

## **BiblioTech**

### **Group exhibition**

#### **Exhibition Research Lab (Liverpool, UK)**

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Mel Jordan and Gary Hall, Art & Knowledge

For us, the arts and humanities are a site for the invention and testing of new knowledges, new practices, even new subjectivities, not least for the artist and author. Working with a range of different collaborators we carry out such tests in spaces traditionally associated with the institutions of the university and art school. We do so by reimagining various media-material aspects of the creation, circulation and sharing of art and knowledge, including books, journals, pamphlets and presses. See the Free art collective's choral reworking of pre-existing manifestos, or the processual texts of Open Humanities Press's two liquid and living books series. But we are also concerned to conduct such tests in the public sphere by collaborating on the reimagining of galleries, libraries, archives, museums and other elements of municipal infrastructure. In both cases we operate very much in terms of those social movements dedicated to radical open

access, peer production, internet 'piracy' and the anti-privatised knowledge commons. We are now working on the following question: can the collaborative, performative approaches to art and knowledge we have developed with initiatives such as the Partisan Social Club and Media Gifts be translated to cities in order to help transform them and the way 'we' are as bodies in such public spaces - intellectually, affectively, as flaneurs etc?

The reason we are focusing on cities is because they are particularly important places when it comes to progressive politics. It's hard to imagine societies differently without also imaging the spaces they occupy differently too. It's also in cities that political forces for change often emerge these days. Over the last few decades numerous events have testified to the significance of cities in this respect: from Occupy Wall Street and the movements of the squares in Spain and Greece, through the roundabout revolutions of Bahrain, South Korea and Egypt, to the pro-democracy actions in Hong Kong.

Another reason cities are important when it comes to politics is because they operate at a scale that makes progressive change in a leftist sense a

realistic possibility. Being smaller – and in the case of the UK less subject to the attentions of the Tory press – it's often far easier for towns and cities, and within them local governments, council leaders and mayors, to take a more radical and experimental approach than it is for nation states.

This is borne out by the celebrated community wealth building model – dubbed 'guerrilla localism' – that has been pioneered by Preston City Council in the UK, and which is based on the collective economic and social power of the city's public institutions.<sup>1</sup> But a lot of the initial impetus behind the Arab Spring, 15M, Occupy, Occupy Gezi and YoSoy132 protests subsequently went into municipalism for just this reason. Ada Colau, Barcelona's housing-activist-turned-city-major, is only one of the most prominent and oft referred to examples.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in the UK, a lot of the energy and ideas that were produced by the left over the course of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party have been relocated to the nation's town and city halls. Local political leaders such as Andy Burnham in Manchester – and to a lesser extent Sadiq Khan in London – no longer try to engage in large-scale mainstream politics at a national level of the kind I have detailed elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> They are rather intent on providing smaller scale government at a local level. This means that to offer something different to the status quo they don't have to wait for a sympathetic

government to be elected to Westminster with a programme of radical transformation; or even for a sympathetic opposition party to appear, as they would with the 'state capture' approach. Their attitude is the more independent one of taking action 'without waiting for permission or guidance from above' or the centre.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time cities face many problems today. They include war, poverty, unemployment, population density, political polarisation, massive displacements of peoples, racist state violence, segregation, social and economic inequality, labour exploitation, violence against women (or female-identifying, female-presenting people), climate breakdown and the threats to public health that are posed by novel viruses. Given the funding cuts that were imposed by numerous governments in the name of austerity to defend the neoliberal order in the global North and West after the financial crisis of 2008, many cash-strapped cities have been forced to respond by reducing that proportion of their budgets dedicated to providing infrastructure and offering alternatives to the market. In the UK public spending was shrunk from 42% of GDP in 2009-10 to 35% in 2018-19. Since 2010 Britain has closed approximately 800 of its public libraries – which is almost one fifth of the total amount. Nearly 130 libraries were shut

in 2018 alone. More closures are expected to follow in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak of 2019-2022. Shrinking budgets and income combined with the greater cost of services such as public housing and health care during the pandemic mean lots of councils are talking of having a £7.4bn gap in funding, with as many as 131 in England facing cuts or bankruptcy. Leeds, for example, said in June 2020 that a £200m financial shortfall could force the city to close 34 of its libraries. More recently it has been reported that £172bn has been assigned by the government to 'levelling up' (remember that). Only £9bn of that money has been designated for social infrastructure projects, however. Nor is this a state of affairs that is confined to the UK. A June 2020 survey of 760 museum directors by the American Alliance of Museums found that one third (i.e., 12,000) of their institutions may never re-open after the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

