Justice Scenographics: Preparing for civilization change in a time of 'Anywheres' and 'Somewheres'

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It's 2019 as I write this opening statement. In the UK, we have just experienced the hottest February on record with temperatures as high as 20.6C[1]. This is one year on from what the UK media termed 'The Beast from the East', which saw average temperatures fall to -11C[2] in the same calendar month. At the same time, the east coast of the United States has just experienced a cold snap with warnings not to leave your home unless obsoletely necessary. Climate scientists have warned that, based on an analysis of trends over 50 years, the increasing regularity of extreme weather conditions across the planet will become the norm[3]. While this has a direct impact on our living patterns and infrastructure, it also impacts the seasonal cycles of insects, plants and migratory birds that human food chains are reliant upon. Social and climate justice movements will need to act in unison if resources become increasingly regulated, horded and re-allocated. The need to prepare humanity for, what the anthropologist Arturo Escobar (2018) calls, 'civilization change' would have to occur as much through cultural and social interventions as via political reorganisation. Crucial to this shift will be challenging how 'the world' is imagined, deliberated, and practiced within social and political discourses.

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[1] BBC (2019) 'UK basks in warmest February day on record' *BBC News* [Accessed 25/02/2019] URL: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47360952

[2] Morris, S., Weaver, M. and Khomami, N. (2018) 'Beast from the East meets storm Emma, causing UK's worst weather in years' *The Guardian* [Accessed 25/02/2019] URL: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/01/beast-from-east-storm-emma-uk-worst-weather-years

[3] Battersby, S. (2012) 'How global warming is driving our weather wild' *New Scientist* [accessed 25/02/2019] https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21528721-800-how-global-warming-is-driving-our-weather-wild/

To afford focus to this discussion, I approach the political rupture known as 'Brexit' (the name given to the process for the UK's exit of the European Union) as a symptom of a broader set of spatialized 'worldviews'. The journalist David Goodhart (2017) has proposed that the Brexit process has revealed two new 'political tribes' that do not align with the established left-right dichotomy of Western politics. Goodhart calls these tribes the 'Anywheres' (minority, mobile, global) and the 'Somewheres' (majority, located, national). Four months after Leave won the Brexit referendum, this alignment of the anywhere-somewhere model with voting behaviours was implied in the British Prime Minster Theresa May's speech at the Conservative Party conference in October 2016. May declared that 'if you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere'[4]. While the Anywheres-Somewheres dichotomy is not without its critics[5], I propose that this spatialized tribal model aligns with distinct conceptions of 'world' that pits two speculative futures against one another. I summarize these two speculative futures thusly:

> Future 1: Humanity has transcended the geo-politics of nations to operate as a race of globalized post-human travellers, which build unity through large scale political unions and overcome resource issues through technological invention. The terminal goal of this worldview is to transcend planet Earth itself and explore the galaxy: e.g. the politics of Star Trek and the United Federation of Planets provide an apt example of this worldview's imagined future.

> Future 2: With the nation-state as a stable reference point, humanity acts as curators of place-based communities that build strong cultural bonds and share finite resources in fair and just ways, while also giving preferential access to those who have been

[4] May, T. (2016) 'Theresa May's Conference Speech in Full' *The Telegraph* [accessed 25/02/2019] URL: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/05/theresa-mays-conference-speech-in-full/
[5] Freedland, J. (2017) 'The Road to Somewhere by David Goodhart – a liberal's rightwing turn on immigration', *The Guardian* [accessed 25/02/2019] URL: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/mar/22/the-road-to-somewhere-david-goodhart-populist-revolt-future-politics

socialized in that place. The terminal goal of this worldview is to sustain shared cultural values, memories and practices with a sense that community and family legacies will be maintained: e.g. the model of a commune is reflective of this focus on cultural familiarity and sharing finite resources.

