change, but few people, politicians and planners take it seriously. You did. Which kind of obstacles did you find?
- Economic interests VS ecological/social needs: how did you deal and negotiate between them? Was R4R a “good business”? Any sort of “taboos” to struggle with?
- Giving room for the river means giving room to natural flows, movement, uncertainties. To what extent that changes the contemporary urban/planning/architectural thought? I mean, regarding this idea that “the nature” is immense, out of our complete control, what is the biggest challenge it presents to contemporary urban planning/architectural thought?

- In terms of people mindsets, what (if any) do you think must change to accept and desire such an amphibious life? – Which is the after-R4R? Do you envision implementation/maintenance or steps back?
- Sea level rising and flooding risks. Not every water is the same water (salt VS fresh water), but all water flows and challenge Dutch infrastructures and urbanization. How do you think we should deal with the rising sea level? Is it possible to make room for the sea?
- The more water permeates the built environment, the more it is possible to navigate it. what do you think about floating urban projects? Dutch history and culture are about trade and sailing: with programs such as R4R and the rising sea levels is there, speaking forward, a new season of deep integration between port activities and more specifically urban, living and even farming ones? – For example, I read that – in the case of Noordwaard de-poldering – farmers didn't agree with the project because they would have lost their lands. Actually, the more water permeates, the less land is for agriculture. How do you approach this problem?
- One could say that we are nowadays facing the fact that nature has multiple times: the long times of big changes (also due to our footprint), the medium times of huge flooding, the short ones of agriculture. How can urban/design/architectural thought manage this multiplicity of times? How can they live together?

Frans Kljin – physical geographer, R4R Q-Team member, February 2022.

Frans' background facilitated the conversation, although some differences emerged among us. For example, just at the beginning, he told me that for him “nature is everything that is not human, biotic and a-biotic, from birds to earthquakes”. I did not expect such a sharp distinction. Therefore, I fixed it and during the conversation it turned out to be a very important premise from where to grasp Frans' perspective. “R4R fits perfectly in Dutch history” - he continued - “in our debate about how much we can control and how much to accept Natural behaviors”. He added:

“R4R is not so different from the past. There has always been a debate about how much we can engineer and how much to accept natural behaviors. In the

Netherlands we had population and economic increase. And related problems of pollution etc. so an ecological thinking developed. How to live with nature, how can we control and relate to it? R4R arrives here, if we only do reclamation of flood plains for agriculture and we narrow the river course we increase risks...so we have to give more room to nature development. This is also related to our history and disasters elsewhere. R4R is new because we were used to fully control water. For example, the Po in Italy in downstream areas is very similar to some Dutch situations!"

A crucial point emerges here. On the one hand, Frans ascribes to non-human natures a degree of autonomy, even in the completely engineered Netherlands (see Pieter here below). It is also coherent with what discussed above about the “spatial quality” and the general strategical shift “from resistance to resilience”. On the other, he recognizes that a kind of “planning-with” has always taken place in the country. So – according to him - the new relation is not metabolic by contrast of the first one. Rather, it *entails another metabolism*. It should be about producing an environment in which the ontological exodus and excess of non-human natures (“we cannot fully control it” – Frans said) is recognized and finds room. Thus, R4R appears to act as kind of a solvent: one where that uncertainty is not alienated in a “still to know knowable” but infra-structurally approximated. It seems a kind of *urbanized encounter* between the turbulent materiality of water and that one of human species.

Nevertheless, the socio-economic (and political) unevenness of the latter makes no shortcuts possible. For example, when I asked Frans about the Noordwaard negotiation, he clearly answered:

“The program must be placed on a collective and not individual scale...the program was meant for the safety of society as a whole, and this put both profits and other various private interests in the background. Of course, this was possible in the Netherlands because we are a rich country, we can compensate, but in Bangladesh and Indonesia? That is a big problem we will have to deal with.”

On the one hand, the issue of profits is worth to attention. Facing flood risks, to Frans it is clearly a matter of put the people and their safety before earnings of the few. But, on the other, such an inversion immediately depends on the concrete availability of money. Therefore, concerns about poor countries are appropriate. Indeed, the Noordwaard projects – which entailed the removal of entire farms with their houses, agricultural and breeding fields – have been possible only by means

of refunds to the people involved (not before that huge conflicts arose. See Schut, Leeuwis, van Paassen, 2010). However, also according with what Frans had previously said, for the Netherlands neither it has been a smooth process to pass “from profit to people”. Nor the idea itself of “not controlling nature” fits linearly the Dutch engineering culture. Therefore, I asked Frans which were (if any) the major required changes in mindset, as far as Dutch people in general are concerned, but also regarding specific actors such as investors, real estate businesses and other political-economic figures. He told me:

"It is mainly a change in engineers minds, who have always given the idea that they can fully control nature. And so the population believed that. But then floods happened and there was a wake-up call: we can't control everything! Before engineers had a strong and full power, slowly more ecological issues come in. More geographers, social scientists and natural science people come in and asked questions: are we sure we can control? Catastrophic events in the past helped in changing mindsets. People with different backgrounds participated in the discussion about how to deal with nature, and that helped a lot."

Engineers – one might say – have been materially forced to discuss their positions since non-human natures proved to exceed the human calculative grasp. That entailed, as Frans say, also a kind of political consequence. People in general trusted less in technical capacities to keep that excess outside society (and its infrastructures) and, at once, different disciplines and experts were involved in “planning with nature” practices. When I interviewed Ralph – the mathematician (see below) – I recalled all these attention Frans paid to the unknowability of water. Indeed, the former suggests a somewhat different perspective. The latter instead, about the end of the interview, was again very clear and sharp in that regards. I asked him what he thought about sea level rise and if he saw the R4R as a “pilot program” to give also room to the sea. He answered: "The sea is simply too big. We can only gradually move back. The first option is to mitigate, but we are not good in doing that fast enough, so the only one is to give up part of the world. But again, we could do that, what about poor countries?". Our conversation finished talking about port related activities. To Frans, the only possibility for “thinking through porosity” (as far as navigation is concerned) is about reducing ships’ tonnage. It is impossible, he said, to let huge freighters sail beyond the main coastal ports. Moreover, their design and dimensions are also inadequate with respect to Dutch cities and villages, he concluded.

Pieter Schengenga – Landscape architect, H+N+S Landscape Architecture, Utrecht, April 2022.

The initial part of the discussion focused on a more general evaluation of the R4R. We retraced back the various step of the program. They are not worth of attention here, since contextual elements have been widely given above. After, we switch to a specific project H+N+S developed in Nijmegen. It has consisted in a split of the Waal: a second canal have been built where the river can flood in case of huge rates of water. This work has involved the creation of a new inhabited island with a recreational park (before and after the R4R, respectively Fig. 69 and 70). A new bridge has also been added which – if flooded (Fig. 71) – becomes a chain of steppingstones.



Figure 69: Nijmegen before the R4R (H + S + N Landscape Architecture).

Figure 70: Nijmegen after the R4R (H + S + N Landscape Architecture).

Figure 71: Steppingstones bridge, Nijmegen (H + S + N Landscape Architecture).

Interesting backstories emerged from the conversation. Initially, there were various alternatives about where to make the new dams and where to open the (new) second branch of the river. Pieter showed me the drawings they had prepared. The project has therefore changed during the construction, also due to the intervention of local actors and inhabitants. It started with a city completely inside the dam - he told me (referring to the small, urbanized nucleus on the island that the project

created) – and finished with a full-of-bridges city facing the water. One of them in particular is designed to be crossed in different ways depending on water levels. In cases of high ones, only a few steppingstones remain outside and have proved to be very popular. At the first flooding, people started crossing the river despite the water by jumping from one “stone” to the other. The festival/recreational area of the island was an equally important intervention.

Then, the conversation went ahead talking about nature in general, and the Dutch relationship with it. Interestingly, Pieter distinguished between “nature” and “agriculture”. He said:

“Until the early 1990s, there was no debate about this difference in the Netherlands. All nature was included in the planning programs for agricultural areas according to old ways of agriculture... [Instead] the idea of leaving nature the chance to develop is what guided the R4R. Nature...is also something that must develop itself. The only thing we can do as humans *is to create the right conditions for that*. So, we should not be any more sad about the things we can't protect but be proud and happy that nature can develop. Of course, it is a question of zoning. You have to plan the spaces and times for this development” (emphasis added).

The idea is worth to attention of “nature development”. Indeed, in Pieters formulation, it does not look like a matter of allowing nature to do what *we* want to. But, very differently, it seems about organizing-with the kind of relative autonomy non-human natures materially show to possess. According also to my script, I started asking Pieters which kinds of such “infra-structured kinships” he was considering. To me, it was interesting to pass from a purely theoretical/abstract approach to a more urbanistic one as far as the society-nature relationship is concerned. The conversation moved immediately to amphibious thinking and the possibility of amphibious forms of life to be established. I thus focused specifically on technical and social issues related to such a change. “It's not so easy in mindset terms to live amphibiously with water” he said. Pieters then took the elevation map of the Netherlands and explained:

“In cities that are below the sea level you cannot do amphibious life, you cannot remove the dams otherwise they would be swept away. Not immediately, but sooner or later yes. The Netherlands are completely divided by rings of dikes, they are all embedded in dikes. In the floodplains amphibious life is possible. In this other area there is a high pressure of seawater, and you need pumps to throw it back into the sea. With climate change, we will have more rain, but even if we will be able to

build higher dams and there will be more space for rivers, the water dynamics will be there, perhaps higher than they are now”.

Again, amphibious life does not appear as a kind of pacified way to stay with an “autonomously developing nature”. On the contrary, uncertainty as far as climate change is concerned, and water’s dynamics (perhaps higher) – Pieters says – remains there. That is a crucial point I will come back on in the final chapter.

Ralph Schielen – mathematician, Rijkswaterstaat, May 2022.

The discussion took place at the TU Delft. I seized the chance for using elements from the previous two interviews in order to open a virtual discussion between Ralf, Pieter and Frans. Of course, it has not been as such first of all because Pieter and Frans did not have the opportunity to reply. Rather, I recalled insights from the others just to stimulate a turbulent and heterogeneous perspective on the same object: the R4R. Indeed, the conversation with Ralph developed from a prominent premise.

I firstly introduced myself, my background in literature and theoretical geography and the general purposes of my research. Then, Ralph admitted smilingly: "I'm your counterpart, my job is about calculations and predictions". At this point I added: “I forgot to tell you I attended the scientific high school in Italy. At that time, I also won a 3-months scholarship for a period of 'visiting' at the astronomical observatory of Arcetri, Florence. Just to say that maybe we also have something in common”. He smiled. Therefore, such a crackling premise made the conversation more interesting, rather than complicating it. In fact, I had already decided – since I was aware of Ralph's professional role – to keep the posture of a “bridge”. That is, I thought that it would be interesting to stimulate connections between my perspective and his one, more than point out what kept us afar. So did Ralph. I admitted that I recognize the ontology of graphical and statistical representational systems, i.e., the models they use. He said to be interested in philosophical and architectural issues, that he does not consider his approach the only one able of providing answers. “But in the end” - Ralph said - “this bridge is difficult. We use different vocabularies; different cognitive models and we have different ideas of practice. Anyway, let's go on”.

I thus seized the chance not to focus too much on the initial point of my script (the problem of “nature”) but to remain on this issue of differences in vocabularies,

backgrounds etc. That is why I asked Ralph how and if the R4R itself had been the case for that bridge to appear and to be “built” in practice. I also pointed out that before I had interviewed Frans and Pieter. “Room for the River” - Ralph said - “through the Q-Team has sought this encounter, but with many difficulties. It has never been a 'let's plan together' but rather a 'this is good, this is not'. A real interaction has been lacking”. I thus decided to focus on this lacking. I recalled the “wait-and-see” approach mentioned by Frans, his idea about the impossibility of controlling water and Pieter's formula “nature development in itself”. Ralph said:

“R4R is not primarily based on the idea of letting nature develop. An idea of safety for the population is at the core. It's still about control. Sure, we allow more nature, but still in the embankments. There has been a battle against water in the Netherlands for centuries. The Dutch created land against water. We have very elaborate defense systems to protect us of from the sea. There are embankments of the rivers since the Middle Ages. Our system is simple: main channel-floodplains-embankments. At the beginning we said: let's raise more and more dams. But in 1992: why don't we make a plan to increase the natural and biodiversity value of floodplains? And anyway, the higher the dams are, the higher the risk of damage if they break. In 1993 we had very high discharges, and the same was the year after. We (from the ministry) said: we cannot continue like this, raising the dams means widening them and there are houses nearby and other cultural elements. We have statistical standards to manage safety level from discharge but with higher discharges this model had to change. Hence R4R arrived. 1992/1993: change in strategy.... *R4R has no relation with climate change*, events happened in 1992-1993, we made a project. When you plan, you plan for next 50 years, you can't do it for one year, at least few decades. *Now, climate change came into play*. So far everything was about calculation. There has been uncertainty, of course, as in all mathematics, but nothing more, *not in a more conceptual sense*. Given those uncertainties, these systems are safe enough". (Emphasis added).

Key points in Ralph's answer I want to point out are two: the nexus between engineered nature and safety; the issue of control. As far as the first one is concerned, he was very clear about the fact that there is very small room in the Netherlands for theoretical abstraction. The country exists only since it has been built and engineered. It exists thanks to a 10-centuries long battle against water in order to protect the people through technical means and more and more accurate calculations. Later in the interview, I would have again stimulated Ralph about the nexus between R4R-profits-safety. He coherently told me: “sure, it was about safety before profits. Collective needs before individual ones. Even in the case of the

farmers who had to move from the Noordwaard area that was depoldered. At first, they disagreed, but through a good communication strategy and cash compensations they understood the problem". Instead, as far as the issue of control is concerned, crucial point is that one about climate change. While – for Frans – R4R has already been a matter of engineering an uncontrollable water, that was not the case for Ralph. Climate change was not considered in calculations, but specific amounts of possible water did. The real uncertainty – not the “conceptual one” - comes now, in present days. I thus recalled the “wait-and-see” approach the Q-Team adopted and Ralph said:

“it does not make sense for R4R since that was a construction project based on past events, for which there were uncertainties, yes, but as in all mathematics. Now is the moment to wait and see if it works. Unfortunately, though, we are not doing that, because the Delta Program is not working very well, and I am worried about that.”

At this point in the conversation, I started to feel a shift. At the beginning Ralph was very safe in his calculations. But things changed a bit when we came to talk about the post R4R. The key word which struck me was “worried”, together with the way Ralph recognized that climate change involves a higher level of unpredictability. I thus decided to focus on this – also for him – troubling aspect. I added the idea of a Room for the Sea program to face its rising levels. As a premise, Ralph said that the R4R and the Delta Program (that one more directly related with sea level rise) belong to different working groups and therefore they think differently. Anyway, he said:

“the strength of the sea is immense, it is not feasible. As well as moving back from the coast. How do we do it? Shall we leave Amsterdam? [...] if sea levels are to rise – as in IPCC projections - by 7- 10 meters between now and 2300, the face of the earth will change so much that we cannot imagine. In fact, there are no plans now that go beyond the 2050/2100 maximum”.

This excerpt can well conclude the focus on the R4R. In fact, here again water dynamics – if complicated by the historical, social, and political issues of climate change – gains a problematic new level of uncertainty. Moreover, how such an autonomy can be technically and economically approached remains to be clarified, or even completely (after 2100) unexplored.

During this first journey across the archipelago Netherlands, I have observed landscapes, encountered people, and felt feelings which – on the one hand – testify

how deeply water permeates the Dutch territory. On the other, the Room for the River seems a great example of planning for and through porosity. Chapter 6 will offer the *Archipelago* as a *productive urban-political figure* to observe, reactivate and prolong some hidden potentials it was (and is, as realized environment) in the grip of.

5.2 – Archipelago Netherlands2: an agglomeration of ships.

On every side, between the houses, above the rooftops, between the trees, you can see masts, flags, sails, and rigging; this city is a seaport, an immense fleet, captured in a city (Edmondo de Amicis about Rotterdam, in De Langen et alia, 2015 p. 94).

5.2.1 - Ships and urbanism: an underdiscussed relation.