It's a policy of reducing spending on local civic infrastructure and amenities that over the years has left the path clear for private providers to enter spaces long considered the domain of the public sector. In 2017, Innisfil in Ontario, Canada, gave Uber complete responsibility for the provision of public transport in the town.<sup>6</sup> It did so with the goal of saving money, as Uber seemed a cheaper option than the bus system Innisfil was originally

planning to build. Unfortunately, it has not quite turned out like that. The town subsidises rides, so the more the system is used the more it pays out to Uber. It very quickly reached the point where Innisfil was spending a larger amount of money on what is basically a subsidised taxi-service than it would have cost to construct a public transit system in the first place.

Nevertheless, many towns and cities are planning for their future by deliberately turning to for-profit businesses to provide investment and to help improve their infrastructure, often partnering with, or outsourcing to, multinational surveillance capitalist companies in the process. As Evgeny Morozov noted a few years ago, when it comes to turning to the big tech of Silicon Valley, towns and cities 'do so in the hope ... that the company's superior ability to gather, analyse and act on data would yield tremendous savings for the public sector, while stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.'<sup>7</sup> The same neoliberal thinking is apparent at a national level. For example, it has recently led the UK government, under cover of the pandemic, to look to scrape all GP data from people's medical records and make them available for sale to corporations. (This was a replay of a similar initiative called Care.data that was launched in 2013 and abandoned not long afterwards due to fears about the security,

confidentiality and transparency of the extracted data.) Plans of this kind are all the more surprising post-Covid given the virus has clearly exposed the danger of relying on the private sector. Doing so led to vaccines for diseases with pandemic potential not being developed in advance as businesses regarded them as having insufficient potential to generate profits for their owners, shareholders and investors. Companies preferred to let their priorities be set instead by the desires of the rich: for makeup, skincare, dietary products and the like. Yet as the emergence of coronavirus variants in different places around world showed, the fight against a pandemic requires that *everyone everywhere* be safely vaccinated, not just those (countries and people) that can afford to pay for the privilege.

The same can be said of other aspects of municipal welfare. Cities are only really fit to live in if they provide all of their human and nonhuman inhabitants, including people, animals and plants, with a decent quality of life. The climate crises makes this quite clear. When it comes to humans, the environment is shared by everyone, not just a select few who are able to ensure their own well-being by displacing any threats to the ecosystem onto the vulnerable members of society in an effort to maintain the status

quo. Among the risks are the spread of plastics, the erosion of soils and increasing carbon dioxide emissions, 8% of which come from that basic building material of cities, concrete. The latter is the planet's 2<sup>nd</sup> most used resource. The most used is water, its scarcity now impacting 3 billion globally. Approximately 1.5 billion people have experienced acute water shortages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – to the point some are predicting that drought will be the next pandemic (if food shortages generated by the war in Ukraine don't get there first).

Faced by these threats to the elemental commons we should all be communists, the philosopher Michael Marder writes.<sup>8</sup> And, to be sure, sooner or later even the wealthiest of city occupants are likely to feel the impact of climate breakdown – not to mention population density, racist state violence, and the increasing gap between labour and capital. Indeed, it could be argued that we can already see this with 21<sup>st</sup> century mobilisations such as the *gilets jaunes* and Black Lives Matter, and their reactions to the increasing economic and geographical inequality generated by neoliberal globalisation. These social movements are demanding change in ways that the well-off in society are finding it difficult to ignore as they become aware of just how vulnerable they are to the



world around them. Nevertheless, as with vaccines, the development of municipal infrastructure has often been driven more by the profit motive and by the needs and desires of the rich than by, say, social goals based on values of justice, equality, community and solidarity.

Granted, there has already been a lot of criticism of the direction in which cities are headed due to shiny, blue, Smart City initiatives. (Smart Cities are almost invariably presented graphically as blue.)