Escobar has argued that the first of these worldviews – which he terms 'techno-capitalist determinism', but for the purposes of this chapter is aligned with the Anywheres – may be a future impossibility if the growth model of the Twentieth Century is unsustainable. Economist Kate Raworth echoes this reading and argues that for 'over 70 years economics has been fixated on GDP, on national output, as its primary measure of progress. That fixation has been used to justify extreme inequalities of income and wealth coupled with unprecedented destruction of the living world' (Raworth 2017: 25). Rejecting the 'growth addicted' model of economics as represented by the familiar curved incline graph, Raworth proposes that a 'doughnut model' (see figure 1) might afford a more sustainable and just future.
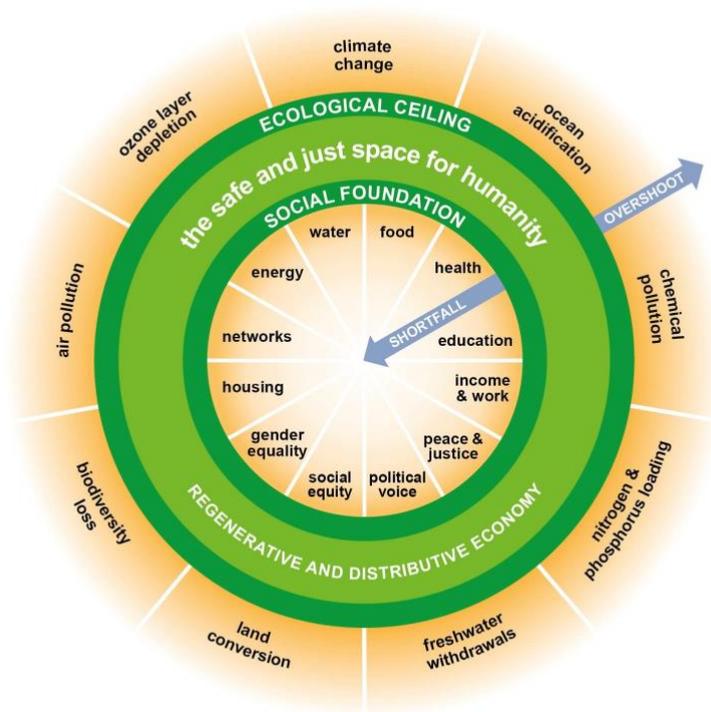

Figure 1: Doughnut economics (Raworth 2017)

Central to the doughnut model is the introduction of a 'social foundation of well-being that no one should fall below and an ecological ceiling of planetary pressure that we should not go beyond' (Raworth 2017: 11). Doughnut economics, therefore, affords a model in which to imagine new collective futures, but it also, as Raworth stresses, underlines how 'Visual frames […] matter just as much as verbal ones' (Raworth 2017: 24). While this is a point I return to throughout this chapter, the integration of an ecological ceiling would impact the worldviews of Anywheres and Somewheres. Most immediately, the mobility via air travel that the Anywheres take for granted may, alongside access to foods grown across the planet, become a luxury and be regulated by governments. Likewise, the social stability valued by the Somewheres may be challenged if regular mass climate migration becomes necessitated by a combination of access to resources, water levels and to escape potential conflicts[6]. In particular, the parts of the planet that have been havens for economic prosperity in the Twentieth Century may no longer be best able to adapt to this new climate context. Either way, the preparedness of individuals and communities to respond to, and thrive within, these new climate contexts is vital.

In this chapter I offer a model for speculating renewed human-world relations based on a climate ceiling model of economics. Framed by the anywhere-somewhere dichotomy, the aim is to consider the role scenographic practices might play to reconceptualising the orthodoxy of 'world as resource' to 'world as connectivity'. In *Beyond Scenography* (2019), I argued for a renewed distinction between 'scenography' – as the crafting of material and technological stagecrafts (costume, lighting, sound and scenery) that sustain staged atmospheres – and

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[6] Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Bergmann, Jonas; Clement, Viviane; Ober, Kayly; Schewe, Jacob; Adamo, Susana; McCusker, Brent; Heuser, Silke; Midgley, Amelia. (2018) *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. Washington, DC: World Bank. URL: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461

'scenographics'. In this model, scenographics are the affective traits of staged material cultures that enact, affirm and shape 'orders of world'.

> I argue that acts of theatre isolate the worlding expressions of scenographics, which in turn complicate orders of world. Scenographics have the potential to enact speculative worlds that afford new insights into what it means to be worldly or how to be *with* worlding orientations. It is this potential that opens out the study and practice of scenography into the borderless disciplinary positions occupied by performance studies.
>
> (Hann 2019: 136; emphasis in original)

Scenographics are present within the staging of a Christmas tree, the seductive tactics of visual merchandising, along with theatrical staging methods that perform crafted atmospheres through the combination of scenery, lighting, sound and costume. Crucially, I propose that the 'potentiality of scenographics is predicated on their temporal withness: of their capacity to evoke and sustain action through means of proxemic orientation. It is the difference of *being with* scenographics and *looking upon* scenic images' (Hann 2019: 134; emphasis in original). The act of *being with* scenographics stresses the ways in which our worldly connections – as enacted as a distinctive atmosphere or feeling of place – moves beyond the strict ontological binaries present within the aesthetics of 'the scenic', which akin to 'the picturesque' places humans outside of the 'image' as objective onlookers (see figures 2 and 3 for illustrative examples). In the twenty-first century, the luxury of conceptualizing human experience as special, distinct and apart from 'nature' will be challenged as climate change stresses our interconnectedness and dependency necessitated by *thriving with* non-human agents.