De Amicis described Rotterdam with those words when he visited it in 1874. Even though – as seen in previous paragraph – the city is not located on the coast, it appeared to the Italian writer as a seaport. Firstly, and mostly, he saw fleets and fleets-related objects. In his *Urbanism under sail*, Eriksson (2014) shows how ships themselves were conceived as cities. Their inner organization was town-like planned with corridors (streets), main common spaces (squares), private rooms (houses) and control ones (government offices). Instead, as far as the external aesthetics was concerned, ships had to be reminiscent of the originating city by means of flags and architectural features. Therefore, to De Amicis, one could say that the addends were reversed: sails, fleets, vessels, and related objects gave shape to the urban environment, not the other way around. Geographically speaking, they mattered at a deep, spatially constitutive level of the urban reality.

However – unfortunately - as Hasty and Peters (2012) have recently deeply showed, the ship in itself has been a neglected object in geography. On the one hand, it has been at the very core of the cartographic revolution (Donattini, 2004; Lodovisi, Torresani, 2005) – being the first maps exactly sailing supports, especially after the Mercatore's projection. Indeed, it allowed to navigate following the straight line which, on the map, was linking departure and arrival. That was possible since Mercatore's projection preserves angles, this way the rhumb line (IT: *lossodromia*) – the one connecting to points on a sphere – could be traced as a line on the sheet. On the other hand, the ship has been – in the same historical moment – a key place and mean of colonialism, slavery and power negotiation, modern capitalism having been developed through the sea (Campling, Colas, 2021).

Ogborn (2002) – for example – shows how much crucial were the ships for the East India Company and for the Crown in general. They were, at once, very fragile, vulnerable objects and core means of commercial and political relations. They were exposed to natural and piracy hazards, so they were to be defended and charged with lots of weapons. At the same time, ships were places where the captain – in order to secure goods, spices and discipline onboard – had “monopoly of legitimate violence over the ship's crew” and “power of life and death” (Ibid.). Other authors have also shown how ships have been places of political negotiation from below, of struggle, of subjective awareness about and contention upon broader social relation of power, race, gender, and sexuality (Gilroy, 1993; Creighton, M.S., Norling, 1996; Featherstone, 2005; Lambert, Martins & Ogborn, 2006; Rediker, 2007). Nevertheless, although there is a huge (here given very briefly) amount of literature on and about ships, one can agree with Hasty and Peters (2012) in saying that “the ship has rarely been the primary focus of geographer’s attentions” (Ibid.). Indeed, they propose – firstly – to look at the ship as the object which embodies processes of globalization. Then, they argue, it can appear as the primacy space of encounters, clashes, resistances, and contestation of those very processes.

Such a perspective, Hasty and Peters continues, is even more needed since ships are “intricately bound up with the everyday lives of much of the world’s population. Indeed approximately 95% of trade is still carried by ship” (Ibid.). In recent years, some studies have been done about sea workers (Sampson, 2003; Sacchetto, 2009), ship's “dwellers” and crews on super rich yachts or cruise liner (Atkinson, Blandy, 2009; Spence, 2014) and about island people mobility (Hodson, Vannini, 2007; Vannini, 2012). In particular, Pugh (2016) has proposed an archipelagic thinking which brings together sea, island and ship relations focusing on the Landship, a dance and social welfare institution that is now unique to the island of Barbados.

Elaborating upon crew feelings of missing home and cabin fever, Spence (2014) instead suggests conceiving of ships as more-than-sea spaces. Ones that “transcend wet–dry, human–non-human, surface–air binaries”. The author argues they can be seen as such thanks to “an approach that incorporates the land rather than the other way round” (Mack, 2011, p. 21, quoted in Spence, 2014).

Here, in De Amicis’ suggestion vein, I explore the relation between ships and the urban space. This second *navigation* as well started from Rotterdam, and then moved through the archipelago Netherlands. During the journey, I encountered various kind of vessels and vessels-related objects. They are architecturally relevant landmarks, ancient ships moored along canals, contemporary container ones or freighters. Nevertheless, I now specifically focus on a very particular class of boats: houseboats. I am not interested in delving into their specific geography, nor in their interior design and architecture and the ways the latter engineer onboard behaviors (Hasty and Peters, 2012). To that regards, I only give few descriptive elements when needed. Nor do I explore how the question of habitation arises in cases of existing floating houses or neighborhoods, even if some suggestions come out. Rather, I am here interested in showing how planning practices, design studies about floating urbanization and the issues they face embody a kind of *becoming-ship* of the city amid the Planetary Flood. Indeed, the geography of quasi-ships and their assemblages I point out is that one under-mutation and more-than-wet which is produced when planetary urbanization meets the turbulent materiality of sea level rise and (growing) rain intensity. That is, when the displacing power of both work within the production of environment. This way, the latter is moved towards new wet "covenants" between land and sea. In other words, I show that the Planetary Flood brings to the forefront (also) a new kind of ship that is not just “boat”, and at the same time a new kind of “city” that is not a city. Namely: an "urban object" is at stake that lies somewhere in between the two.

After having seen lots of them all around the archipelago Netherlands, once docked in Delft, I met the co-founder of Blue21 and a colleague of him. They and their group do not only design private floating houses. More interestingly, they explore the possibility for building at sea huger social infrastructures such as airports, energy fields and ship assemblages which – as I am going to show – hardly fits the banner “city”. As seen in Chapter 4, these are *UFOs*, Unidentified Floating Objects. Indeed, as far as the international sea law is concerned, they do not fall under any specific category. Moreover, in the Netherlands (since 2010), they are – also legally speaking – ships. That is why what Hasty and Peters (2012) say about the latter can also be said about houseboats: "a moving technology, traversing a

moving surface; in a space of fluid legal boundaries". Therefore, I had a long conversation at Blue21 with Rutger de Graaf and Barbara dal Bo Zanon. Here below, I offer an exploration of their major publications. I cross read them with what we personally discussed about not only for showing that (echoing De Amicis) *ships still matter in the Dutch urban space. Rather, and mostly, to argue that it is the latter to be going ship.*

After all, such a scenario perfectly fits Hein's claim (2021) about planning for porosity. In fact, the appearing *port-cityscapes* (Ibid.) - with their urban archipelagos of wet infrastructures - open (for the authors) precisely to the possibility of making again cities the seaports they used to be (Fig. 72)⁶⁹:



Figure 72: Map of Venice, 1572, (Braun and Hogenberg, in Hein, 2021).

⁶⁹ Map of Venice, 1572, by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg. Source: Hein (2021). Ibid. (p. 4), the author writes: "the house itself has historically been a porous border for port-related activities. The surrounding city hosted numerous spaces where maritime activities occurred and where people from different trades mingled. Among these urban cells were also spaces of migration and temporary use—Chinatowns, red light districts, sailor towns—that allowed for rapid transitions. Stock exchanges, but also coffee shops where traders discussed the fate of ships and shipping and where workers had their breaks are part of such a porous space". Such an *urban archipelago* is emerging again during the planetary flood.

5.2.2 - From Rotterdam to the future: the becoming-ship of the urban.

Unfortunately, nowadays Rotterdam has lost almost⁷⁰ all its ancient buildings. Indeed, it was destroyed by the Nazis, on May 14, 1940, during the so-called Rotterdam Blitz. Nevertheless, for a modern-day visitor, it does not look like (only) a history-less contemporary agglomeration of skyscrapers and (private or public) creative buildings. Ship-related elements mark very crucial architectural objects of the city. Main examples are, to me, two: the Central Station (Fig. 73) and the Erasmus Bridge (Fig. 74).

The first one – designed by Benthem Crouwel Architects, MVSA Meyer en van Schooten Architecten and West 8 – stands like a huge wave in the heart of Rotterdam (Ibid.). The glass outside overwhelms the people entering the city. Especially during sunny days, a gigantic blue light is shed which sounds like a warning: the bigness of water and the stormy North Sea are an integral part of the urban life. They always break over the Rotter's dam. Instead, the wooden beams covering the interior seems directly reminiscent of an immense upturned ship. They recall the assembly of wooden planks with which vessels' floors and hulls were once made of. That is why – when I arrived in Rotterdam by train for the first time – I felt entering a *shipwreck*. Its danger and ubiquitous threat plastically surrounded me, while that very representation sung the glory of those techniques and architectures which had survived the crash. In a point, I got swallowed in a great metaphor of the Sisyphean effort which, only, makes the ontological tragedy livable.

It is something very close to what happens if one bathes in the multitude which cross the Erasmus Bridge on windy days. While cutting the Nieuwe Maas' salt and rough waters, it stands like an enormous sailing ship stuck in the city. However, it is such only apparently. The movement of people, vehicles, winds and under

⁷⁰ Some buildings have been preserved, such as the iron bridge upon the Koningshaven canal. It should have been dismantled to let Jef Bezos yacht take the sea from the shipyard where it was under construction. A fierce debate arose, and the Amazon's patron chose for another water way. I have written about such event and the political, ecological, and urbanistic issues it entailed (Bertocci, 2022).

flowing freighters shake it up. That is why – during those baths – Rotterdam seems always ready to set again sail at sea.



Figure 73: Rotterdam Centraal Station (Domus Web, 2014, photo by Jannes Linders).

Figure 74: Erasmus Bridge, Rotterdam, (UN Studio).

But these two landmarks are not the only elements which – still nowadays – let ships and ship-related object permeate that city and the whole Netherlands. Fleets of more or less ancient vessels also densely appear while navigating Rotterdam's streets and canals. Except for freighters and container ships berthed at the port's

inner docks (see previous paragraph), the others are all moored. Sometimes are used as houses, hotels, music clubs and restaurants (Fig. 79, 80) or as part of exhibitions (like for the Maritime Museum, Rotterdam). Their pervasiveness and knotted threads plastically testify the ubiquitous wetness one sails through in the Netherlands (Fig. 75 to 78, my photos). Skyscrapers, bikes, vessels, canals, boulevards, streets, bridges, and ships' decks spatially and temporally (experiencing them) intertwine and overlap. On rainy days, for example, it is thus truly difficult to distinguish between walking, cycling, and sailing.



Figure 75: Delfshaven, Rotterdam (my photo).

Figure 76: Delfshaven, Rotterdam (my photo).



Figure 77: Sea-city weavings, Rotterdam (my photo).



Figure 78: Sea-city weavings, Rotterdam (my photo).



Figure 79: Vessel 11, Rotterdam (Vessel11).

Figure 80: Ship Hotel, Rotterdam (SSRotterdam).

Among them, floating houses are those which matter the most to the extent of this research. Whether they are boats transformed into private habitations or newly designed objects aesthetically similar to their telluric “sisters”, they are all *ships* - both legally (Lin *et alia*, 2022) and technically. They permeate the Dutch archipelago far beyond Rotterdam and open a gateway to the whole Netherlands’ potentially porous future. By means of them, the former seems *to become ship*, to be *materially changing state* under the pressure of growing flooding risks and rising sea levels. The Planetary Flood blows an unprecedented energy through such wet, highly infra-structured, and flood prone territories.

Nonetheless, the idea is hardly new of floating homes or cities but centuries old. Jules Verne's works – and especially his “*Une ville flottante*” (1999 [1870]) – have been pioneer in bringing the telluric ideas of “city” and “home” closer to the sea-based one of “ship”. In the Netherlands, especially in Amsterdam (Fig. 81, Schuetze, 2019; Fig. 82, my photo), living on houseboats is very common since long time.



Figure 81: Houseboat in Amsterdam (Schuetze, 2019).

Figure 82: Houseboat in Amsterdam (my photo).

A reportage by Christopher Schuetze published on New York Times in 2019 states that nowadays there are about 10,000 houseboats in the country, a quarter of which are moored in the capital's canals. Over the years, prices of berths have risen. In the period 2014-2019 an increase about 40-50% has been registered (Ibid.) Nevertheless, because of land-space scarcity and flood risks, lots of people (of course, those who can pay) continue in living on houseboats.

UrbanShips – for example – is a company which produces different kind of such objects. As one can read on their website (Urbanships.nl), ambition of the founders is “to combine contemporary living with all the qualities of free life on a ship. Space, comfort, and efficiency are of paramount importance”. The urban-ship nexus is here evident. Even more it is as far as names of models are concerned: City, Suburban, Metropolitan, Cosmopolitan, Continental, Commuter, Province, Traveler are some among them. What is worth to notice is that no one has a clear, strong connection with the sea. They all recall global or planetary urbanization by completely neglecting the water they should pass through. This way, the turbulent materiality of oceans or seas is denied and forgotten. They simply disappear. Also, prices are relevant: as one can read on the website, they start from euro 7,2000 per m² (excl. 21% VAT).

Instead, *Scoonship* (Fig. 84) is a huge floating neighborhood in Amsterdam. The name itself is revealing, it means “clean ship”. Indeed, sustainability and buoyancy are the concepts that set it apart. *Scoonship* consists of 30 arks, 144 people live there, and it produces energy and heat principally through solar panels and pumps. As Rubin (2021) reports, residents feel safer in floating homes during storms and in view of rising sea levels. The idea for the neighborhood came from Marjan de Block and Thomas Sykora, who began work on it in 2009 (Space & Matter). The final plan was developed by Space&Matter and Waterloft, and the construction work ended in January 2020. Furthermore, Marlies Rohmer Architecture & Urbanism has worked at the project for Europe's largest floating neighborhood, *Ijburg* (Fig. 83). It is located 15 minutes from Amsterdam and faces the waters of the IJsselmeer. The latter is the large freshwater lake that was created after the Wadden Sea was closed by the *Afsluitdijk*, the northern dam completed in 1932. *Ijburg* consists of 158 houses moored to jetties and anchored to two mooring poles. This type of ground tie is due to both legal reasons - which I presented in paragraph 4.2 - and to ensure the structure's stability according to water movements. The height of the latter, in fact, can vary by as much as tens of centimeters. Finally, *Waterstudio* together with *Aquatecture* built a floating neighborhood in Utrecht in 2008 (Fig. 85) that consists of 19 dwellings. Other floating clusters or individual

houses can be found in Rotterdam (Fig. 86), Delft (Blue21, Fig. 87), Dordrecht (Fig. 88, my photo) and elsewhere in the Netherlands.



Figure 83: Ijburg, Amsterdam (Rubin, 2022, photo by George Steinmetz/Getty Images).

Figure 84: Scoonship, Amsterdam (Space & Matter).



Figure 85: Floating neighborhood Utrecht (Waterstudio, 2008).

Figure 86: Floating neighborhood Rotterdam (Dimitrova, 2021).

Figure 87: Delft's Harnaschpolder, Delft (Blue21).

Figure 88: Floating neighborhood, Dordrecht (my photo).

They often appear – see the pictures above – as floating boulevards waiting to be reached not only spatially, but also *temporally*. They seem to be suspended. But what kind of suspension?

Apparently, they lie in silence. *The becoming-ship of the urban space is there announced and – at once – blocked.* No noises, no voices, no sounds come from

them. Waters beneath are calm, no turbulences, no currents, no waves seem to stir the situation. Thus, spatially, more human and non-human life is needed. Movement is lacking. To spatially reach them appears a matter of really inhabit them, of letting the crowd, the multitude materially in. That is why, *temporally*, such suspension is open to very different scenarios. Due to the Planetary Flood and the Dutch geo-physical configuration (see Chapter 4), water first will enter inner lakes and canals. Then, more people will need floating houses, and the push of both will expose to a huge stress the urbanistic, ecological, and political imagination of involved inhabitants and practitioners. Will those more-than-human waves activate the possibility of new urban-political ecologies beyond capitalism and the State? Will those movements awake the dormant technical energy of currently existing floating boulevards and release the becoming-ship there embedded? Which subjective, urban-political effort is needed to that purpose?

Temporally, that is the suspension I felt navigating amid Dutch *shipness*. I pinned it in my diary as follows:

“Small ripples on water, vibrating profiles on windy days, the convergence – in the same object - of the most telluric one (the house) and the less (the ship) among those created by our species. Then, the proliferation of such a cyborg and built encounter between so opposite *currents and politics*. Finally, nomadism and sedentariness, the fixity of the oikos and the mobility of a walking and questioning life find something like a synthesis. I notice all these pawing forces all around me, and their condensation in specific urban forms. Strands of rain made of the same matter than the metropolis.”

It seemed to me that the heaviness of the future, its strong materiality, its gravity was stirring in the floating boulevards I saw. That way, the former was like giving us the chance *to act that time*, to urban-politically change it by *transforming and bending* the very environment, *the very weather* through which – only – life takes place.