- In May 2020 Naomi Klein reported that Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, was due to head up a ‘blue-ribbon commission to reimagine New York state’s post-Covid reality, with an emphasis on permanently integrating [AI, mass surveillance and data collection] technology into every aspect of civic life’. Schmidt joined New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s daily coronavirus briefing on May 6<sup>th</sup> to say that the initial focus would be on telehealth, remote learning and broadband. Viewing the pandemic as providing New York with an opportunity to create “a smarter education system”, Cuomo had made public a similar partnership the previous day with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.<sup>9</sup> Klein identifies in such arrangements the

beginnings of an extremely profitable, ‘no-touch’, ‘pandemic-proof’ vision of the future: what she refers to as both a ‘Screen New Deal’ and a ‘Pandemic Shock Doctrine’. At its heart lies a ‘seamless integration of government with a handful of Silicon Valley giants — with public schools, hospitals, doctor’s offices, police, and military all outsourcing (at a high cost) many of their core functions to private tech companies’.<sup>10</sup> Amazon’s introduction of Sidewalk, which turns its Echo speaker and Ring security camera into a shared wireless network, with a view to creating city-wide ‘mesh networks in the name of providing a better, more connected and convenient service citizen customers, is presumably paving the way for arrangements of this kind.<sup>11</sup>

- In their 2019 book *How To Run A City Like Amazon and Other Fables*, Shannon Mattern, Mark Graham and their co-authors have clearly enjoyed themselves imaging how bad it would be to actually live and work in a city run by hyper-capitalist companies such as Uber and Deliveroo with their emphasis on precarity, mass surveillance and behavioural control.<sup>12</sup>

- For the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale, which took as its organising theme ‘How We Live Together’, the British architects Parsons & Charlesworth have likewise had fun creating a satirical *Catalog for the Post-Human*.<sup>13</sup> This, too, envisages a future of contingent labour where success rests on the ability to be ‘permanently cognitively sharp’, and workers are forced to augment themselves, physically and mentally, just to keep their jobs.<sup>14</sup> Along with memory implants and data tattoo monitoring systems,<sup>15</sup> the catalog features smart drugs that enable people to adjust their circadian rhythms to their work schedules. Other products enhance an employee’s ability to recover from their labour by enhancing their short-term napping or by matching their arcadian rhythm to their economic rhythm.<sup>16</sup>

Yet while criticising the stupidity of Smart Cities can be extremely satisfying, we don’t want to leave it at that. We want to see if we can go even further than some of the critical approaches we have just mentioned. Taking our inspiration, in part, from municipal socialism and initiatives such as the Preston Model and Frome’s Flat-pack democracy – not to mention

the self-organised networks of mutual care that emerged in the early days of the pandemic in many locations around the world without waiting for permission from central government – we want to look toward what we *do* want when it comes to the post-pandemic future of cities, not just what we don't. As a provocation to radically reimagine our cities, towns and habitats along more *entangled, relational, processual* (i.e., non-modernist-liberal) lines, we want to see the disruption created by deindustrialisation, the financial crisis, austerity, Trump, Brexit, coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, along with multiple protests against planetary destruction and violence against women and people of colour, as providing us with an opportunity to extend a challenge to both the public and private paradigms as they currently exist. And all the more so given so many of us are unhappy with the answers both paradigms are currently proposing to the city's problems. The latter includes many failed and uneconomical private finance initiatives, public-private partnerships and efforts at regenerating post-industrial cities by encouraging short-term strategic investment.

All this may seem ambitious, utopian even. But as the response to the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic of the UK Conservative Party shows, if the will is there, we can make radical changes of a kind that would once have been

considered unimaginable, not to mention unaffordable. Not to explore such alternatives is a political decision on our part, not an economic or pragmatic one. (And we can help fund them by defunding other parts of sociality and culture.)

As noted above, we want to challenge the public and private paradigms by examining how the collaborative, performative approaches to art and knowledge we have developed with initiatives such as the Partisan Social Club and Media Gifts can provide inspiring – but also relatively easy, cheap and flexible – possibilities for radically rethinking cities and their infrastructure so that they are ‘fit for purpose’ in the age of AI, algorithms and data analytics. We want to do so not least by exploring how offering a diverse range of more horizontal, collaborative and commons-oriented alternatives to those galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) currently being provided by the state and corporate realms can help to reshape cities: conceptually, but practically and concretely too. (We single out GLAM because this is where a lot of our expertise lies. Yet other aspects of municipal provision could be addressed and even invented, since there would be no need to mimic those – often ‘universal’, Enlightenment, modernist-liberal – elements that, historically, have gone to

make up a city, especially in the global North. Excitingly, new and very different kinds of post-Gutenberg, post-Enlightenment, de-liberalising organisations and institutions could be designed that do not adhere to the traditional models and that function both online and off as well as hybrid combinations thereof.)