Figure 2: Stock images of *looking at* 'the scenic' ontology of objective distance on the left and *being with* scenographic orientations on the right.
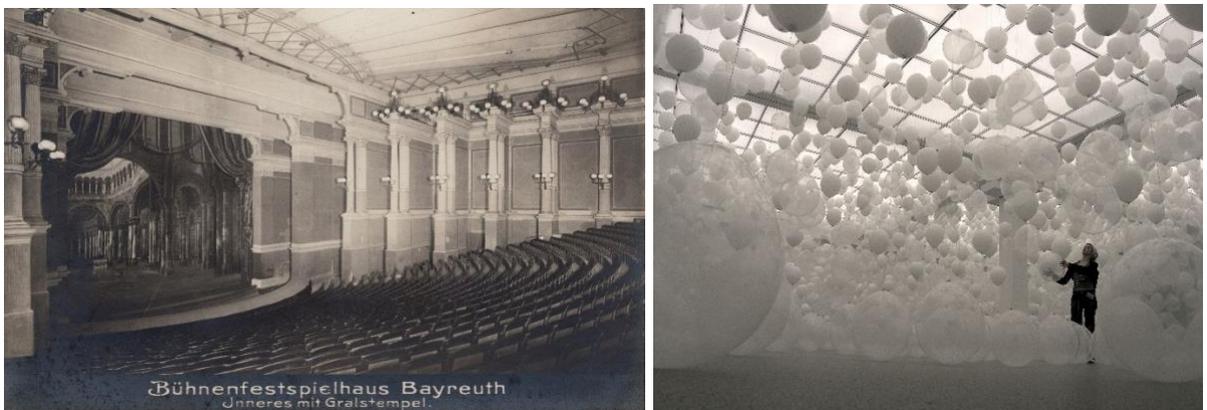

Figure 3: Left, Richard Wagner's *Festspielhaus Bayreuth* (1876) that used a double procesium to separate the theatrical world from the auditorium. Right, William Forsythe's *Scattered Crowd* (2002) as an explicit example of being with scenographic orientations.

Influenced by the Design Studio for Social Intervention's (ds4si) work on spatial justice and design, I adopt the ethos of ds4si's model of 'to be, thrive, express, and connect' (Bailey, Lobenstine and Nagel 2015: 20) in considering the role scenographics can play in scoring – highlighting, irritating, intervening – the inscribed spatial politics that promote and enforce geographies of power. In this regard, I approach spatial justice as a methodology for promoting social change by re-designing cultural geographies to address political and civil inequalities. Building on practices of 'speculative design' (Dunne & Raby) and the ecological argument on dualist 'design imaginaries' (Escobar 2018), I assess the potential for scenographics to reveal the spatial injustices embedded within the politics of the Anywheres-Somewheres dichotomy. I argue that these two political tribes are representative of two distinct, but equally problematic,

philosophies on humanity's relationship with world, resource, and mobility. While there are certainly other positions and ways of conceptualising this issue, the provocation of the Anywheres-Somewheres binary affords insight into how the political projects of neo-liberalism and globalization have been built without an ecological ceiling. For ease of reference, I describe this intersection as 'justice scenographics'.

Figure 4: Tanja Beer's *The Living Stage* (2013) as an example of ecoscenography that builds scenographies from living materials that are eaten as part of the performance and any other materials have planned reuses beyond the performance.

My proposal for justice scenographics exists in the potential of 'situated practices' to queer, reveal, and highlight how discourses of power are placed, literally as well as metaphorically. In particular, I reject the notion of space as abstract or empty – the *tableau rasa* or 'blank slate' ideology adopted by Modernist artists. Indeed, I argue that the systems of power that produce spatial experiences are nullified through an ideology that presents space as open and ethereal. Likewise, Marxist philosopher and spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) argued that the idea of space as articulated only through writing lead people to believe for 'quite a time that a revolutionary social transformation could be brought about by means of communication alone' (Lefebvre 1991b: 29). Lefebvre, instead, argued that physical space

was critical to the manifestation of power. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) echoes this position arguing that 'space is fundamental in any exercise of power' (cited in Soja 1989: 19). In that regard, justice scenographics draw upon similar methods to Jane Rendell's argument for Critical Spatial Practice where she considers 'criticism to be a spatial investigation and production of the various intersections between theory and practice, art and architecture' (Rendell 2010: 193). With particular regards to climate justice, theatre designer Tanja Beer's proposal for 'ecoscenography' offers a dual focus on making sustainable theatre and scenographic practices that highlight ecological issues (see figure 4 for example). Beer argues that ecoscenography 'entails incorporating principles of ecology to create recyclable, biodegradable, restorative and/or regenerative performance spaces' (Beer 2017). Justice scenographics seeks to drawn upon the ecological ethos of ecoscenography and focus this potential to broader issues of how worlds are felt, experienced and ordered by systems of power.