Along such a pensive and future-haunted navigating life through the archipelago Netherlands, I also used to dock at the Port City Futures network's monthly seminars. They are an interdisciplinary group of research based at the TU Delft founded by architecture historian Carola Hein. As it is written on the website (Ibid.), their work consists of exploring how “the flows of goods and people generated by port activities intersect with the dynamics of the natural territory, hydraulic engineering, spatial planning, urban design, architecture, and heritage”

(Port City Futures). In addition, they elaborate future scenarios (and impacts) in that regard. During their meeting days, I had the opportunity to discuss with students, scholars, and professors about port-related and Delta-related issues. Interesting conversations (January-July 2022) came up especially with Carola Hein. We talked about her studies and proposals about port cities (2011, 2020, 2021) which would have been significant for the whole path of my research. Once she told me that – to her – port areas and infrastructures should have been conceived and planned as “guardians” *at and of* the encounter between the natural bigness and the urban one. Previously, I had asked her about Dutch solutions as far as rising sea levels were concerned. Her answer was to me impressive: I started imagining the tentacular pervasiveness of ships and ship-related objects throughout the whole archipelago. What Hein elsewhere (2021) calls “port-cityscapes” and their porosity flooded my mind and fantasy. Even more since they concern not only harbors but refer to the spatially organized interaction and melting of living, working, commercial, travelling and leisure facilities. I thus went ahead explaining my research to Carola, and she suggested me to start talking with floating urban designers to deepen knowledge about their work. I decided to get in touch with Rutger de Graaf, the founder of Blue21, who had also reviewed (2021) Hein and Couling’s *Urbanization of the Sea* (2020).

5.2.3 - Towards the Blue Revolution: Blue21’s vision about floating urbanization.



Figure 89: Floating Pavillon, Rotterdam (Blue21).

Blue21 is a world's leading company providing design, engineering, and consultancy for realizing floating urban and maritime projects. To them, that is a resilient and sustainable practices able to face sea level rise and the increase in urban (coastal) population. Blue21 is based in Delft (NL) and has been founded by: Karina Czapiewska (architect), Rutger de Graaf (Civil Engineering) and Bart Roeffen (Architect). It develops projects of floating urbanization at various scales: private or collective housing, parks, airports and even cities. They have designed lots of already existing buildings in the Netherlands: the floating Pavillon for Rotterdam (Fig. 89, above), some floating villas in Delft and Woerden. Plans also are under development as far as the relocation at sea of Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) is concerned and in the framework of what they call the “Blue revolution”, the expansion of cities on water. Blue21 has also participated in [Space@Sea](#), a Horizon 2020 research project funded by the European Commission. Its results and the knowledge advancements it led to – which are briefly presented here below – are still crucial and pivotal for the company's ongoing work. I had the pleasure to deeply discuss about it with Rutger de Graaf (co-founder) and Barbara Dal Bo Zanon (architect, Blue21) on February 22, 2022. I met them in their offices (Delft) and we had a long open conversation. It started as an interview based on my questions – the script I used is here below – but it rapidly became a friendly dialogue which would prove very useful to the purposes of my research. Significant excerpts from that discussion will thus appear in the following pages in order to better show Blue21's philosophy. A last contextual element is worth to notice.

I met Rutger and Barbara on February 22, 2022. It was just 2 days after storm Eunice had left the Netherlands and 2 days before Putin started the Ukraine invasion. The latter, unfortunately, needs no introduction. Instead, the former maybe does. It has been a storm which remained on northern Europe for about a week, from February 14 (when it arrived in England) till February 20. Starting from 12 am (Feb. 18), everybody in the Netherlands without a good reason to move was forced to remain home. Public facilities were limited in access, libraries and universities were closed. The heavy rain and the very strong winds (which reached 200kn/h in London) caused lots of damages in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Leiden. The railway system remained almost out of service for days. Three people died because of the storm and huge emergency sand barriers were made (Fig., below) on Den Haag's beach in order to protect inhabited areas (which lie below sea level). Therefore, when I met Rutger and Barbara, I was doubly scared. On the one hand, I had the impression that something very dangerous for the whole world was about to happen in East Europe. On the other, something (if possible) worst were just occurred. Namely, I had just felt (probably because of a mixture of feelings) the same fear I usually had when was a child and storms hit my countryside house.



Figure 90: sand barriers, The Hague (RTL Nieuws, 2022).

It has been something like a huge chill which freezes the body and makes you tremble and shut up. Over time, I have conceptualized such a reaction I feel in front of the wild and out of control nature. Maybe, it concerns the mythical experience of the ontological thrownness we are alive in, whose echo the reason in general and names in particular can never petrify at all (Horkheimer, Adorno, 2010). It consists of the fear for the shadow cone which lies behind the thunder, for the abysses it evokes - according to Taussig's (2019) memories about his 10-years long fieldwork

along Rio Timbiqui, Columbia. Facing Eunice's winds and impressive strength – the picture testifies it – I pass through the tempestuous and tremendous moment of the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. On my diary, I tried to leave traces of a storm of feelings that cut across literary memories, philosophical issues, and the then present fear due to be a nothing before Eunice. The name itself was, to me, troubling. The fact was challenging and telling, that someone had chosen to call *eu-nike* - which means “good victory” – a super-turbulent weather event. But what made me think the most was the idea that – during a storm, which violence is killing and destroying – the non-human otherness appears in all its distance. Within Eunice, while its winds and rains lashed the Netherlands, such otherness was clearly about dis-measure, opacity, unknowability and – most of all – risk.

No metaphors were allowed, no comforting ecologies neither. *To stay with such a trouble* was – at once – *needed* and, exactly according with Haraway (2019), *dangerous*. Immediately, the *thread figures* she talks about appeared to me as necessary (even though fragile and temporary) *infrastructures* to be built and to take care for. Ships, bridges, dikes, floating metropolis, hydraulic systems, flood and wind-prone buildings, and whatever else able to keep us safe: as such arose my Chthulucene. It did not sound like a metaphor, nor as a dream, but a matter of being radically aware of our position.

During Eunice – and just before meeting Rutger and Barbara – I was caught up in such thoughts. The coincidence emerged again between “weather” and “time”. The feeling was growing that the Planetary Flood and the ubiquitous wetness it reveals already is – and will more and more in the future – also a matter of conceiving the passing time as a consistent weather issue to be tackled with proper tools. *Urban-politically*, not abstractly. As I wrote on my diary:

“Eunice is approaching, tomorrow we may not be able to leave the house. One cannot name the storm; it overflows beyond man - hapless our civilisation that has named it so comfortingly “nature”! You cannot name the hyper-object; it entails a mythical experience. I am waiting for the storm, and I will not sleep, tomorrow does not come with the storm, time and weather coincide, there is no yesterday, not today, in this eternal moment of fear as the wind swings the lights in the little Waterloo Straat”.

Instead, here below one can find the plot I used during the conversation with Rutger de Graaf and Barbara dal Bo Zanon. I prepared it during storm Eunice.

Geography (space).

- *Nature*. What do you think about if I say “Nature”? How do you use it – as a concept - in your work. How would you represent it? An image, an action, a color, a property, else...which role does it play in your planning/design thought.
- *Urban*. What do you think about if I say “Urban”? How do you use it – as a concept - in your work. How would you represent it? An image, an action, a color, a property, else...which role does it play in your planning/design thought.
- What differentiates a floating city's relationship with nature from that one of a telluric city?
- About the “no risk increasing concept of urbanization”: can we say that floating urbanization is an example of Bigness? I mean: a way through which planetary urbanization comes to terms with an exceeding nature?

Planning (space+practice)

- Floating urbanism in 3 keywords: modular, heuristic, flexible. In one: unfinished. Such an open attitude with the urban/architectural project is impossible on the land, because of its fixity. Unfinishedness.
- Carola Hein, TU Delft professor of architecture, uses the formula “port-cityscape” referring to that environments composed of port infrastructures, water, buildings, services, mobility infrastructure etc. What do you think about similarities and differences between floating cities and port cities? Can we speak about a becoming-port of society through floating urbanization?

Future (space+practice+time)

- *2100*. About future (next 50-75 years) coastal urbanization: how do you envision it? Do you see floating metropolises all over the ocean? You (Rutger) argue there is still research to do in terms of technologies, technical solutions, governance and living problems. In your *Adaptive Urban Development* you say that one important point is and will be to understand how people feel living on the water, surrounded by it, in its uncertainty, that

is in/on a floating city. But, for the moment, we don't have such cases where to start from for such an inquiry.

- Question for both (Rutger and Barbara): could be cargo/cruise ships (or offshore platforms) places where to start from? After all there are lots of similarities between these latter and floating cities

I present Blue21's work starting from de Graaf's publications (2008, 2012, 2021) and by integrating them with excerpts from the interview, other publications and relevant planning programs or agendas.

Blue21's guiding concept is the *Blue Revolution*. They take it up from Takahashi (1996, see also Dal Bo Zanon *et alia*, 2020), who used that formula to envision a hydrogen-led transformation in energy production. Differently, de Graaf and colleagues have started to refer to such an idea in order to study and produce floating urban scenarios for delta and coastal cities (Fig. 91). They entail a radical change in state of our (planetary) metropolis, which would partially move at sea *and become a kind of ship*.

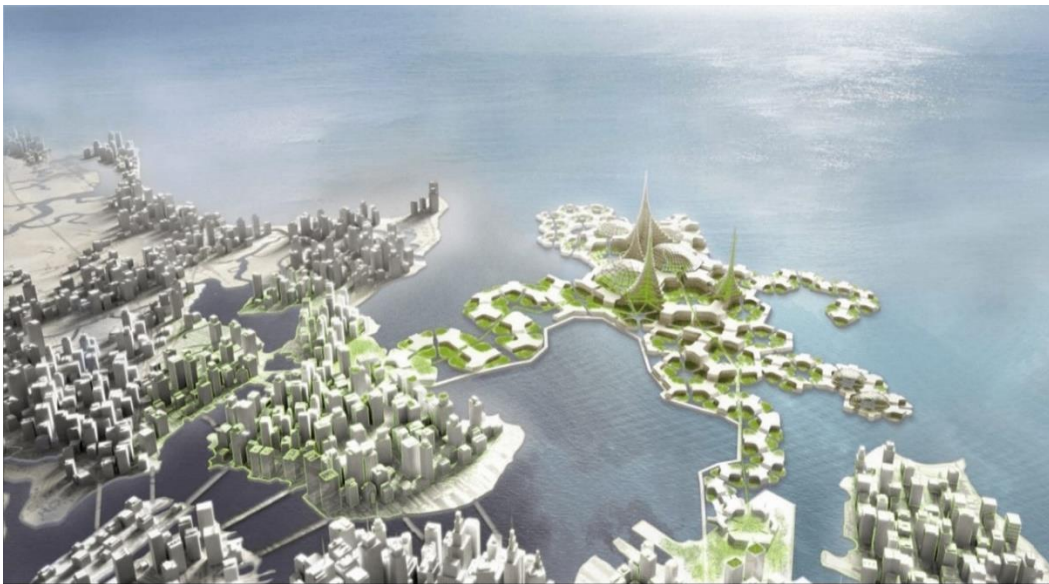


Figure 91: project for a metropolis at sea (Blue21).

In his *Adaptive urban development. A symbiosis between cities on land and water in the 21st century* (2012), De Graaf explains on which contextual and historical premises the need is grounded of a floating swerve in urban planning. The author starts from a both “local” and “global” perspective. Namely: he takes the Netherlands as a significant case from where to learn what to do and what not in light of the planetary climate crisis. De Graaf elaborates upon projections which immediately recall those ones showed and confronted in the general Introduction of this research. By 2100, urban dwellers will continue to increase, while major world cities are (already) located in vulnerable floodplains. By 25 years from now, half of the global population will be living within 100 kilometers from the coast (de Graaf, 2012, p. 7). Beside that scenario, rising sea levels and growing flood risks stand. Moreover, land scarcity is an issue not only in the Netherlands, but generally in delta or flood-prone areas. On the one hand, a too much high degree of urbanization of such territories produces a dangerous decrease of water retention capacity (p. 22). On the other, also spaces for agriculture are difficult to be found (p. 9). However, Rutger adds, it is not only a matter of building the less, but of building differently. The example of Dutch dikes is worth to notice.

“Dikes” - de Graaf writes (Ibid., p. 9) - “stop the natural sedimentation process in river plains... As a result, the land rises with the same rate as the river. After dikes have been constructed, no sediment deposition takes place any more in the river plains behind the dikes...The land no longer keeps up with the rising level of the riverbed, increasing the potential flood damage of the river plain behind the dike”. Moreover, if one looks to the future, costs for flood damages are expected to increase to 48,6 billion US\$ per year by 2100 (Ibid.). Finally, for lots of delta cities or coastal ones, land subsidence is another issue which might be taken seriously (de Graaf, p. 15). Therefore, for the author, floating urbanization can be a strategical horizon able to face such a local (becoming planetary) context. It will have to reduce land scarcity, flood risks, and to change attitude as far as energy production and non-human habitat preservation are concerned (p. 19). Indeed, floating urbanization should *create* ecological habitats.

Two points are here worth to notice. On the one hand de Graaf's vision appears immediately coherent with the switch “from resistance to resilience” (see above) unfolding in the Netherlands in recent years. On the other, it recalls some insights coming from Carola Hein's and Nancy Couling *Urbanization of the Sea* (2020) – which in fact Blue21's co-founder have reviewed (2021). Indeed, on the one hand such an approach directly relates with the Delta Program in general and the Room For the River one in particular (which Rutger himself referred to during our

conversation). On the other, de Graaf's idea of human-nonhuman metabolism – according with Hein and Couling, but also with Moore (2015, 2017) – is not about an ideological or a-historical vision of preservation. Instead, de Graaf argues (2021):

“The transformation of the North Sea also creates new possibilities for marine ecosystems. A wind park has the potential to function as marine reserves as fishing is often prohibited there. Nature restoration such as new oyster banks and coral reefs could become an integral part of the design and development of wind farms. This leads to the important question how these systems should be designed, operated, maintained and used after their technical lifetime to maximize benefits for marine ecosystems. While the resulting ecosystems will have little resemblance to the historic oyster banks and coral reefs that once covered large part of the North Sea floor, they could still have significant ecological value and fulfil a crucial connecting function for ecosystems that are threatened by the effects of climate change”.

Such an idea of “operational ecology” is worth of attention. On the one hand, De Graaf seems envisioning a *porous approach in planning* close to that claimed by Hein (2021). Indeed, to him, infrastructures and non-human natures melt through an engineered, intelligent environment which allows and is aware of currents of matter's movements. On the other, the former has been also at the very core of the conversation I had with Rutger and Barbara. Indeed, during the interview I asked them what their philosophy about the urban-nature relation was. I thought it would be interesting to stimulate designers and architects on that issue, even more Dutch ones. Premise was always that such radical (politically, philosophically, culturally) questions are to be discussed facing the *radical materiality* they are composed of, i.e. at the level of production-of-environment. In the Netherlands, there is very small room – in time and space - to avoid the concreteness of rising water, rain, land subsidence and infrastructures. How those who lives on a disappearing country made from marshes over more then 10 centuries conceive of “practice”, “to do” and “climate challenges”? That is: how the “sense of practice” permeates there the thought – most of all that one of geographers, architects, and designers - making the alienation in pure theory at least radically cynical? Answers I received have been thoughtful:

Rutger: “Up to now we had a negative impact, now we are thinking about a more positive way to impact. So, yes, nature is also composed of humans. We are not independent from nature, having thought it created problems, we influence and

are influenced by ecosystems. They are a totality which we are in. Humans also make ecosystems: like the Netherlands. [Here] the concept of control is very strong, look at dikes for example. Now there is a switch from fighting to living with water. Like Room for the River, no higher dams but more room for the river. We have concepts such as building with nature. More co-existence with these natural forces. With land reclamation ecosystems disappear, so we should think about let new ecosystems emerge with floating platforms as well.”

Barbara: “when I think of nature I think of all living and non-living things that are in the world. Economy, cities etc take place within them. Nature is not something different from us, our economies are in nature. We are nature. We are natures producing artificial things within the natural system.”

On the one hand, they specifically referred to the Room for the River program. It is significant since it points out how, for them, floating development is explicitly not an isolated practice for the few. Rather, it is conceived of as a part in a broader *planning for porosity* framework. One which regards society (at least Dutch) as a whole, the environment through which it develops and the water-land interaction it is composed of. On the other, such a *metabolism* does not happen between two entities which are separated. Rather, while water as flux and movement is incorporated in the thought, the latter acts in turn within the former. Projects are not thought to be “above nature”, neither simply “with nature”, but through it. They should create new environments which infrastructurally assume the impossibility to control water and that – at once and anyway – lay in its ubiquity.