For example, can we build on the experience that we and our various collaborators have with open access publishers, shadow libraries,<sup>17</sup> DIY pop-up exhibitions<sup>18</sup> and so forth? A starting point for this would be with the various hardware, software, tools and collections that have been made widely available by advocates of open access, open GLAM,<sup>19</sup> FLOSS, p2p filesharing, copyfair, copyleft, copyfarleft, 'piracy' and the anti-privatized knowledge commons. Can we make it possible for the inhabitants of cities to be able to select from these resources in order to create their own bespoke anticapitalist, antiracist or antiheteropatriarchal cultural institutions? The idea would be for a multiplicity of actors to be able to do so according to the needs and requirements of their specific situations: either by copying them more or less as they are if that what's they wish; or by developing, modifying and repurposing those elements they want and discarding the rest. All this could then be fed back into either an informal,

flexible, latent commons, or a more formal distributed union or federation of open city infrastructure, and made available to be critically and creatively reused, misused and abused by others in turn. (The emphasis on open software, tools and resources is important. Not only does it enable such creative reuse; it also works against the current tendency for technology to become concentrated around a small number of companies. The latter is due to the likes of Apple reducing the degree to which their products – laptops, phones, Airpods – are interoperable with those of other companies.)

In keeping with the approaches of Open Humanities Press and the Partisan Social Club, the building of such *bespoke* counter-institutions would be done in a non-rivalrous, non-competitive – but not necessarily non-antagonistic – fashion, to collaboratively proliferate experiments with reimagining the city for a more equitable, socially just and environmentally sustainable future. Here, too, the emphasis would not be on scaling-up or scaling-out any one open city model for the creation of free and open civic resources and social infrastructure. Rather, the kind of scaling small approach some of our collaborators have detailed elsewhere would be used to develop potentially transformative inter-group relationships with a

diversity of human and nonhuman others locally, nationally and internationally.<sup>20</sup> We mention the nonhuman here because ours is a *relational, processual* (i.e., non-modernist-liberal), commonism that includes the nonhuman.

The city in this conception would not be concerned with growth or expansion in the conventional sense. Nor would it be organised hierarchically in terms of a centre/periphery or inside/outside model, be the latter the suburbs, the countryside or nature. (Not even in terms of a reversal of this model that has the countryside being privileged over the city.)<sup>21</sup> Rather, by allowing tools, content, systems and infrastructure to be copied, shared and reiterated free of charge, it would non-scale or scale small through the establishment of collaborative relations of co-creation and custodianship between a variety of distributed communities.

With regard to humans, a list of those involved could include (but would certainly not be limited to) academics, architects, artists, activists, builders, craftspeople, designers, engineers, journalists and technologists as well as trade unionists, community campaigners and everyday city folk. In this way an extended multi-polarity of *disparate* projects and initiatives could be



cultivated involving people beyond the white, middle-aged and middle-class who tend to be both the main participants in art and culture and the main audience for galleries and museums in the UK; but also beyond the 'usual suspects' of professional politicians, councilors, think-tanks and retired middle-class professionals with experience in local or third sector politics who too often make up their boards and steering committees of such institutions.

We emphasized *disparate* above because there are many kinds of cities. The appropriate combination and mixture of principles and protocols, tools and infrastructure, tactics and strategies, priorities and resources would therefore differ from location to location, municipality to municipality, time to time, and would be highly situated and site sensitive: materially, ecologically, culturally, politically. According to what (following Derrida's notion of the responsible decision) we might call a stance of *responsible openness*, it would include the possibility of some communities refusing to make their tools and infrastructure openly available and instead keeping them closed, hidden, secret. Rather than sharing their knowledge, technologies or infrastructure with any larger community of communities, they may well prefer to keep working by themselves in their own specific

contexts and languages using their own heritage, concepts and tools.