Building on the work of Rendell and Beer, I argue that justice scenographics have the potential to score the interlaced laying of 'power-geometries'. Geographer Doreen Massey describes place as 'woven together out of ongoing stories, as a moment within power-geometries, as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space, and as in process, as unfinished business' (Massey 2005: 131). Similarly, justice scenographics reveal how these places, these 'worlds', are felt in relation to human-centric power geometries (nations, economics, belonging) and the ecological connectively of non-human assemblages (human-world binaries, ecological relations, process philosophies). Indeed, I argue that scenographics are only known through their active othering of place. This can manifest itself through the tactics of queering and surrogacy, but also extends to all place-based practices that complicate, reveal or irritate normativities of world, place and location. The self-proclaimed micro-nation of the Republic of Molossia (founded 1977) in Nevada, USA, exemplifies how scenographics affirm orders of world (see figure 5). Located in the President Kevin Baugh's

backyard, the state is declared by adopting the paraphernalia of nationhood (flags, borders, timezones, currency, and signs) without being a formal nation-state. This 'backyard nation' shows the spatial practices that affirm nations as 'real', felt and present. Consequently, justice scenographics is a call to action for practices that complicate the assemblages of world/place/nation/stage by enacting renewed human-world relations that afford insight into other power relations and other ways of living *with* place.
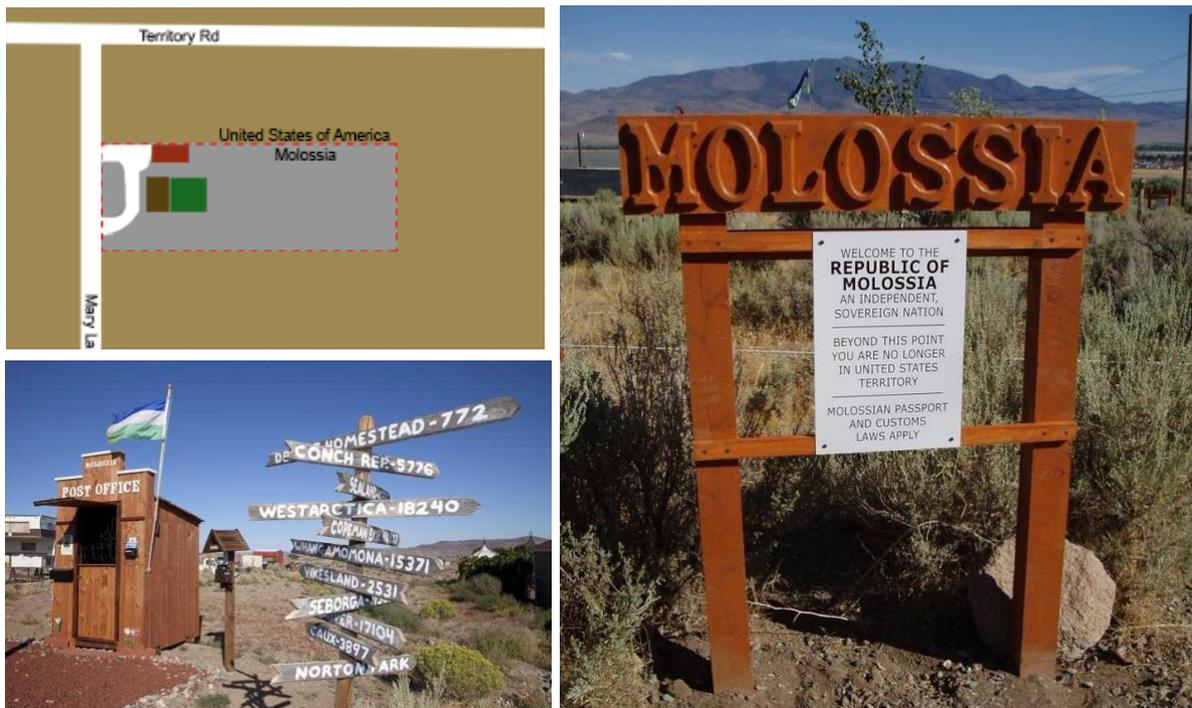

Figure 5: The micro-nation of the Republic of Molossia (founded 1977) in Nevada, USA.