During the interview itself, de Graaf and dal Bo Zanon focused a lot on that issue. Moreover, they appeared well aware about the political, philosophical, more-than-technical consequences and implications involved in thinking metropolis at sea. As they said:

Rutger: "You can make a huge platform like a ship and build a city there and it's just like on land. The only difference is that you go up and down. It changes if we think forms and design, public spaces etc. from the point of view of water, but it depends also on how you connect to energy. It is different from land, on floating cities you can produce your own energy, it is easier, immediate. Floating is a bottom-up approach in the sense that it empowers citizens to adopt local solutions. But not by definition, that is, *I am well aware that it is not a simple matter of transferring a form from one place to another, but a matter of modifying that form-principle through water*". [emphasis added]

Barbara: “we should think in terms of dynamic geographies, on water even more, you go up and down with tides, there are waves. On land everything is more stable, still.”

I emphasize the focus on the “form-principle” since it testifies how – for Blue21 – thinking about and designing floating futures is not simply a matter of putting on water something previously fixed to land. Moreover, it is not neither only an issue of thinking other techniques. Such a *becoming-ship* of the urban space, such a *change of state* appears to be wide-ranging and reaches also some urban-political issues which concern the *very different life* that the change cannot but induce. On that ridge – as suggested also above during the navigation through Dutch floating boulevards – an ambivalence, an openness to be challenged takes place. Here, geography should embrace the time dimension also. That one which bends the environment according to different political horizons and *concretely nests the possible in the folds of space*. What, really, to think and build with a materially turbulent, partially unknown, dangerous excess is about? How can it entail – amid the Planetary Flood - an urban-political change in state which transforms life and production beyond capitalist ecology and the State? How to release such a becoming-ship of urban space? In that regard, De Graaf offers also written suggestions and perspectives of research and planning (2012, p. 47):

“What is lacking, however, is an urban design philosophy that is specifically developed for floating cities. Many designs for floating cities are still clearly derived from land-based cities and focused on the building scale. Others have a futuristic character similar to spaceships. Integrated knowledge about urban densities, building typologies and *a broader vision and imagination on how it would actually be to live in a floating city is still lacking. There is therefore a need to develop urban design instruments that are specifically accustomed to floating cities...and above all, more detailed knowledge and understanding about the possible way of life in floating cities.*” [emphasis added]

Politically speaking, de Graaf gives few suggestions, which mainly lie in that legal undecidability I presented in Chapter 4. “Another knowledge field that should be investigated” - he argues (2012, p. 50) - “is how floating cities could be part of nation states, or alternatively floating cities on the ocean could constitute their own state and become members of international organizations such as the United Nations”. As one can see, the State is still – to him – the political framework through which imagine floating cities. But, economically speaking, de Graaf advances an interesting perspective. He envisions a “symbiotic economy” beyond the financial

system in which the coastal State (if any) owns the location (on territorial seas or EEZs – on high sea, such a problem should fade) and rents are paid exchanging energy (Ibid., p. 49):

“The current economic models for real estate development are probably not suitable for floating city development [...] New economic models need to be studied and developed to support floating city development. As an alternative to sea acquisition, floating cities could also rent a coastal location from a certain country. The rent could be paid by delivering ecological services such as CO₂ capturing, biofuel production and waste processing from cities on land. Such a non-monetary symbiotic economic model could prove to be of great value as a possible alternative to the current growth dependent global financial system that is not properly functioning and unsustainable in the long term”.

Of course, that terrain needs further research. Nevertheless, a kind of technical and design openness appears which can lay such foundations. In fact, other relevant elements emerge if one goes on in reading de Graaf’s and others’ publications. Let us have a look at some “technicalities” which are discussed also in *Floating City Ijmeer* (de Graaf, Fremouw, van Bueren, Czapiewska and Kuijper, 2008) and in the [Space@Sea](#) project report (2021). There again the Sea is not a metaphor (Steinberg, 2011, 2013). Its turbulent materiality permeates and in turn makes turbulent the materiality of the floating project as well. The latter is thought through that turbulence, water fluidity abstract-concretely imbues it. Such a mutual shaping appears and is taken seriously also at the very technical level.

Space@Sea has been a 3-year research (ended 2020) project which aimed to develop technical knowledge about, feasibility, gaps, materials, and logistical issues related with floating urbanization. It has considered two possible locations: the North Sea and the Mediterranean. Crucial and interconnected points – with related issues and problems to be solved - are mainly three. Firstly, as far as large-scale projects are concerned, one cannot build a unique floater onshore and then move it offshore. Modular solutions must thus be envisioned. Such an option should be the better also for flexibility reasons to be able to relocate and move elsewhere the entire floating city or its parts. Finally, modularity entails standardization and in turn reduces production costs (pp. 14-16). But, unfortunately, structures with more than 50m side length are currently not producible in European shipyards, and global availability is also scarce (p. 45). Secondly, a modular solution implies that connectors are needed to link modules. Experiments, observations, and logistical evaluations have brought the authors to consider rigid connectors. They should be

preferred to flexible ones because stability aboard is needed to ensure people safety and in order to build bridges and other buildings (p. 46). But this way, one faces a huge loss of relative movement between them. Rigid connectors make the structure not high loads-proof or forces-proof (as in case of bad weather conditions). Therefore, such connectors can only be used where there is no risk of rough seas (thus not the North Sea) or as internal modules of the structure, since the external ones already absorb the energy of waves. In addition, they cannot be installed with a wave height of more than 0.5m, so logistically it is possible that - in case of bad weather - works will be greatly delayed (p.44). Space@Sea has started to experiment with a rigid but adaptive connector. However, there are still knowledge gaps in that regards and production costs are too high. Finally, the third problem concerns mooring. The main system considered is a catenary one which connects floaters to the seabed. This solution, however, needs considerable water depths to work well and to dampen currents movement. Therefore, it has proved to be feasible in the Mediterranean but not in the North Sea (which has an average depth of 40 meters). Here a breakwater system should be preferred to protect the "city". Such an option would not remove the possible use of catenary moorings as a support (pp. 9,21,37).

As one can see, for the authors, thinking-with water does not imply - as shown above - only a non-land-based design philosophy. It means, also, allowing the turbulent materiality of water to penetrate all levels of the project. As far as logistics is concerned, wave conditions matter for the process of floaters connection. So, rough seas produce a work stoppage. On the other hand, regarding the overall structure, it has to completely adapt to the water. It is technically shaped by the liquidity and waves of the sea. Even though this latter was "nothing but waves" - and it is not (Steinberg, Pieters, 2015) - these waves matter. Of course, they matter if one *really* wants to produce the blue metamorphosis of the city. Such an uncertainty thus marks another crucial key characteristic of Blue21's philosophy: the *unfinishedness*.

As de Graaf told me at the end of our conversation: "I love the idea of unfinishedness because it is the opposite of blueprint planning". Again, something like an openness emerges. On the one hand, those seaports cities used to be according to Hein (2021) seem to be possible again. On the other, *time* also – more than *space* only – is the *matter* where water's excess pass through. As such the manifold and porous terrain looks like, where the becoming-ship of the urban may take place and the political differences it is in the grip of might be chosen.

Therefore, next chapter concludes the research by offering the Archipelago as a productive figure for orienting that choice through the ubiquitous wetness' time(weather)-space.

Conclusions.

Throughout this chapter, the Dutch ubiquitous wetness has been explored. A porous and engineered environment in the making has appeared. One where currents of matter – and specifically of water – participates as excess in the co-creation of urban spacetime. Port activities, port-related infrastructures and then Dordrecht and Gorinchem have been showed in their more-than-wetness. Cranes, streets and walls proved to be permeated by the turbulent materiality of the Sea, which insinuates and roars till the “hinterland” of Rotterdam. Then, the Room for the River Program has been discussed. According to the related literature and the interviews with practitioners involved, it can be described as an effort of *planning for porosity*. At once, it seems to consist of the engineered strain of building a new metabolism among humans and non-humans. One which grounds on the concrete uncertainty and immensity of the latter.

After that, boats and floating urbanism have been considered. On the one hand, the former are still a key component of the Dutch landscape. To various extent, they permeate the environment, which shipness appears in manifold ways. From Rotterdam Central Station to lots of floating neighborhoods, a *becoming-ship* of urban space seems to emerge in the Netherlands. On the other, that is even more the case if one looks at Blue21's work. Indeed, it consists of an articulated vision and planning practice aiming to thinking of and produce a radical change in state as far as our (planetary) metropolis is concerned. Thanks to them, knowledge is deepened about how – concretely – the turbulent Sea may roar again in the former's agoras. Moreover, and consequently, those seaports can be created anew which cities used to be according to Hein (2021).

Therefore, interesting urban-political practices are developed in the Netherlands amid the Planetary Flood. But: how to release the potentials they seem to be in the grip of? How to better visualize, take care for and choose them? Chapter 6 delves into those issues and offers the Archipelago as a *project* up to such a task.

Chapter 6

The Archipelago: a figure for transforming life, from the Netherlands and beyond.

Introduction.

By navigating the Dutch ubiquitous wetness, I passed through various cities, infrastructures, and books. Two specific focuses have then been offered – the R4R Program and Blue21 – to deepen knowledge about delta urbanism and related open issues.

In this concluding chapter – starting from the Netherlands but immediately looking beyond - the Archipelago is re-proposed as both a *critical* and *productive* figure. On the one hand, it helps in grasping (*diagnostically*) emerging potentials from the observed climate. On the other and in so doing, it may (*prognostically*) orient the social production of environment towards a post-capitalist ecology. Indeed, by reviewing all the materials deployed in previous chapters (4 and 5), Hein’s claim about “planning for porosity” (2021) can gain politics and find an interesting *telos* in that urban-political project. In fact, the latter – as shown in chapter 3 – does not simply consist of a material porosity where cities are permeated by waters, which currents roar among them and in their squares, streets, and daily life. Rather, the Archipelago has been showed as the political, rational, decisive effort of building the Common through a material infrastructure which preserve and profits from the movement of the ocean (and exceeding natures in general, being such a wetness everywhere, from jungles to stones). In the Netherlands, such an urban-political porosity is not – of course – completely deployed. On the contrary, it appears as a potential to be activated, to be chosen. Moreover, it is fostered by water which “refuses” measure and complete control in time-space by *denying* its

class role⁷¹. “Refuses” seems to imply a kind of consciousness or will. It is nothing about that. As deeply shown in Chapter 2, I strongly disagree with the anthropomorphising attitude towards personification, which is typical, among others, to Latour (2020). On the other hand, Moore himself (2015) leaves open questions around the way through which “climate acts”.

Notwithstanding, I am going to show that - in the Netherlands - one witnesses how a *superweed effect* (floods) can oblige reason – in the capacity of planning thought – not to externalize, deny, and thus appropriate non-human excess, movement, and dis-measure. Indeed, such an operative logos, which is radically different from the capitalist world-ecology as presented by Moore, can be found at work in some approaches adopted in the Room for The River Program and by Blue21.

Firstly, the chapter discusses how the considered examples might anyway reproduce capitalism and State-based politics. But then, it highlights contrary directions which are (and will) immanently spatially fixed in those very projects, plans and visions to be realized. That is why I argue they also participate in and contribute to the production of *territories of exodus*. They are metropolitan and porous landscapes through which the possibility of a post-capitalist ecology, of alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019) materially arise, where the latter are spatially *fixed* (Harvey, 2001) by means of *infrastructures in the web of life*.

Secondly, the Archipelago is offered for *orienting* such an ambivalence and to let stronger emerge the potentials the Dutch environment is in the grip of. In addition, it serves to open a new space for political action, research, and critical imagination. Indeed, in its light, the R4R, Blue21 and Hein and Couling’s proposals may appear – on the one hand – *shipyards of the metabolic logos of the multitude*. On the other, the latter’s makings could profit from such forms of deployed operative intelligence to really socialized them, to unleash their embedded possibles through, by means of and towards *the building* of a common planetary oeuvre: the archi-polis. One where water is hosted assuming its non cartesian ontology, and – with Neimanis’ words (2017) – re-done, re-created by taking care for that radical unknowability.

⁷¹ See Moore (2017a) about non-humans as an exploited class, which labor has been appropriated by capitalism. See his *Ecologia-mondo e crisi del capitalismo* (2015) and my Chapter 2 for the “ecological surplus” such appropriation produced.

Finally, the *becoming-port of society* is proposed as a possible urban politics of the Archipelago to be fostered. While the former refuses to reify the infinity to the finite, it would develop on the terrain of “infinite plasticity” (Lefebvre, 2016 [1965]) to *infrastructurally approximate the Sea’s* ontological exodus and ours from capitalism and the State.

6.1 – Business as usual: change everything to change nothing.

As reported in Chapter 5, water material turbulence roars within the Dutch engineered environment. Its infrastructures are constantly stirred by the former’s currents. In times of Planetary Flood, the R4R Program and Blue 21 emerge from such a context. They hit (or will) the environment by orienting human and non-human fluxes through plans and specific works which fix a partially new metabolism. One where exceeding temporalities and spatialities of water are taken seriously. Moreover, floating urbanism in the Netherlands is already widespread. It is a product of the ubiquitous wetness (da Cunha, 2019) wherein the country lies and which my navigation witnessed. But, amid climate change and rising sea levels, the former and its involved ecology could gain a new centrality. In fact, floating objects - rather than being, as they are mostly nowadays, small scale solutions for the few – could permeate the daily life of a huge amount of people. At least, that is the scenario Blue 21 works within.

I propose to consider such a conjuncture an *ambivalence*. Namely: a built situation or in-progress scenario in the grip of the possible. On the one hand, capitalism, and State-based politics risk to be there reproduced. On the other, potential alter-urbanizations beyond them might be in the making. As I am going to show, the two poles together stir the Dutch environment and make the urban-political spacetime of negotiation open to manifold (and radically different among them) horizons. *Porosity* and the *becoming-ship* of urban space are the core concepts I let emerge in previous chapters for describing as many crucial processes undergoing in the Netherlands.

To begin with, let us have a look, for example, at the triad which described Blue21’s work: flexibility, modularity, unfinishedness. They are all watery

concepts which cannot but recall the neo-liberal liquidity which (negatively) permeates the work market, our lives, and projects. Ross Exo Adams (2018) has thoughtfully showed how Cerdá's *General Theory of Urbanization* was already deeply made of such maritime ontologies which have been transferred to the currently existing economic system. Indeed, they may be a means of exploitation and global surplus accumulation in the hands of the few. As lots of authors have shown, logistics in general (Grappi, 2016; Alimahomed-Wilson, Reese, 2020) and port activities in particular (Hein, 2011) are indeed urban-politically pivotal in capitalist economy precisely by means of that fluidity and flexibility. Such a tension moves towards nullify time by means of space (see Harvey, 1989) by creating a putative smooth ground (Khanna, 2016) for circulation. Therefore, planning for porosity might easily consolidate a similar urbanism. Even though the latter has not prevented from the proliferation of struggles, contradictions, and streaks (Cuppini, Pallavicini, 2015; Into the Black Box, 2021).

The same goes for freighters which are crucial in contemporary exploitative economy and has been likewise throughout modern history (Rediker, 2007; Sacchetto, 2009; Campling, Colàs, 2021). The becoming-ship I observed of the urban space and the pervasiveness of port-infrastructures might thus simply reproduce and foster that urban-political architecture. Nor are “exceeding natures” and superweed effects (Moore, 2015) impossible by definition to be re-captured into capitalistic circuits. As Keucheyan (2019) has showed, the case of climate bots is telling. Assurances and financial systems’ protection from disasters reveals to be a way to capitalize uncertainty which – at once - rises prices of involved lands and real estates. Finally, also Blue21’s effort of overcoming the “city-form principle” (Interv.) in planning does not contain a radically democratic planetary society beyond capitalism and the State as a destiny. Contrary, very conservative and neoliberal destinations are possible.