We're making this point under the influence of the Bolivian theorist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and feminist group Feminismo Comunitario. They see the refusal of translation – and with it the kind of decontextualized connection that can be achieved when their writings are *not* accessed in their original Spanish – as a way of refusing extractivist power relations and keeping English-only speaking actors at the margins.<sup>22</sup>

We are certainly not trying to provide a uniform, 'one-size-fits-all' model, nor what Matthew Brown and Rhian E. Jones describe as a 'blueprint for "universalisable localism"'.<sup>23</sup> If anything, what we are looking toward would be closer to a 'pluriversalisable localism'.<sup>24</sup> Even within any 'one' city there would likely be a messy plurality of actors, groups, movements, organisations, institutions, resources and priorities, all rooted in specific places with their different histories, experiences and expectations, and all best engaged with the involvement of those who are dealing with them on a regular basis. The reinvented notion of the city we are working toward is made up of such initiatives.

Ours is thus a very different approach to the city than that we are perhaps familiar with from architecture and urban planning. We're not talking about an equivalent to the smooth Smart City here, after all. Without an aporetic opening to the 'stupid', rough, dirty, humble, impure, disordered and disfunctional, cities are boring and antiseptic at best.

Let us provide an obvious example. Despite the emphasis on digital technologies, open source software and so forth, none of this is to suggest that cities should no longer make room for old style public libraries: that in the age of AI, Amazon and Academia.edu these are now outmoded. For one thing, public libraries are enclosed, warm, well-lit spaces in which people can remain for long periods of time in order to think and study for free – 'the universities of the streets', as the poet Benjamin Zephaniah calls them.<sup>25</sup> For another, they can serve an important role as alternative community centres for the very young, the very old, the disabled, the unemployed and the socially marginalised. And this is the case no matter how underfunded and run down many of these places may be currently. Meanwhile, for the 'working poor' and those in precarious employment, public libraries can offer various forms of care, advice and support, including internet access. It should always be remembered that, when it

comes to Britain's poorer families, over a quarter are digitally excluded as a result of having no access to broadband.

But we also refer to the example of the public library because it is a good illustration of how the inhabitants of a city often use its infrastructure differently from the ways in which it is imagined they might. Learning from this lesson, the sketch of how to build a latent commons or federated community of 'open' cities and municipal infrastructure we have provided here has been deliberately left loose and unfinished. It is important it remain adaptable and flexible enough for others to be able 'complete' it by mutating it in unpredictable ways according to their particular needs and circumstances (although of course it will never actually be *completed*). Not every last detail needs to be planned or designed, then. Some things can be left to chance. It is vital cities remain hospitable to the useless and unproductive – including the marginalized, the disadvantaged, the disempowered and the disaffected – as well as to the strange, the surprising, the weird and the monstrous. The latter includes the notion that nonhuman species and other actors and elements (buildings, technologies etc.) actively participate in the creation of both culture and cities.

In this respect, it is important to recognise that – for all our mention above of academics, architects, artists and so on – the multiplicity of actors we want to help to create their own bespoke cultural institutions does not already exist: say, as a civic population or public. Rather these, too, are missing communities. What we are endeavouring to do is invent the new contexts out which such multiplicities can emerge.

Which is of course where our interest in cities comes in – although the same goes for them. There is no blueprint for the cities we are looking to create. They do not already exist – not even in our imaginations. They are missing cities; cities that need to be called forth in different ways, times and places. Artistically, practically, theoretically. In short, we need to keep the question of the city and its inhabitants (aporetically) open.

All of which means the brief sketch of how to build a latent commons or federated community of open cities and municipal infrastructure that has been provided here should be seen less as a model and more as an aspiration or horizon. The idea is to cultivate the kind of meaningful diversity when it comes to the development of self-governing,

democratically-managed and controlled, community-owned initiatives that might actually change things.

Such a non-scaling approach would thus add to the pluralistic menu of ideas for transforming existing cultural, economic and social relations that are already features those being explored in places such as Preston, Birmingham, Frome, North Ayrshire and North of Tyne in the UK, Amsterdam in the Netherlands, New York, San Francisco and Cleveland, Ohio in the US, and Barcelona, Madrid and the Basque region in Spain. According to Brown and Jones, for example, ‘the UK already has over 7,000 cooperative enterprises, while around the world approximately one billion people in 96 countries have become members of at least one cooperative’.<sup>26</sup> In addition to worker-owned cooperatives (including platform cooperatives), this ‘living’ repertoire takes in municipal socialism, ‘sanctuary’ and ‘solidarity’ cities, community wealth building, mutually owned businesses, social (and socially conscious) enterprises, mutual care networks, credit unions, people’s banks and community land trusts.