As implied by the Republic of Molossia's affirmation of nation as a feeling of place, the combination of scenographics and spatial justice invites new speculative relationships to world that also ask us to act differently, feel differently, and be part of a different human-world ecology that celebrates connectively between human and non-human agents. Crucially, scenographics forefront the ability to enact new cultures of worldly relations that can exist alongside, but also replace, the strict ontologies of subject and object, human and world. Environmental philosopher Rupert Read argues that what is needed are the cultural seeds for a new kind of civilization, which embraces a 'new radical localism'. Likewise, Escobar calls for tools 'for reimagining and reconstructing local worlds' (Escobar 2018: 4). The model for a

radical localism, albeit with regards established city structures, was mooted by the former British Labour politician Tristram Hunt and now Director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Arguing that a radical devolution of power to cities would be good for democracy, Hunt suggests that: 'Look around the world. Everywhere but everywhere centralized authority is in crisis. It does not speak to what people want in this fast-moving, hyper-connected, pluralistic world. People want a say. People want a stake. People want to participate. People want power' (Hunt 2016). Hunt cites the need to manage energy and food resources in ways that are more locally responsible and accountable with the large political unions – such as the United Kingdom – often being unresponsive to the change needed for local communities to thrive.

Whether radical localism becomes a necessity is, arguably, secondary to the need to first imagine a future that embraces an ecological ceiling as a realistic possibility. Raworth argues there is a need to go 'beyond new economic thinking to new economic doing' (2017: 292).

> When it comes to new economic thinking, *draw* the change you want to see in the world too. By combining the well-known power of verbal framing with the hidden power of visual framing, we can give ourselves a far better chance of writing a new economic story – the one that we so desperately need for a safe and just twenty-first century.
>
> (Raworth 2017: 293; emphasis in original)

Raworth's proposal to 'draw the change you want' and for 'new economic doing' directly informs my own approach to justice scenographics. Escobar equally states that the notion of 'transition design' can re-imagine a region of Colombia's southwest to transform 'from the ecologically and socially devastating model that has been in place for over a hundred years to a codesign process for the construction of a life-enhancing regional pluriverse' (Escobar 2018: 5). The notion of the pluriverse is a result of the transition from the 'hegemony of modernity's one-world ontology to a pluriverse of socionatural configurations' (Escobar 2018: 4). In speculating new future relationships to world, this extends to imagining new daily practices and life trajectories that may be radically different to the ones sustained by a culture predicated

on growth, technological saviours and neo-liberal models of individual responsibility. The political ruptures of Brexit, as well as the nationalist agenda of Trump in the US, highlight a lack of preparedness for imagining new social geographies that go beyond the worldviews of the Anywheres and the Somewheres. In both political tribes, world is a 'platform', 'background', 'scenery' for humanity's ingenuity and/or exclusivity to resource. Echoing Escobar's argument that 'we design our world and our world designs us back' (Escobar 2018: 4), the invitation to speculate new human-world relations affords a degree of cultural preparation should the necessity arise to re-imagine how our civilizations sustain humans *alongside-and-with* world.

I argue that justice scenographics act as provocations on how worlds are encountered, processed and manifested through intervention. Moreover, I propose that scenographics afford a shift in thinking for social justice movements. Scenographics emphasize the methods for installing counter-places, worlds and atmospheres which, in turn, complicates the normative spatial orders that place humans as near or far, familiar or foreign, friend or foe. In a historical movement that the ds4si has termed a 'Social Emergency', there is a need to challenge the assumed orthodoxies of power relations and consider how future models of civilisation may be increasingly governed by the 'super wicked problem' of climate change. Building on Rittel and Webber's (1973) articulation of 'wicked problems', climate scientists Kelly Levin at all. argue that 'Super wicked problems comprise four key features: time is running out; those who cause the problem also seek to provide a solution; the central authority needed to address them is weak or non-existent; and irrational discounting occurs that pushes responses into the future' (Levin et al. 2012: 124). Approaches to codesign and a radical localism afford potential methods for responding to these super wicked contexts. Indeed, this chapter adopts the position that our conception of world – as either the globalized perspectives of the Anywheres or the localized needs of the Somewheres – will drive spatial injustices as national and local policies on transport, water, and food production shift in relation to questions of nationalism, finite resource, and protectionism. Consequently, I argue that political ruptures

such as Brexit have revealed two speculative futures that build upon histories of aesthetic, cultural and political reinforcement of humanity's *place-in-the-world*. Now is the time to speculate new human-world relations that embrace a sustainable future together.

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