In that regard, Brenner (1998, 2007) – for example – argues that the explosion of the city, its historical overcoming, does not bring directly to the fading of the State itself, even though they share the same territorial-telluric foundation (see also Schmitt, 1991 [1950] and Elden, 2013). Indeed, starting from Lefebvre, he states that a process of “re-scaling” is also possible, and probably underway under neoliberalism. Capitalism, he says, needs “spatial fixes” in order to provide “a stabilized geographical scaffolding for the circulation of labor-power, commodities and capital on multiple scales” (Brenner, 1998). But also, a “scalar fix” is needed, one that is “composed of distinctive forms of territorial organization including urban-regional agglomerations, state institutions and the world economy that

encompass yet transcend the urban scale” (Ibid.). That is to say that two levels must be considered: one where cities can materially overcome their own borders and another by means of which such a movement re-scales (and creates anew) lots of territorial institutions. Under neo-liberalism, Brenner (1998, 2007) argues, that process is underway, and it transforms – more than erodes or fades – State power and territoriality. The latter do not disappear but operate in – and are crossed by – such a multi-scalar configuration. One where new scales of governance and territoriality pop up, giving birth to metropolitan cities, urban regions or Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Even more recently, other authors have studied those “operations of capital” (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2019). Easterling's *Extrastatecraft* (2014) appears here helpful in order to “fix” - spatially and politically – how the metamorphosis of the city and the State (can, and presently does) unfolds. With such a concept, she refers to “a site of multiple, overlapping, or nested forms of sovereignty, where domestic and transnational jurisdictions collide... a portmanteau describing the often undisclosed activities outside of, in addition to, and sometimes even in partnership with statecraft” (p. 13). Easterling uses the word “zone” to indicate spaces “operating under authorities independent from the domestic laws of its host country” (p.14). With Mezzadra and Neilson's idiom, one can add they are sites – and even territories – founded when operations of capital “hit the ground” (2019, p. 214). Indeed, Zones are – for example – the EPZs (Export Processing Zones), a political-economic form of territory which has spread during the 70's in order to create attractive areas for investments with a very cheap labor force available (p.21). Starting from China, such a model has grown, which “far from overwhelming state power...is a new partner that strengthens the State by serving as its proxy or camouflage” (p.14).

Therefore, the SEZ model and similar reproduce the areal, telluric-based city-form principle. They do not dismantle but re-territorialize it. That is true and happens also as far as the oceans are concerned. One can just look to critics Couling and Hein (2020) move against the cartographic conceptions through which the North Sea “moving volume” (Ibid., p. 116) has been measured and divided (see Chapter 5). Despite its turbulent materiality, borders have been there applied, copied and “socially produced” throughout capitalist modernity (Steinberg, 2000) by means of representation and the extension of land-based territorial categories and political operations. The same which informs – to various extent – some currently existing cases of floating urbanization (or similar) as well. Steinberg, Nyman and Caraccioli (2011) – for example - show how the *Seasteading Institute's* vision is not exactly intended for social and environmental justice purposes. Rather, they are projects oriented to make tax-free, extra-State enclaves for small

communities of rich people (see also Hodson, Marvin, 2010). They do not challenge and discuss the State, nor they think-build with water for the liberation of the human and extra-human Common. The Seastading vision is simply struggling for “create a different kind of State; one built with due regard to the fluid nature of “aquatory”, but a pseudo-state nonetheless... [one which] use[s] the notion of bounded territory (as realized in the delimitation of the high seas) as a means to justify its existence” (Ibid.). Something similar can be observed if one turns to *The World*, a luxury cruise ship where rich people own their private apartments and where can live sailing. Atkinson and Blandy (2009) study the case and – beside discussing its elitist aims – show how it is legally possible. Firstly, *The World* – author say – is a floating island flies Bahamas flag. But the tailor-made company responsible “for sales, marketing operations and administration of The World” - the ResidenSea - has its headquarters in Miami (USA). Owners of apartments can own them by virtue of an equally evaluated immovable property on land given as guaranty to the company. Thus, the cruiser ship is organized as a sort of condominium: dwellers possess the volume of air of their apartment.

A partially different vision has been elaborated almost 50 years ago by Kent M. Keith. It deserves more attention. Indeed, in 1977, the American writer – who has been also Director of the State of Hawaii Department of Planning and Economic Development – published a paper on *Marine Policy* where he speculated about future non-land-based floating cities. An excerpt in particularly is to be read:

“With *no fixed borders*, floating-city states would have *no permanent neighbors*, but could freely align themselves economically, politically, and militarily with other states. This *flexibility could be an international catalyst* which would begin to break up spheres of influence based on geographical proximity. Floating-city states which were ‘*internations*’ would have a variety of languages and customs with counterparts in other states, and this might enhance international cooperation. [...] As ‘internations’ become easy to establish, new states may no longer be differentiated by languages and customs. Thus, the concept of the nation may begin to fade, just as the concept of the feudal state faded; and the lifestyles and values of the new floating-city states, international communities moving freely throughout the world” (p. 204, emphasis added).

Leaving aside the speculative and to some extents utopian tone – which the author himself recognizes (Ibid., p. 204) – the first sentence is worth to notice. Thanks to the turbulent materiality of the sea, floating-city States should have no fixed borders, neither permanent neighborhoods. As one can see, the areal, telluric

form principle is not dismantled, nor it works completely. The author seems to look for a mediation between the moving volume of waters and the need of clear, fixed political identities. The effort continues in following lines. Keith goes ahead in imagining a kind of non-local system of alliances through which also languages and customs melt. Again, on the one hand, the telluric virtuality of State persists, but it also passes through another disassembling movement. Finally, the end is crucial. The concept of nation is said to fade. However, the idea of floating communities moving freely throughout the world reveals the permanence of a cartographic, land-based fund. In fact, those entities are supposed to be – at once – identified and identified as free since a flat, homogeneous plan where to move as such is a-priori given. According to Farinelli (2003, 2009) that is exactly the way the cartographic reason and the modern, telluric-based capitalist modernity works. Indeed, the raw materiality of human and non-human space is abdicated through a process of abstraction by virtue of which the world becomes a copy of that representation.

Back to Keith's vision, that intellectual movement seems still present in his view. That is why he cannot completely overcome the "methodological citysm" and the State.

Nevertheless, water exodus and excess from measure works there in the opposite direction. From its perspective, telluric spaces are shaken, and thus also strong identities are. The ontological flexibility of water permeates and transforms subjectivity and related institutions. The various languages and customs (and people) - which are not denied, nor homogenized - come together in "internations", contrasts of course remain, but are approached with a new kind of diplomacy. Such a scenario also emerges from Keith's view. One where friendship through difference and care among those who are separated but share a common water world takes place. There, the floating-city, the ship-State – beside recalling and repeating a well-known metaphor (Cacciari, 1997; Blumenberg, 1985 [1979]) – partially remains, partially fades. It is not envisioned as an individual identity alone, but as shaped by the Others, and a kind of *new* planetary urbanization seems to appear through and thanks to that mutual shaping. One where cities no longer exist, but singularities in a common becoming-with do. One where "internations" (mutual shaped singularities, non-identitarian identities) develops, where the implosion-explosion dialectics does not produce "operational landscapes" on the one hand, and "metropolis" on the other. Instead, an infra-structured archipelago is announced without geo-political borders. Such a contradiction between the permanence and the disappearance of the State during the metamorphosis of the city recalls

Brenner's, Easterling's, Neilson's and Mezzadra's studies. At the same time, Keith strives to overcome it (without completely succeeding).

To sum up: *The World* and the plans developed by the Seastading Institute are kind of enclaves (Hodson, Marvin, 2010) for the few. By means of some extra-State territorial configurations, they constitute themselves on water without changing the currently existing political assets in any way. Contrary, according with Keith's (1977) speculative vision, the floating condition should be optimal for moving in the direction of a revolutionary blue metamorphosis of the city. However, crossing boundaries in itself is not sufficient and could lead to forms of re-scaling (Brenner, 1998, 2007) and extra-statecraft (Easterling, 2014). The legal gap (see Chapter 4, and Lin *et alia*, 2022) which makes agglomeration on water *U.nidentified F.loading O.bjects* seems not to prevent but to foster those operation of rescaling - as the case studied by Atkinson and Blandy (2009) testifies. Finally, logistics, porosity and port-related activity are completely integral to neo-liberal economy. Nonetheless, struggles, contradictions, and streaks (Cuppini, Pallavicini, 2015; Into the Black Box, 2021) proliferate.

All those critical perspectives should be considered when observing the Dutch environment. Indeed, amid and because of the Planetary Flood, the ubiquitous wetness wherein it lays is turbulently reveling and making the former become a kind of archipelago.

But, before that scenario, I now also pay attention to the forces which stir Blue21's visions, the Room for the River Program (in particular), and the future Netherlands they entail (in general). I show that a negotiation is in progress. In fact, some post-capitalist potentials are emerging (and infra-structurally fixed) to ally with (i.e., to approximate) water's superweed effect. Such a good urbanization is given as and produce a built (or to be built) *ambivalence*. One where *the possible* materially nests in the folds of the environment. The former roars in De Graff's attention on new economic models, in his team's effort to overcome the methodological citysm and in the "dynamic geographies" they look through and design. It also infiltrates the Room for The River when people are put before profits and water excess is approximated.

This way, Dutch time-space reveals to be materially opened. It appears *urban-politically porous* and fixed as a footprint of alter-urbanizations (Brenner, 2019).

6.2 - Territories of exodus: when water refuses measure and permeates (as excess) planning thought and practices.

To begin with, the “operational ecology” de Graaf speaks about in his *Adaptive urban development* (2012) is worth of attention. He recalled it also during the interview. To him, in fact, ecology should not be about simply preserving nature. Rather, the former involves the creation of ecosystems since the latter is “a totality which we are in” (Interv.). In that regard, what Rutger added really struck me: “humans also make ecosystems: like the Netherlands” (Ibid.). The Dutch territory, in his vision, is not only artificial but represents – or should – an example of ecosystem where existence develops *through* non-humans. The Room for The River is just such case: “natural forces” – as he calls them – have to be operationally hosted, not to be fictitiously kept outside. I say “fictitiously” because, as Moore argues (2015) and we discussed in Chapter 2, nature has never been properly external to Capital, nor to human activity in general. Rather, along modernity, it was appropriated but not capitalized, thereby allowing the “ecological surplus” to increase until more and more “superweed effects” arose.

What is interesting about de Graaf’s view is that he does not tautologically recognize this state of the art by reaffirming the necessity of pure control. Nor he argues that, to overcome it, one has to let those forces simply be. Rather, he claims for an infrastructural and productive effort for living through them. “Unfinishedness”, as he told me at the end of the interview, is thus not by chance his favourite concept. It describes precisely such an endless strain of infinite plasticity. A similar productive ecology, which thinks and does beyond the “nature-as-external” concrete abstraction, appears very close to Moore’s (2015) post-capitalist conception of metabolism. In fact, on the one hand, the former is not about preservation, i.e., about fixing something as “natural” outside something which is “social”, thus re-affirming the metabolic rift, but about *creation*. On the other, such a production presupposes the field-of-life more than the alienated capitalist ecology. In fact, it hosts non-human forces but assuming their *constitutive and material excess* in time-space with respect to reason, calculations, etc. De Graaf seems thus doing – and his team with him - the urban-political effort of such a stellar friendship, of infra-structurally approximating water’s exodus without reducing and reifying it into a new measure. To him – as to Moore – it appears a matter of thinking through

the *oikeios* as an historical linchpin, not towards capitalization of the unknown. As the Dutch designer explicitly writes (2012, p. 49):

“The current economic models for real estate development are probably not suitable for floating city development [...] The rent could be paid by delivering ecological services such as CO2 capturing, biofuel production and waste processing from cities on land. Such a non-monetary symbiotic economic model could prove to be of great value as a possible alternative to the current growth dependent global financial system that is not properly functioning and unsustainable in the long term”.

That way, the “superweed effects” of floods and rising sea level are not re-oriented to a new ecological surplus. Contrary, *urban-political alliances* are envisioned with them beyond capitalism and towards a new economic exchange relation.

Nevertheless, as de Graaf argues a bit after (Ibid., p. 50), the State remains the latter’s telluric base. But, in such a regard, it is to me crucial also what he and Barbara said during the interview and Rutger himself writes (2012). Indeed, the need to think in terms of “dynamic geographies” and to overcome the “city” as a *form-principle* stands beside such a State-oriented horizon. In other terms, the latter is kept open by a tension towards non telluric conceptions of territory. Planning floating cities is not – to Blue 21 - about transferring (Interv.) land-based models at sea. Rather, a new design philosophy is required able to recognize water’s turbulent materiality which does not make you – only – go “up and down” (Ibid.). This way water could really permeate – more than simply by definition – the very idea of floating urbanism. Thus, on the one hand, they participate in and keep opens the legal gap Lin *et alia* (2022) study as far as floating entities are concerned. But, on the other, de Graaf and colleagues act it and take seriously liquidity: to them, it *matters!* (Steinberg, 2011, 2013). Therefore, the juridical (and thus political) void is negotiated by affirming the primacy of water’s materiality on the land’s one. Which is precisely what makes the gap unsolvable with the city- or State-form⁷². That is why, for them, “thinking-with water” is not about transferring a land-based

⁷² That happens because what floats - by definition - *does not lie*. It makes, it gains the turbulent materiality of water as its own defining characteristic. The former makes the latter radically irreducible to each of the currently existing categories, that is, to each of the currently existing spatial covenants between land and sea. Indeed, the floating city – as both a figure and a practice - exceeds them (see Chapter 4.2) by deeply discussing many land-based rules through which States seek to decide above the ocean and to construct it (Steinberg, 2000).

concept – or an object created through a land-based concept – on water. Contrary, water produces here the attempt to overcome conceptually and practically the “city” as a political technology and abstraction. Therefore, such a *becoming-ship* might consist of creating an urban space materially made of roaring waters, which in turn move urban-political practice. It is not about a simple proliferation of floating homes. Rather, it announces a planetary seaport to be created as scaffold of a new institutional asset of society.

In other terms: by thinking that way, Blue 21 strives to move beyond the “methodological citysm” (Angelo, Wachsmuth, 2015) in practice and a new urban logos emerges. Indeed, the blue metamorphosis of the city they envision and act does not lean towards a smooth space to be reinforced. It is not, I mean, a cartographic urbanization of the sea which would be nothing less (or more) than the modern spatial application of the land-based map onto the flowing sea. Blue 21's approach appears to be a very different one. They inhabit the crisis of nature-as-external by allowing its excess to enter (and to some extent to produce) their creativity. To them, Nature is no more “an outside”, nor it is internal as measure, by means of appropriation. Differently, it appears practically, urban-politically hosted *as excess* through the very making, the very production of environment and social space. This way the city disappears, and new friendships might arise. Ones made of infrastructures where cyborgness and care are grounded on risk, on the material semioticity of a turbulent water. Such are the built kinships for the Chthulucene (Haraway, 2019) that the *becoming-ship* (as envisioned by Blue21) announces.

For them, in fact, the sea is not a metaphor (Steinberg, 2011, 2013), but a moving volume which cannot be grasped with usual cartographic-based tools and models (Couling, Hein, 2020, p. 77). Consequently, the project which emerge – in design terms more than in explicitly political ones – cannot but overcome (or at least wants to) that *citysm* which has been – according to Farinelli (2011) – the very root of cartographic reason. The same which, to Moore (2015, 2017a, 2017b), gave the geographical base for creating and inscribing on the ground nature-as-external. Instead, de Graaf and colleagues plan partially beyond such an equational reason (Galli, 2010). Thus, one can say that they are developing a design and urban-political planning thought up to the (revolutionary) challenges issued by the ongoing capitalist crisis (Moore, 2015, 2017). Their projects originate thinking-with water and designing-with water: the latter roars, they are the output of a sympoietic (Haraway, 2019) re-production of knowledge and reason through the mesh (Morton, 2012), through the unknowable opacity which makes the water a

pelagos (Cacciari, 2017). To that extent, the infrastructures they envision appear to be *constellative*. They *approximate* human-nonhuman distance without appropriating it or reducing it to measure, as they were *built stellar friendship*. Techniques are not their mere technicalities. The latter as well are imbued and transformed in light of that new logos: it reproduces through them. *Meta-philosophically*, it crosses the threshold and *metabolically becomes-with, by means of the very creation of environment*.