Of course, it almost goes without saying there’s lots more to be said and worked out here. But we’ll leave that for another time.

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<sup>1</sup> For more, see Matthew Brown and Rhian E. Jones, *Paint Your Town Red: How Preston Took Back Control and Your Town Can Too* (London: Repeater, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Michel Bauwens, Vasilis Kostakis and Alex Paziatis take Barcelona as a case study of radical municipalism in *Peer to Peer: The Commons Manifesto* (London: University of Westminster Press, 2019). For more on the global municipalist movement, see Barcelona en Comú, eds, *Fearless Cities: A Guide to the Global Municipalist Movement* (Oxford: New Internationalist, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Gary Hall, 'Postdigital Politics', in Cornelia Sollfrank, Shuhsa Niederberger and Felix Stalder, eds, *Aesthetics of the Commons* (Zurich: DIAPHANES, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Brown and Jones, *Paint Your Town Red*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Valentina de Liscia, 'One-Third of US Museums May Never Reopen, Says American Alliance of Museums', *Hyperallergic*, July 24, 2020: [https://hyperallergic.com/578563/aam-survey-one-third-museums-reopen/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=WR073120&utm\\_content=WR073120+CID\\_0633971dda9aac14a1fe68cad7db8b73&utm\\_source=HyperallergicNewsletter&utm\\_term=One-third%20of%20US%20museums%20may%20never%20reopen](https://hyperallergic.com/578563/aam-survey-one-third-museums-reopen/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=WR073120&utm_content=WR073120+CID_0633971dda9aac14a1fe68cad7db8b73&utm_source=HyperallergicNewsletter&utm_term=One-third%20of%20US%20museums%20may%20never%20reopen).

<sup>6</sup> 'Canada's First Ridesharing and Transit Partnership', *Uber* (website), accessed April 23, 2022: <https://www.uber.com/ca/en/u/innisfil/>.

<sup>7</sup> Evgeny Morozov, 'Public Transport by Uber, and Airbnb Social Housing? Not A Smart Solution', *Observer*, September 11, 2016: 26.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Marder, with artworks by Anaïs Tonder, *The Chernobyl Herbarium: Fragments of an Exploded Consciousness* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016) 34.

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<sup>9</sup> Naomi Klein, 'Screen New Deal: Under Cover of Mass Death, Andrew Cuomo Calls in the Billionaires to Build a High-Tech Dystopia', *The Intercept*, May 8, 2020: <https://theintercept.com/2020/05/08/andrew-cuomo-eric-schmidt-coronavirus-tech-shock-doctrine/>; quoting Cuomo from Valerie Strauss, 'Cuomo Questions Why School Buildings Still Exist — and Says New York Will Work With Bill Gates to “Reimagine Education”', *Washington Post*, May 6, 2020: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/05/06/cuomo-questions-why-school-buildings-still-exist-says-new-york-will-work-with-bill-gates-reimagine-education/>.

<sup>10</sup> Klein, 'Screen New Deal'.

Klein's argument in 'Screen New Deal' is that this was a vision Schmidt had been advancing for some time: 'the thrust of Schmidt's argument has been that since the Chinese government is willing to spend limitless public money building the infrastructure of high-tech surveillance, while allowing Chinese tech companies like Alibaba, Baidu, and Huawei to pocket the profits from commercial applications, the U.S.'s dominant position in the global economy is on the precipice of collapsing.' Google, through its parent company Alphabet, was advocating – not entirely successfully given the amount of techlash the giants of Silicon Valley have experienced in recent years over how they are reshaping almost every aspect of our lives – for the US government to make a similar amount of investment in 'research into artificial intelligence and on tech-enabling infrastructure like 5G'. It's only since the coronavirus outbreak presented new opportunities for massive investment in such public-private partnerships that his argument has pivoted via an 'aggressive rebranding exercise': from America's need to be able to compete with China in fields such as "AI for medical diagnosis," autonomous vehicles, digital infrastructure, "smart cities," ride-sharing, and cashless commerce'; to a focus on such high-tech research and infrastructure being the only hope if, in the future, the health of the American public is to be protected by remote working and schooling etc.

<sup>11</sup> 'In addition to capturing everyone's shopping habits (from amazon.com) and their internet activity (as AWS is one of the most dominant web hosting services) ... now they are also effectively becoming a global ISP with a flick of a switch, all without even having to lay a single foot of fiber' (Ashkan



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Soltani, quoted in Dan Goodin, 'Amazon Devices Will Soon Automatically Share Your Internet with Neighbors', *Ars Technica*, May 29, 2021: <https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2021/05/amazon-devices-will-soon-automatically-share-your-internet-with-neighbors/>).

<sup>12</sup> Mark Graham, Rob Kitchin, Shannon Mattern and Joe Shaw, *How To Run A City Like Amazon and Other Fables* (London: Meatspace, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Parsons & Charlesworth, *Catalog for the Post-Human – Venice Architecture Biennale 2021 (ExhibitionsFeaturedFutures)*: <https://www.parsonscharlesworth.com/catalog-for-the-post-human-venice-architecture-biennale-2021/>; Parsons & Charlesworth, *Catalog for the Post-Human*, Vol.1, Fall/Winter, 2020: <https://www.parsonscharlesworth.com/catalog-for-the-post-human-pdf/>.

<sup>14</sup> Parsons & Charlesworth, *Catalog for the Post-Human*, Venice Biennale Press Release, accessed April 24, 2022: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/w17sj0a1z6gsa68/P%26C%20VENICE%20BIENNALE%20PRESS%20RELEASE\\_\\_5\\_26.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/w17sj0a1z6gsa68/P%26C%20VENICE%20BIENNALE%20PRESS%20RELEASE__5_26.pdf?dl=0).

<sup>15</sup> Parsons & Charlesworth, *Catalog for the Post-Human (Featured, Futures)*, *Parsons & Charlesworth* (website), accessed April 24, 2022: <https://www.parsonscharlesworth.com/catalog-for-the-post-human-2014/>.

<sup>16</sup> Parsons & Charlesworth, *Catalog for the Post-Human*, Venice Biennale Press Release, accessed April 24, 2022: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/w17sj0a1z6gsa68/P%26C%20VENICE%20BIENNALE%20PRESS%20RELEASE\\_\\_5\\_26.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/w17sj0a1z6gsa68/P%26C%20VENICE%20BIENNALE%20PRESS%20RELEASE__5_26.pdf?dl=0).

<sup>17</sup> Marcel Mars and Tomislav Medak, *The Public Library: Memory of the World*: <https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/blog/cat/public-library/>.

<sup>18</sup> Jacqueline Cawston et al, 'Mandela27 – DIY Exhibition: Introduction', *Mandela27*: <https://www.mandela27.com/assets/downloads/Mandela27%20DIY%20Exhibition%20-%20Building%20Instructions.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> 'Towards a Declaration on Open Access for Cultural Heritage', *Open GLAM* (website), accessed April 24, 2022: <https://openglam.pubpub.org/>.

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<sup>20</sup> Janneke Adema and Samuel Moore, 'Collectivity and Collaboration: Imagining New Forms of Communitality to Create Resilience in Scholar-led Publishing', *Insights*, 5 March, 2018: <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.399/>; Janneke Adema and Samuel Moore, 'Scaling Small; Or How to Envision New Relationalities for Knowledge Production', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 16(1) 2021: <https://www.westminsterpapers.org/article/id/918/>.

<sup>21</sup> See AMO/Rem Koolhaas, *Countryside, A Report* (Cologne: Taschen, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> See also Andrea Francke, in Teresa Cisneros and Andrea, Afterword: Nobaody Wants To Deal With This Shit Internally', in Marquard Smith ed., *Decolonizing The Curriculum, The Museum, and the Mind* (Vilnius, Lithuania: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2020) 227.

<sup>23</sup> Brown and Jones, *Paint Your Town Red*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> See my 'Pluriversal Socialism – The Very Idea', *Media Theory*, Vol.5, No.1, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Zephaniah, quoted in Jasmine Andersson, "'Libraries Are The Universities Of The Streets": Authors Call For Stop To Further Closures', *iNews*, December 6, 2019: <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/libraries-800-shut-since-2010-austerity-benjamin-zephaniah-jacqueline-wilson-authors-371636>.

<sup>26</sup> Brown and Jones, *Paint Your Town Red*, 99.