That is what the “dynamic geographies” Dal Bo Zanon claims for (Interv.) appear to be about. They immediately concern architecture; they emerge *from* and stay *at* the trial of environmental creation without passing before from the alienated terrain of representation. To her and Blue 21, geography is a matter of *creation* and techniques *are* geography. They materially write (*graphos*) the terrain (*geo*) thinking-through its material exodus, not with its reified copy (the map, or other ideological representations). In this specific way water's opacity transforms thinking, by bringing the latter beyond the "methodological citysm" - which is a decolonial political gesture since it is radically non cartographic (Mignolo, 2007). In fact, flexibility and modularity are two key words that abstract-concretely mark the Blue Revolution. They point to its technical reason and at once to its political tensions. Of course, the latter are in the background. But – as shown – a more-than-technical, ecological-political dimension emerge from Blue21's work. Flexibility and modularity are mobilized to stay with the "radical uncertainty" (de Graaf, Fremouw, van Bueren, Czapiewska and Kuijper, 2008) to which the Planetary Flood exposes spatial planning. The turbulent materiality of this uncertainty is exactly what makes the latter something more than merely the gap in an equation. Rather, while it makes the equation impossible, it is precisely what transforms practice and thinking, what makes them materially and operationally flexible and modular. Uncertainty around sea-level rise thus infiltrates reflection, making it productively a more-than-wet aspect (Pieters, Steinberg, 2019) of the sea itself. This way, the non-human is not alienated again, but its *exodus* (from us in general and from capitalist world-ecology in particular) is metabolically approximated. It is precisely that void of knowledge (that *farness*) to be put at the centre and with-which one stands operationally.

The same idea of distance and non-coincidence emerges also from the three conversations I had with participants in the R4R Program. Frans Kljin's (geographer, Q-Team) emphasis on the absence of control was to me impressive. To him, the ocean or seas appear as hyper-objects (Morton, 2018), something which cannot but exceed reason's grasp, which engineers cannot completely contain into

calculations. Thanks to their turbulent and not metaphorical materiality, the possibility is prevented to conceive of them as an external measure. The Planetary Flood historically, and thus water in general, does not appear neither an “it” that can be put “in front”. Contrary, it is – only apparently paradoxically – internal as excess, both internal and external. Reason (and the project) should here think in light of a reversed coin with respect to modernity. Namely: since nature – as Moore argues (2015, 2017) and Frans experiences – reveals itself as no more external, point cannot be to re-introduce it “in society” as a measure and value. Such a smooth togetherness has been the colonial and homogenizing *telos* of capitalistic modernity, its metabolism. Rather, the very issue – which Frans’ logos embodies – seems about how to think *within* a revealed, demystified, turbulent and exceeding materiality, about how to take seriously and become-with the far, material opacity of – in this case – water.

Hence, it appears deeply problematic to let it simply be. Instead, it is a matter of *wait and see*, of opening space to the multiple temporalities of nature and then approximate them operationally. The very need of reason and projects arises, not the contrary. To Frans, in fact, the R4R is a matter of rationally and productively dealing with that hyper-object which partially exceeds reason. He does not claim against engineering and architecture, but in support of a radically different ethics of them. One which recognizes and works with the ontological tragedy of distance. In fact, on the one hand, Kljin does not deny such an exodus but affirms it. On the other, the need appears to *infrastructurally approximate* it as an issue of public safety. Therefore, Moore's (2015, 2017, see also Chapter 2) conception of metabolism seems embodied and mobilized by Frans’ approach. Indeed, the latter looks to be productively and *creatively* up to a post-capitalistic ecology. One where non-human natures are not alienated in measurable externalities or internalities, but urban-politically approached through planning operations. In fact, as shown discussing *Ecologia-mondo e crisi del capitalismo* (Moore, 2015), Capital does anything he can to capitalize and not to give room to the autonomy of extra human natures. The 25% increase in costs for implementing the R4R, differently from the classical “struggle-with” approach, shows a different ethics. There, a kind of alliance takes place with the “superweed effect” (Moore, 2015) the exceeding water produces. Listening to Frans, one could say that the R4R has been a program which tried to host such a “rebellion”, letting it open time-space to alter-urbanizations, to environments where non-humans are internal-as-excess to human productive actions. Such a position, which abstractly seems a contradiction, is *solved* (to Moore, metabolism should work as a *solvent*, 2017a, 2017b) *operationally on the*

terrain of time-space production, where political engineering mediates by building infrastructures in the web of life and death.

The same tension emerges if one listens to Pieters evaluations about the Nijmegen project he and his Studio (H+S+N) worked at. “Nature” – he said during the interview – “is also something that must develop in itself. The only thing we can do as humans *is to create the right conditions for that*”. Again, what Moore calls the “crisis of external nature” and Morton (2018) describes as the arrival of hyper-objects appears here in its concrete and turbulent materiality. One that forces to literally split a city, and we cannot but think- and build-with if we want to survive. On the one hand, an excess is recognized, the multiple temporalities of water are put at the forefront. On the other, Pieter invites *to assume them through the project practice*, even if the latter appears more a choice than a necessity. “We have to plan spaces and times”: it means that it is not merely about letting the nature develop, about abandoning ourselves to its flow. Rather, it is a matter of interaction, of assuming those multiple temporalities and partially unpredictable movements through a coherent design philosophy and practice.

One can thus say that, in the project for Nijmegen, the former are *engineeringly approximated* through structures which have different uses depending on whether the flood arises. “To rock” (Morton, 2017) with such a “symbiotic real” has thus meant doing the operative strain of reason, the effort of a project up to the task of a surplus nature which simply goes ahead: it does not matter if someone is on the way. The formula “nature development in itself” is again worth to attention. It appears an attempt to refer to the *nowhere* towards which the river flows and floods. Instead, “the right conditions” *to be created* which Pieter claims for points to the needed urban-political gesture of engineered preservation of human life. Therefore, non-human exodus from us in general and from modern-capitalistic ecology in particular, seems to entail the (human) effort of creation, the right conditions not to transform “rebellion” into catastrophe. In such a scenario, the festival arena strikes which has been created on the new island in Nijmegen. It announces that – amid the Planetary Flood - play time also can be produced and preserved only through an urban-political infrastructure which takes seriously the ontological tragedy we are in. It may represent another example of built stellar friendship, of an ecological practice to affirmatively host non-human distance and excess and letting it productively support human life, creativity and urban Being creation (see Lefebvre, 1965).

Thus, before the Room for the River Program, one can say that “porosity” (Hein, 2021) gains there a post-capitalist and planning-oriented dimension. Indeed, it seems the proper concept for describing how such *territories of more-than-human exodus* are co-produced. If – according to Harvey (2011) – “spatial fix” is the way capitalism hits the ground and embodies its operations, the considered projects could instead be labelled “metabolic fluxes”. They are spaces materially crossed by and made of – at once – water and productive post-capitalist potentials. Time is challenging them, therein it stirs as concrete, multiple, infra-structured possibility of alter-urbanizations. The urban logos can ignore that pressure (and let it work as a “removed” negative), it can let the water simply be (thus trusting in its ontological distance as it involved a kind of promise). Differently from both cases – and that is what “porosity” would be about according to Hein (2021) - it can do the effort of a mutual shaped production of environment. Namely: the project can let the multiple temporalities of water transform its instruments, materials, and philosophies in order to let the former *positively* permeate also the produced (and inhabited) environment which appear.

In that regard, a crucial point emerged talking with Ralph Schielen as well. Indeed, to him, water's opacity is something to be worried about. And that is coming from an engineer! Again, one can say that – to him – to face the Planetary Flood is not only a matter of dismantling modern ecologies about “external nature”. Rather and in so doing, it is about recognizing that beyond those ecologies there were (and is) an ontological tragedy, a distance which is not (only) a concept. It is materially turbulent and materially made of multiple temporalities. Ralph position is telling since he recognizes that calculations have limits, and that these limits immediately concern issues of safety for the people. But, at the same time, I felt him striving for inhabiting that trouble. At the beginning of the conversation (as far as the R4R was concerned), mathematics was to him a matter of prediction: the eternal presents of formulas. At the end (looking at climate change), it rather appeared an issue of care, of doing the effort of connection, of urbanizing, of letting live together those who cannot but be separated in their dialectical unity: humanity (reason) and water (the web-of-life). Therefore, mathematics gained a precious role in fostering such an urban, metabolic logos up to the Planetary Flood and – at once – devoid of the “nature-as-external” capitalist ecology.

Finally, if one looks at the wider context of the Netherlands as explored throughout Chapter 5, all these tensions and potentials could find a huge resonance. Indeed, the whole Delta has appeared a kind of archipelago, where currents of water permeate life, infrastructures, and imaginaries. Nevertheless, such an echo is not a

destiny, nor it can be imagined as a linear resonance from an issuing point. As it propagates, different scenarios pop up and various path can be chosen. Those alternatives depend on how social practice and the distant movement of non-human natures (especially, in this case, water) urban-politically interact. Therefore, for the abovementioned potentials to be developed, for the ambivalence to be activated, *specific and up to the task choices and orienting projects are needed*. Here, critical research and practice co-determine. While the former assembles instruments and lenses to see immanent alter-urbanizations' potentials, the latter has to enact a double movement. It should – at once - foster those *possibles*, and thus, by means of a virtuous circularity which tends to *metaphilosophy* (Lefebvre, 2014, 2016), stimulate new operative knowledge.

To start up such a process – from our side of critical urban researchers – an only *diagnostic* approach to the object of study is insufficient. In addition, a truly *prognostic* Lefebvrian *style* is needed, which constantly protrudes (urban) philosophy towards the (revolutionary) historical movement of urbanism socialization. Following this claim, I now let react the Archipelago (as offered in Chapter 3) through the collected materials and reflections about the Netherlands. By means of *transduction* (Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 11 and subsequent), I advance it as an illuminating virtuality to open critique to prognosis, to meta-philosophy. It should work as an operative concept, as an *orienting* project to be realized through social climate practice.

Next paragraph, considering what advanced in Chapter 1, 2 and 3, delves into such second critical exercise.

6.3 - *All'Arcipelago!* The metabolic life of the multitude at the trial of climate political change.

As reported in Chapter 5, water material turbulence roars within the Dutch engineered environment. Its infrastructures are constantly stirred by the former's current. In times of Planetary Flood, the R4R Program and Blue 21 – which emerge from such a context – seems to embed, take charge of, and spread out some alter-urbanization (Brenner, 2019) potentials. To a certain extent, those planning initiatives and explorations *urban-politically open the climate*. They hit the

environment by orienting human and non-human fluxes through plans and specific works which fix a new, partially post-capitalist metabolism. This way, in fact, exceeding temporalities and spatialities of water are infra-structurally approximated and the capitalist ecology of external, measurable nature seems to be suspended. *Territories of exodus, infrastructures in the web of life arise as productive moments of negotiation and environmental bending by means of critical porosity.* At once, urban life and creation is not denied, nor it is dismantled. Rather it is supported, it appears as means and telos of such an ecology. That way, water is hosted assuming its non cartesian ontology, and – with Neimanis’ words (2017) – re-done, re-created by taking care for that radical unknowability. What we see in the Netherlands is thus an urban logos which – to some extents – refuses to reify the infinity to the finite. On the contrary, the former develops on the terrain of “infinite plasticity” (Lefebvre, 2016).

How to take care for, prolong and completely realize those potentials? A point of convergence, a project is needed to *re-unite* (as the Urban to Lefebvre, 1973b, p. 194; 2014, p. 84) them and to make an immanent *telos* visible. Without such a movement (from the concrete to the abstract), the former would remain isolated and hardly socialized. They will continue in announcing, but to nobody. We would not take seriously the historical materiality of the Planetary Flood, which matters (and reproduces) also as an epochal crisis in capitalism. The chance would not be seized.

Therefore, I offer the Archipelago as a *project* for filling the gap and – again – debating planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation. Such a figure enables a movement of *transduction*, i.e. – according to Lefebvre (1973b, p. 11), whose theory it is an extension of – the “reflection upon the *possible* object” (emphasis in original). Namely, on that *hologram which may reunite (abstractly) a dispersed reality and then orientate in hitting the ground to let the former concretely converge.*

Indeed, the Archipelago works as and adds to the critical movement an *illuminating virtuality*. It updates at our geo-historical conditions the French philosopher’s “virtual object” (Ibid. p. 9) he called “Urban Society”. That is to say, the former – differently from common uses of “planetary urbanization” as a diagnostic tool only – has been offered (see Part 1) as an “orientation” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 401) towards the “perfectly reappropriated space, and thus *urban* (Lefebvre, 1973a, p. 156, emphasis in original) amid the Planetary Flood. “Nothing more and nothing less” – Lefebvre would have added (Ibid.) – than “a thought out direction, an experienced movement that breaks through to the horizon. Nothing

that can resemble a system”. This way, the Archipelago has been useful – following Brenner (2009, 2019), Keil (2018) and Merrifield (2013) – to regain the French philosopher’s concept at its critical and revolutionary origins. It has in fact been suggested – through an unprecedented reading of Cacciari’s namesake essay (2017 [1997]) – as a possible, risky, and arduous becoming to be chosen, produced, defended, and constantly taken care for. In times of Planetary Flood – i.e., the concrete hypothesis which I started from and updates the French philosopher’s one around “the urbanization of society” (1973b, p. 7) – the Archipelago has appeared a productive way to grasp the urban-political possible our present is in the grip of (Lefebvre, 1973a, p. 156). Namely, to update and re-claim for what Lefebvre argued in 1972 before an audience of architects at the University of Lima (in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206):

“It will be a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called art. Terrestrial space is thus created as the social support for a transformed everyday life: containing multiple possibilities.”

In fact, the Archipelago I described throughout Chapter 3 is an abstract-concrete *operative concept*. It is a *figure* - as Dawney (2022), Neimanis (2017) and Haraway (2019) conceive of it. By taking seriously its own morphological dimension, it may orientate the production of the Common by means of an alliance, a stellar friendship, of an urban-political *infrastructure*. The latter should be built between the ocean exodus and the multitude one and consists of the thankless effort of urban-politically connect and approximate those who are different: humans among themselves and together with respect to water. Such a “truth of the sea” (*archi-pélagos*, Cacciari, 2017, p. 18) – if assumed and chosen – may allow the invention of a common *oikos* (an *archi-polis*). One where our “relentless tension towards the too much” (Ibid., 34) profits from the moving force of the sea to avoid falling into the asymptotic trap of homogenization (which utopia “nullifies the Archipelago”, Ibid., p. 103). Where what Lefebvre calls the “plenitude of life” (2018, [1965], p. 28), the right to the city as “right to the oeuvre” (2014 [1968], p. 130)⁷³, to the feast (Ibid., p. 129), to “supreme luxury” (Ibid., p. 129) to the “immense needs of the urban man” (Ibid., p. 103) are all rooted in “ones’ navigation versus-towards the others” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 35) by “sunsetting from any fixed

⁷³ In that regard, Lefebvre writes very clearly a bit before (2014 [1968], p. 129): “Putting art at the service of the urban does not mean to ennoble the urban space with art objects [...] Time-spaces must become artworks”.

identity” (Ibid., p. 162). That is why – in the operative concept “Archipelago” – the materiality of water *matters* (Steinberg, 2011, 2013). On the one hand, the latter simply “goes nowhere” (Cacciari, 2017, p. 19), it has no destiny, nor it is good or bad. It is, at once, in and out, turbulently near (*pontos*) and turbulently distant (*pelagos*). But, on the other, such an exodus may produce – by materially permeating it - the good *hybris* (Ibid. p. 25) of the Common: a good planetary urbanization. One where ships are not the apotheosis of cities (Ibid. p. 31) but infra-structures, crucial moments to be always renovated. They would embed and give shape to the practical effort of “*muros terra posuere nova*” (Ibid. p. 32), of building anew, of infra-structuring encounters and let singularities circulate and meet. In such a common, planetary *archi-polis*, in fact, the Other is the needed, productive energy which makes the *logos* to reach its etymology: i.e. *dia-logos*, connection. “How would the island know to be individual and autonomous” - Cacciari writes (Ibid.) – “if it did not discover in its own *logos* the *Cum*, what unites-distinguishes it from the other?”. That is why the Archipelago let cities as walled *places* disappear. Rather, the possibility of singularities depends there on that common, globally infra-structured and collectively built becoming-with. Its agora results from such an approximation of roaring waters. Through that wet infinite plasticity, *each ship reveals to be an infrastructure, and each infrastructure a ship* where the stellar friendship between the *logos* and the ocean stirs.

Nevertheless, all that is not a destiny. Contrary, it emerges as a Sisyphean effort acted *within but against the tragedy, the “nowhere” towards which currents of water drag*. Someone is thus needed to take charge of the strain, to “say” (Ibid., p. 21) and “save” (Ibid.) that multiplicity, to choose it not to solve the distance, but to inhabit it better. Someone who may materially, urban-politically approximate the differences among himself without transforming such a pluriverse (Cacciari, 2017, p. 32) and urbanized *dia-logos*, into the (impossible) One. Whether the latter was that one of a planetary homogenized city or a walled *oikos*. Such a *logos* and operative intelligence (Ibid.) may be up to the *metabolic life of the multitude*. The suggestion has emerged cross-reading Cacciari’s formulations with Lefebvre’s, Negri’s, Hardt’s and Moore’s. Indeed, on the one hand, the “forbidden navigation” the Italian philosopher puts at the very foundations of the Archipelago has been recognized close to the *meta-philosophical movement of urbanism socialization* Lefebvre (2014) and Negri and Hardt (2000, 2004, 2010; Negri, 2008) claimed for. On the other, in order to profit of and approximate the ocean’s exodus also, a productive and creative approach to non-human nature was needed. Thus, the urbanistic life of the multitude had to embody Moore’s creative and post-capitalist conception of metabolism.

In so doing, the Archipelago has updated the Lefebvrian “Urban Society”. It has been advanced as an orienting figure for the urban common oeuvre to be produced. It points to the (im-)possible *telos* of the metabolic life of the multitude amid the Planetary Flood. It describes her urban revolution to be endlessly made. That is why it can be used nowadays as a figure for bending time-space. It might help in negotiating the future beyond capitalism and the State when the ubiquitous witness our climate is made off is stormier and growing. In fact, the former offers a way to imagine, fight for, and build the Common by assuming and positively approximating water’s exodus and turbulence through a good planetary urbanization. *In the Archipelago the multiple is saved, and the deep etymology of logos realized, which indeed finds in the archipolis (the planetary watered metropolis) its destiny: to infra-structure those who are perfectly different, humans among themselves and together with respect to non-humans.* Therefore, under the ecological and capitalist crisis, when also the State re-scales (Brenner, 1998, 2007; Mezzadra, Neilson, 2019), the Archipelago may work as a liberatory figure. It may help the emerging, alternative potentials not to be captured by orienting their release and realization.

That appears even more the case in the Netherlands. There, such a concrete-abstraction might be considered and assumed as a possible becoming to be chosen. It may consist of a radical urban democracy which profits – at different levels – from the moving forces of water. That choice would depend on and be up to the multitude, the social architect, whose politics will coincide with and be developed through urbanism, by means of environmental production. Her *urban logos* should constantly do the creative, environmental productive effort of connection to become and make metabolic life. Hence, if one approaches the Archipelago to the Netherlands, all the above-mentioned blocked potentials may find an illuminating virtuality in whose light to be observed and developed. Namely: some lines of possibility, of alter-urbanizations, may be prolonged *through* that hologram *beyond* the present and become the terrain of new research and urban-political struggles. *That way, the Archipelago ends up in working - meta-philosophically and prognostically - on the ground as an operative orienting figure for enquiry, critique, and social practice.* It takes seriously the Planetary Flood and, amid it, the R4R Program and Blue21’s work. It opens the urban-political spacetime for socializing their logos in the making, for showing and letting converge the energies that stirs throughout Dutch territories of exodus. The gash of future they are in the grip of, and whose landscapes exhibit are then more visible and – most of all - negotiable. Finally, porosity and the becoming-ship of urban space gain this way a post-capitalist politics. Those lines, those *routes* - if prolonged theoretically and then in

practice – let us set sails towards the Archipelago and unveil new frontiers of research and political action. Amid the Planetary Flood, Lefebvre’s “urban revolution” is this way back to its revolutionary origins.

In fact, prognostically, the Archipelago makes one take seriously the *urban logos* produced by architects, geographers, engineers and other practitioners involved in the R4R Program and Blue21’s *Blue revolution*. The operative thought they develop tends to produce another environment, where the water’s exodus and the multitude’s may be infra-structurally woven together. They understand the former’s “struggle” and ally with it. They cultivate such an urban-political stellar effort of connection, of logos, able to take up the latter’s destiny: to name and save the multiple, to produce Being by approximating the ontological tragedy of the *stranger strangeness*. Thus, one might say, their *techniques think* (Assennato, 2018) in the dimension of the Archipelago. They do that through and despite the tragedy of distance, the ontological nowhere towards which waters proceed. Such an effort appears in the making in the splitting of Nijmegen, the flooding of Noordwaard and all the other R4R-related projects. It haunts Blue21’s *Blue Revolution* and their metropolis at sea. The morphology of the Common, and its pluriversal ethos find there a *shipyard*. The same goes for *the social architect’s logos*. The latter stirs there, it is there in the making. In addition, the *becoming-ship* as well of the urban space they entail proceeds towards the Archipelago. On the one hand, it works in materially keeping open the legal void where *U.nidentified Floating O.bjects* lay. On the other, it does not close onto new State-based solution but unleashes logos to imagine and build new fluid and flexible covenants between land, sea and air.

Therefore, the metabolic life makings could take inspiration from and spread out that operative knowledge and – this way – cross the threshold of techniques. *She could think about her politics through that very urbanism*, with which the non-human exodus is approximated and by whose approximation the Archipelago (the logos as dia-logos, as infra-structure) can appear. Hence, liberation routes can be traced (and urban-politically pursued) which prolong currently existing territory of exodus and shipyards towards the possible Archipelago. They connect again Blue21 and the R4R. They allow floating cities, houses, and their engineering not to be captured by the island State-form and the methodological citysm in politics. Contrary, by assuming the perspective of waters, the collective operative logos of the social architect may navigate them *for and by building a new institutional asset of society which coincides with that very construction process of cooperation*. One where there will be plenitude of life and the multitude will save herself only if she will always be able to find and preserve – thanks to the moving force of the sea –

all those knots and singularities which root her constitutive dia-logos. In such a horizon, currently existing floating houses and neighborhoods might thus be conceived as kind of *anticipations*, i.e., vibrating blocked potentials to be realized. The silences I heard navigating them are waiting and make room for what Merrifield (2013) calls the “new monsoon season”, the storm – out of metaphor - of the multitude. An urban, radically democratic logos is there in the making. One which might make waters roar both in the agoras and in the urban-political decision of navigation, of *muros terra posuere nova*, of realizing the Common by connecting and knotting a planet of singularities.

The same goes for ports, ships, polders, and all other amphibious infrastructures appearing through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. A liberation line may prolong currently existing porosity towards the possible Archipelago. Hein’s claim (2021) about planning in that direction may be urban-politically gained by orienting practice with the project I propose. Beside amazonification (Alimahomed-Wilson, Reese, 2020), exploitation of work and capitalization of circulation, *the becoming-port of society may appear as a liberatory possibility*. In the dimension of the Archipelago, in that horizon, the metabolic life of the multitude might take charge of such a blocked potential. Starting from currently existing port infrastructures, an operative and liberatory logos may be developed. By becoming architect, it may socially struggle against private ownerships of harbor areas. In addition, the festive and mestizo dimension colorfully showed by the paintings from Marseille (see Chapter 5) could pop up again. Moreover, the collective intelligence might think of ports as crucial knots and concrete models for infra-structuring encounters among humans between themselves and together with non-humans. That way – and taking on Carola Hein’s words (private conversation) - ports may be the “guardians”, the urban-political *scaffold* for organizing such an ecosystem and common co-becoming.

Thus, the Planetary flood, may be considered the Event which stimulates and open the historical possibility of the Archipelago. The ubiquitous wetness it reveals and I experienced by navigating the Delta, might be the terrain through which that project will be urban-politically negotiated and defended. Historically rising waters and the capitalist crisis climate change entails, together with the planetary metamorphosis of the city and the crisis in the State-form it involves, may be considered the conjuncture where the liberatory intelligence of the social architect is at his epochal challenge. Specifically in the archipelago Netherlands, the urban makings of logos already face the concrete, turbulently material challenges of producing a new climate. Since they already stand partially beyond the “nature-as-

external” paradigm, if the Archipelago was considered as an orienting figure, the path towards a collective plenitude of life would appear and could be strongly chosen. *Such a political change of climate may find in the former the common oeuvre to be built, the planetary porous commune to be imagined, defended, and also morphologically produced. One where engineering is taken seriously, and all the political is absorbed in the urban effort (ponos) of producing the environment, of Being creation by resisting the ontological tragedy of distance. In addition, the metropolitan, archipolitan destiny of logos also would be that way faced: the multiple is saved and infra-structured.*

Let us have a look again to Rotmans’ map (Fig. 92). To him, it displays how risks can be converted into expertise to be exported and profits. In such a heaven, social and ecological issues would be solved.

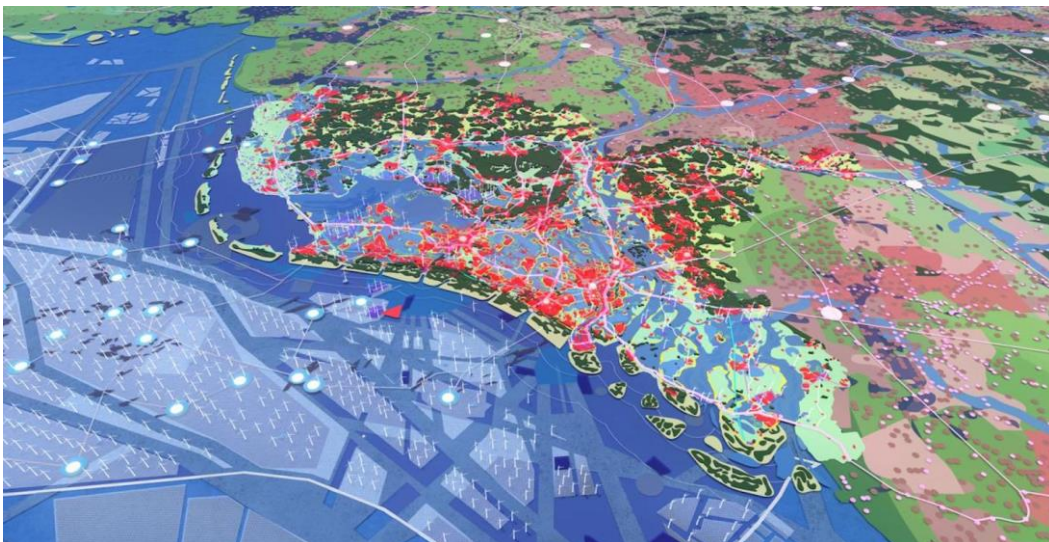


Figure 92: the future Netherlands (Rotmans, 2021, Credit: TU Delft / KuiperCompagnons).

At a first glance, one can say that it represents a combination of Blue21’s perspective and the R4R’s one. Here, the Netherlands are not only made of different kind of islands: windfarms, agricultural or living ones. Better, the country appears a mixed sponge strongly permeated by waters, where the sea, lakes and rivers simply melt and roars in what – with da Cunha (2018, 2019) – I have called “ubiquitous wetness”. It looks like an engineered environment where humanity and

non-human forms of life and energies seems to co-reproduce through a deeply urbanized climate.

Thus, before Rotmans' picture, my conclusive argument is that it also shows the field of a negotiation. The *scaffold* (see Negri, Hardt, 2004, p. 408) – i.e. the supporting infrastructure – of a new institutional asset of society beyond capitalism and the State is announced as well and haunts that glimpse from the future. One where *the terrain of environmental production (of urban life transformation and creation) is completely re-appropriated. Where all the political is completely absorbed in the endless effort of infrastructural approximation. Amid the Planetary Flood, radical urban democracy's cooperative makings will coincide with that archipelago. The metabolic life of the multitude is there become architect and her societas a seaport. She has produced a political climate change and made geography re-gain her etymology and shipness: to write the environment, to hit the climate and to transform the infinite plasticity of the web of life and death. To her it will not have been a matter of producing new symbols, but of changing artificial life. Or, to put it with Lefebvre: "it will [have been] a question of producing planetary space as the work of the human species, in the manner of what has been and is still called art" (in Brenner, Elden, 2009, p. 206).*

Nowadays, far from being an accomplished reality, such an oeuvre is more a vibrant possibility. It is a concrete stirring potential to be urban-politically chosen and pursued by bending spacetime. The Netherlands are in the grip of the Archipelago. *It is weather to act!*

Conclusions.

The chapter has critically analyzed the materials deployed along the fieldwork. Firstly, I showed how some ecological transformations in the making may be integrated in capitalistic-driven and State-based politics. But secondly, I pointed also out which *ambivalences* they fix, which potentials of alter-urbanizations and alter-metabolisms they are stirred by. Therefore, by means of transduction, I offered the Archipelago as a way to theoretically *reunite* them. Consequently, in its light, some escape routes have been prolonged to let porosity and the becoming-ship of urban space find a possible telos, an urban-political liberatory project. Towards that direction, the metabolic life makings could take inspiration from and spread out the

observed operative knowledge for crossing the threshold of techniques. She could think about her politics and build her exodus through that very urbanism. In fact, the latter approximates the non-human exodus, and that is crucial (but not sufficient) for the Archipelago (the logos as dia-logos, as infra-structure) to appear. That way – and taking on Carola Hein’s words (private conversation) - ports may be the “guardians”, the urban-political *scaffold* for organizing such a post-capitalist ecosystem and common co-becoming. Therefore, I argued that – since in the Netherlands some practices are already in the making which stand partially beyond the “nature-as-external” paradigm – the country is in the grip of the Archipelago. If it was considered as an orienting figure, the path towards a collective plenitude of life would appear and could be strongly chosen. Such a political change of climate may find in the former the common oeuvre to be built, the planetary porous commune to be imagined, defended, and also morphologically produced. One where engineering is taken seriously, and all the political is absorbed in the urban effort (*ponos*) of producing the environment, of Being creation by resisting the ontological tragedy of distance. In addition, the metropolitan, *archipolitan* destiny of logos also would be that way faced: the multiple is saved and infra-structured.

Conclusions.

It is weather to act!

As said since the very beginning, the research would have been characterized by two major dimensions: a *utopian momentum* to break through into the possible and, consequently, a *theoretical unbalance* of the argument itself. Both depended on the historically and politically situated position I took. Namely, on the will I advance not to detach myself from the pressure of some epochal ongoing tragedies in general, and from climate change specifically. Contrary, I chose to look for a *project* which might face the latter despite its greatness. That has added a *creative component* to the research, which has mainly consisted of a theory-grounded and field-informed *prognostic effort* to exit the future-less quagmire of diagnosis only. At the same time, I strived - through an *immanent perspective* - not to enter pure-negative mazes, but to unearth, visualize and focus on globally deployed *ambivalences*. That way, I aimed to show *the possible* currently existing Planetary Flood is in the grip of. Therefore, overall, I attempted to draw the outline of a *new urban critique*. One which should be rooted on the *becoming-architect of critical geography*. Namely, *on the endless and always to be renovated meta-philosophical gesture of taking seriously, engaging in and thinking-through the Project in its urban-political materiality. That is offered as a possible manner to participate in and contribute to the makings of the metabolic life of the multitude and her urban revolution*. The Archipelago is hence the proposed figure to gather them towards a common oeuvre to be built amid the Planetary Flood. It is advanced as an *orientation*, an *act of love* pronounced from within but against the ontological tragedy and the more-than-capitalist crisis we are passing through. An effort to live it better and get out ahead it.

Here below, I reknit all threads and give a small glossary (in italics) of the major outputs each chapter of the research produced. Subsequently, some routes for future enquiry are traced.

Firstly, we began from the *Planetary Flood*. I passed by lots of extreme weather events which have hit the Mediterranean in last 3 years. Streets have become rivers; entire cities have been destroyed or hugely flooded and thousands of deaths have been left on the ground. Our Middles Sea has appeared in its oceanic turbulence and concretely far from the salt lake we were used to. Such Medicanes are in fact making our climate experience monsoonic, as it is in South-East Asia. Then, a consistent amount of technical literature (IPCC, 2014, 2019 and elsewhere) has been offered and discussed to show how – globally – sea level is rising, and rain intensity is growing together with flood risks. Because of climate change, scenarios are exposed to high degrees of uncertainty also due to the unknown operative human reaction to them in next decades. Therefore, ranges of G.lobal M.ean S.ea L.evel go from a rise of 0.3 meters by 2050 to up to 5.3 meters by 2300. Since all that is happening – as lots of authors have argued (among others: Magnusson, 2011; Brenner, 2014; Assennato, 2018) – amid a planetary built and interconnected society, I have proposed to call it Planetary Flood. *It is offered as a hypothesis about an historical conjuncture: the epochal encounter between the ubiquitous wetness (da Cunha, 2018, 2019) considered in the process of its material revealing and our urbanized planet and atmosphere. That name fixes such situation and preserves both climate change’s dimension of generality (abstraction) and does not lose the concrete one. There are no local extreme events, but a Planetary Flood to come. Images from our devastated cities, together with daily news substantiate the hypothesis: such a flood is also already here. Therefore, it can be conceived as double: it is partially concrete, partially abstract. It is – at once – a open scenario to different directions and an historically given turbulent materiality.*

Then, I passed to outline the theoretical and methodological framework of the research. In the wake of a lefebvrian-oriented claim Keil (2018) advanced 5 years ago, I asked: *how to bring the “urban revolution” concept back to its revolutionary origins amid the Planetary Flood?* The question has been explored through three, interconnected methodological axes which themselves already would have consisted of a “coming back” to Lefebvre. Firstly, I proposed to *re-figure* (see also Neimanis, 2017; Haraway, 2019; Dawney, 2022) the Urban Society as imagined by the French philosopher. Indeed, to him (Lefebvre, 1973b) it was more an immanent virtuality, a project to be realized than an accomplished reality. The process has been divided into three steps - disassembly, update, and reassembly – to which Chapter 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 have been respectively devoted. Secondly (but not in order of time) I conducted a period of fieldwork in the Netherlands from January to July 2022. I *navigated* through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness for observing and deepening knowledge about the engineered environment the country consists of.

Finally, by means of *transduction* – i.e., according to Lefebvre (1973b, p. 11), the “reflection upon the possible object” – some to be (historically and practically) chosen becoming have been highlighted. Part 2 of this document has developed such second and third axis.

In Chapter 1, the operative and figuring essence has been visualized of Lefebvre’s “urban revolution”. For that purpose, I close read some of his essays following the axis immanence-oeuvre-project. The three conceptual knots stand for as many crucial characteristics the concept would have consisted of according to the French philosopher. Specifically, I considered: *The Right to the City* (2014[1968]), *The Urban Revolution* (1973b) and *The Production of Space* (2018 [1974]). Then, the figure of the *social architect* has been introduced. I have offered it to name the collective subject which is immanently in the making amid planetary urbanization. It serves to grasp how – to Lefebvre – the urban revolution would have entailed, meta-philosophically, the socialization of urbanism. Therefore, I propose such a first concept to open his theory to practice. It is a preliminary instrument for focusing on the “alter-urbanization” (Brenner, 2019) potentials capitalistic-driven urban transformations are in the grip of. *It is a way to take care for and be responsible about the operative, technically informed, and morphological-oriented political “capacity to urbanize” (Brenner, 2019, p. 392) we need for discussing and building radical urban democracy. The social architect is who could gather those potentials thorough his urban-political action. He decides by building association and cooperation, by re-appropriating the production of the overall social space. He overcomes alienations and separations through the creation of urban life (and its morphologies) as artworks. Thus, firstly, the urban revolution is to be conceived as the making of the social architect.*

Subsequently, such argument has been updated at the imperial stage of capitalism.

For that purpose, a reading has been offered of Negri and Hardt’s thought. In particular, I considered and close read their *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (2010) by following the axis multitude-biopolitical production-Commonwealth. I paid attention on how they conceive of the (planetary) metropolis. It has appeared as the *ambivalent scaffold* (out of metaphor) of currently existing social (biopolitical) production and reproduction. Then, it has emerged as a crucial terrain for the *absolute democracy* to be built. This way, the two political philosophers’ argument met the Lefebvrian and could be conceived as planetary urbanization debaters before a horizon of emancipation. Indeed – to them - it is

precisely under that global condition that the project of the multitude becomes possible. The latter consists of the tendential coincidence between liberated life and the very production of the infrastructure of cooperation, i.e. of cooperative-use values. Hence, a second preliminary answer emerges as far as the general question of the research is concerned. Nowadays, to “go back” to the origins of the urban revolution concept - i.e., to re-figure Urban Society - should involve focusing on such (as I propose to call it) an *urbanistic life*. *The operative concept (or figure) describes a social practice – which for Negri and Hardt is already in the making - that tends to cross the threshold of techniques. It points to a residue, a productive excess at work through currently existing planetary urbanization. The former leaves the structure of capitalism open and makes the second an ambivalent whole. By appropriating portions of fixed capital, and urban-politically blur the division among “to decide” and “to build”, she announces the scaffold of a new institutional arrangement of society beyond capitalism and the State. As to Lefebvre, the telos appears of a planetary commune to be created as a human artwork. Therefore, the urbanistic life of the multitude is the living concept I offered for visualizing the social architect at the Imperial stage of capitalism and its commonality (the deployed planetary urbanization).*

Chapter 2 has all been about updating the French philosopher's argument in light of the ecological crisis we are facing. Again, I took my cue from him. Indeed, in *The Right to the City* (2014 [1968], p. 72), he states that “nature is what escapes from rational control”. But, at once, it is precisely in the Urban Society that – according to the author – culture and nature may find a new unity (1973b, p. 197).

Firstly, I discussed Morton’s proposal about hyper-objects (2018) to show *how* non-human natures ontologically withdraws. His ecology (2009, 2010, 2017) is offered as a way to understand their *extremely concrete distance* with respect to us humans. While the English philosopher’s argument resulted insufficient as far as practice is concerned, some passages of Lefebvre’s *Metaphilosophy* (1965) have been nonetheless considered. In fact, they display that the French himself had a Morton-like reading of the ontological tragedy we cannot but face. Moreover, emphasis is added on the former’s practice-oriented approach to such an “infinite plasticity” in terms of approximation. Then, a bridge has been made with Moore’s proposal (2011, 2015, 2017a, 2017b) about the capitalistic crisis climate change triggers. After having shown how – according to the American environmental historian – it takes place, I referred to his operative conception of “metabolism”. The metabolic life of the multitude has thus been the final stage I offered for updating the social architect at both the Imperial contingency of capitalism and to

its ecological crisis. *The former is a living concept which thinks through the oikeios (web of life) as the historical linchpin to conceive of social change as production-of-environment (Moore, 2017a). It might help in re-figuring Urban Society amid climate change since it takes care for the Lefebvrian productive conception of urban revolution. At the same time, it points to the needed subjective dimension for struggling through our urbanized present, crossing the threshold of techniques, and urban-politically reappropriate the creation of environment. Finally, it appeared able to face the ontological tragedy of distance without cheering it or reproducing and re-inscribing the geographical premises of the “ecological surplus” (Moore, 2015). Contrary, the metabolic life of the multitude outlines a productive practice grounded on poiesis and cooperative infrastructural creation through the web of life and death.*

Having been finished the updating process, Chapter 3 has then reassembled all the emerged threads. Specifically, I close read Massimo Cacciari’s *L’Arcipelago* (2017 [1997]) and offered it as a new figure to replace Urban Society amid the Planetary Flood. It consists of a project which depends on the moving force of the Sea. It stands for a collective oeuvre to be realized and might orientate the urban intelligence of the multitude. There, the Common emerges – metaphilosophically – as a productive journey to be chosen. Namely: as a logos-generating movement which arise immanently at the encounter between the planetary metamorphosis of the city and the Sea. *It can be realized only through an urban-political, metabolic movement of creation, of making multitude in the web-of-life. It has to be always renovated by inhabiting in excess the metropolis and the Ocean. Its only “picture”, its only horizon and image, is the political effort of deciding, choosing, and producing such a care-oriented, cooperative, more-than-human infrastructure. It emerges within, but against the tragedy, the “nowhere” towards which currents of matter drag. There, it creates the Being as Urban Feast, as the engineered possibility of encounters, of a common oeuvre. An ephemeral invention to fight for is announced not to fall in the Utopian (impossible) One trap. Whether it was that of a planetary extended homogenized polis, or that of a walled, impenetrable, autonomous oikos. Names, like ships, arise always as societas, as dia-logos in the Archipelago.*

Here, Part 1 concluded. In fact, the suggested project ended the process of re-figuring and, thus, the guiding questions reached a complete, possible answer. To debate planetary urbanization before a horizon of emancipation amid the Planetary Flood could mean to focus on, investigate and increase theoretical knowledge about the metabolic life of the multitude’s makings. Moreover, it would consist of *letting*

geography itself become such an architect. Namely, in developing an urban critique which reproduces the endless *meta-philosophical gesture* of taking seriously, engaging in and thinking-through the Project in its urban-political materiality. Therefore, on the one hand, the production of the Archipelago *is* such a strain as far as this research is concerned. On the other and in so doing, it points also to a common oeuvre to be historically realized and in whose light – circularly - to debate the Planetary Flood.

Part 2 of the document – which unfolds the second dimension of the work – continues that effort starting from a period of fieldwork in the Netherlands. After having given some context information (Chapter 4), I reported what seen, heard, read, and discussed along my navigation through the Dutch ubiquitous wetness. There, differences blur among boat, skyscrapers, canals, and streets commonly conceived while telluric-based movements get close to a sailing action. Specifically, on the one hand, I followed (by boat properly) the navigable line - the Nieuwe Maas river - which connects the North Sea to the Noordwaard polder. On the other - along walks, cycling journeys and explorations by train - I observed the landscape from the perspective of ships, ship-related infrastructures, and floating urbanism.

Overall, a porous and engineered environment in the making has appeared. One where currents of matter – and specifically of water – participates as excess in the co-creation of urban spacetime. Port activities, port-related infrastructures and then Dordrecht and Gorinchem have been showed in their more-than-wetness. Cranes, streets, and walls proved to be permeated by the turbulent materiality of the Sea, which insinuates and roars till the “hinterland” of Rotterdam. *The Room for the River Program itself can be described as an effort of planning for porosity (Hein, 2021). It consists of the engineered strain of building a new metabolism among humans and non-humans.* One which grounds on the concrete uncertainty and immensity of the latter. Besides that, also boats and floating urbanism have been considered. On the one hand, the former are still a key component of the Dutch landscape. To various extent, they permeate the environment, which shipness has appeared in manifold ways. *From Rotterdam Central Station to lots of floating neighborhoods, a becoming-ship of urban space has emerged. On the other, that is even more the case if one looks at Blue21’s work. Indeed, it consists of an articulated vision and planning practice aiming to thinking of and produce a radical change in state as far as our (planetary) metropolis is concerned.* Thanks to them, knowledge is deepened about how – concretely – the turbulent Sea may

roar again in the former's agoras. Moreover, and consequently, those seaports can be created anew which cities used to be according to Hein (2021).

Finally, in Chapter 6 these materials have been critically analyzed. Firstly, I showed how those processes may be integrated in capitalistic-driven and State-based politics. But secondly, I pointed also out which *ambivalences* they fix, which potentials of alter-urbanizations and alter-metabolisms they are stirred by. Therefore, by means of transduction, I offered the Archipelago as a way to theoretically *reunite* them. Consequently, in its light, some escape routes have been prolonged to let porosity and the becoming-ship of urban space find a possible telos, an urban-political liberatory project. Towards that direction, the metabolic life makings could take inspiration from and spread out the observed operative knowledge for crossing the threshold of techniques. She could think about her politics and build her exodus through that very urbanism. In fact, the latter approximates the non-human exodus, and that is crucial (but not sufficient) for the Archipelago (the logos as dia-logos, as infra-structure) to appear. That way – and taking on Carola Hein's words (private conversation) - ports may be the “guardians”, the urban-political *scaffold* for organizing such a post-capitalist ecosystem and common co-becoming. Therefore, I argued that – since in the Netherlands some practices are already in the making which stand partially beyond the “nature-as-external” paradigm – *the country is in the grip of the Archipelago. If it was considered as an orienting figure, the path towards a collective plenitude of life would appear and could be strongly chosen. Such a political change of climate may find in the former the common oeuvre to be built, the planetary porous commune to be imagined, defended, and also morphologically produced. One where engineering is taken seriously, and all the political is absorbed in the urban effort (ponos) of producing the environment, of Being creation by resisting the ontological tragedy of distance. In addition, the metropolitan, archipolitan destiny of logos also would be that way faced: the multiple is saved and infra-structured.*

Here the research has finished and the general claim I advanced about letting critical geography become architect has been strengthened. An example has been offered of how we should – metaphilosophically - take seriously, engaging in and thinking-through the Project in its urban-political materiality while debating the Planetary Flood before a horizon of emancipation. As far as future enquiry is concerned, new frontiers have been opened and – consequently – lots of works is to be done. I suggest some points, which concern both methodology and theory-building. I put them as lines of research towards an *urban philosophy* and a *new*

urban critique up to the historical encounter between planetary urbanization and climate change.

Firstly, *figuring* (Neimanis, 2017; Haraway, 2019; Dawney, 2022) and the work of *illuminating virtualities* may radically change how we do urban critique. By blowing new life in and ignite the “urban revolution” concept, they might make projecting imagination not to get stuck and trapped into pure-negative’s mazes. In fact, they can receive, accelerate, and release back into the world the immanent energies of exodus from capitalism and the State our urbanized present is in the grip of. Figures announce productive projects stirred by a creative will. Therefore, thanks to them, urban critique may flank contradictions with ambivalences, not to stop at a geographically inspired “*methodological marginalism*” – which may reproduce the *methodological citysm* Angelo and Watchsmuth (2015) analyze. Indeed, they take charges of what Italian writer Italo Calvino wrote concluding *Le Città Invisibili* (2018 [1972]). To him (by means of Marco Polo’s voice), in order to remove the hell which haunts life, it is in fact necessary to “seek and know how to recognize who and what, *in the midst of hell*, is not hell, and make it last, and give it space” [Ibid., p. 160, emphasis added]. Illuminating virtualities seem able to do exactly that job, to grasp, take care for, and orient the production of those liberatory potentials which also the deepest hell is stirred by. Specifically, the Archipelago, has not offered a merely utopian position, nor a new Form to be reached. Contrary, it has taken seriously the material conditions but – *prognostically* – *it has saved and let emerge the blocked, only partially invisible metropolis which haunts the coming Planetary Flood.*

Nonetheless, lots of enquiry is to be done theoretically and on the ground. Barely a foundation has been laid here for studying how the Urban and philosophy may (re)discover their common destiny on the terrain of time-space production. Such a *metaphilosophical* gesture (Lefebvre, 1965) itself is to be deepened confronting literatures which often use very different languages and conceptualizations.

Specifically, while the Archipelago has been advanced as a preliminary figure for orienting also that theoretical enquiry, more research is needed to strengthen it. For sure, da Cunha’s (2018, 2019) perspective will remain crucial. How the “ubiquitous wetness” permeates our urban world far beyond shorelines and flood-prone areas is to be better showed. Here, heretical and adventurous research is needed for breaking the mirror of evidence and tautology and finding the hidden currents of *pelogos*.

In the direction of (western) philosophy, how the Archipelago roars in the Urban and how the latter finds in the ecology of the former its revolutionary tension is to be better analyzed and showed. For example, a backwards work is to be done – confronting geographical studies with philosophical ones – to explore how water have permeated urban grounded conceptions of the world before our flooded historical condition.

Moreover, in the direction of economics, how financial capital works in capturing non-human exodus is to be directly addressed (in the wake of Keucheyan, 2019), together with contradictions, crisis and liberatory routes which may start also from that harbor.

In addition, as far as political theory is concerned, it will be crucial to deepen knowledge about how the socialization of urbanism might take place and be organized. Which kind – if any – of tactical institution are needed? Are the classical categories of war, enemy and territorial power up to such a task (Cuppini, 2023)?

Finally, social geography will be pivotal for discovering and analyzing currently existing emergences of metabolic life. By laying in-between social practices, struggles, and operative disciplines such as architecture, engineering, and planning, it may focus on how the multitude is already in the making *through the planetary shipyard*. Amid the Planetary Flood, it may work with the idea of and show how “each ship is an infrastructure, and each infrastructure is a ship”.

Generally speaking, for the purposes of meta-philosophical research, it will be a matter of navigating by inquiring. Namely, of living philosophically through our urbanized present with an architecture-informed eye. In times of Planetary Flood, it will be essential to take techniques seriously, to for-see like “invisible” cities and, amid hell, give them space, fight for radical urban democracy and set sail towards the Archipelago.

If this research had not moved a single step in that direction, I hope at least it could be felt a good paraphrase of the poem:

Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle,
e questa siepe, che da tanta parte
dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.
Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati
spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani
silenzi, e profondissima quiete

io nel pensier mi fingo, ove per poco
il cor non si spaura. E come il vento
odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
infinito silenzio a questa voce
vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno,
e le morte stagioni, e la presente
e viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
immensità s'annega il pensier mio:
e il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare⁷⁴.

To the ships, geographers, it is weather to act!

⁷⁴ Leopardi Giacomo, *L'infinito*, 1821.

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