



Delft University of Technology

An Athens yet to Come

Kousoulas, Stavros

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Deleuze and Guattari and Fascism

Citation (APA)

Kousoulas, S. (2022). An Athens yet to Come. In R. Braidotti, & R. Dolphijn (Eds.), *Deleuze and Guattari and Fascism* (pp. 285-301). Edinburgh University Press.

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download, forward or distribute the text or part of it, without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license such as Creative Commons.

Takedown policy

Please contact us and provide details if you believe this document breaches copyrights.
We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Green Open Access added to TU Delft Institutional Repository

'You share, we take care!' - Taverne project

<https://www.openaccess.nl/en/you-share-we-take-care>

Otherwise as indicated in the copyright section: the publisher is the copyright holder of this work and the author uses the Dutch legislation to make this work public.

Chapter 14

An Athens Yet to Come

Stavros Kousoulas

Architectural Technicities

Michel Foucault asks us to consider technology in a much broader sense, one that is not confined only to what can traditionally be called the ‘hard sciences’ but wishes to encompass a population of practices, including institutions and practices of governance (Foucault 2000: 364). Foucault advances a concept in which technology is understood as any practical rationality governed by a conscious goal: *techne* (Foucault 2000: 364). If an artefact and its capacity for niche construction is conceptualised with a focus on its interventionist and manipulative agency, then the very concept of technology – the production and control of artefacts – can surpass the binaries between social and material, human and non-human. In Foucault’s words, ‘if one placed the history of architecture back in this general history of *techne*, in this wide sense of the word, one would have a more interesting guiding concept than by the opposition between the exact sciences and the inexact ones’ (Foucault 2000: 364).

Gilbert Simondon shares similar concerns: at the heart of one of his most important books, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects* (1958), lies the conflict between culture and technology. According to Simondon, this conflict is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of technology which, at least in cultural terms, positions it as a foreign reality (Simondon 2017: 134). For that reason, Simondon proposes the term ‘technical culture’, suggesting a way of thinking which surpasses that conflict. The point of departure for a way of thinking which no longer considers technology and culture apart is a shift of focus from the usage and utility of technical objects. Aiming to provoke an awareness of the modes of existence of technical objects, one should instead focus on the genesis of the objects themselves (Simondon 2017: xi).

Simondon does this by developing the concept of technicity. For Simondon, technicity is fully relational, abductive and deals with a constant becoming. If one aims to avoid reductionism, then, Simondon advises us, one should also study beyond the technical objects to the technicity of these objects as a mode of relation between human and world (Simondon 2017: 162). The autonomy of each technical object – or better said, each technical individual – lies in its relational technicity, since ‘technical objects result from an objectification of technicity; they are produced by it, but technicity is not exhausted in objects and is not entirely contained in them’ (2017: 176). In this sense, one could move from architectural objects to an architectural technicity which operates in terms of reticularity: located within assemblages, reticularity is the immediate relation of events and actions that occur in a given structure which, however, is understood in terms of its potentials for action, not in its extensive and formal outlines, and has to be studied in ethological, that is affective, terms. If becoming, according to Simondon, is defined as the operation of a system possessing potentials in reality, then it is the disruptive agency of these potentials that pushes future states of the system into being (2017: 169). Therefore, understood as a population of technicities, architectural practices engender a particular mode of architectural reticularity by relating them to their own future.

Generalisation and Concretisation

Nonetheless, what does a technicity consist of? In his book *Gesture and Speech* (1964), anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan examines the anatomical technicity of the human hand, positing its development within the reticularity of the body and the environment. Focusing on the discovery of fossils of the *Zinjanthropus* in Kenya in 1959, Leroi-Gourhan claims that the necessary condition for language is bipedalism. Bipedalism frees the hands from walking and simultaneously enables the mouth to speak, creating a new form of anatomical technicity, composed of new relations of speed and slowness, movement and *stasis* in the animal itself, altering radically the ways it relates with its environment. The hand can make and manipulate artefacts, relating now not only to the surface of the earth but to *any* surface. The amplification in the degrees of freedom of the limb-now-known-as-the-hand is an example of what Leroi-Gourhan names generalisation or de-specialisation, which one can also find under the Deleuzian term of deterritorialisation (Altamirano 2016: 134). While early humanoids

used their stone tools in a similar fashion as animals use their claws, humans nowadays use their tools at both a spatial and temporal distance. This is what Leroi-Gourhan has in mind when he uses the concept of generalisation: while other animals followed an evolutionary path that was highly specialised and, essentially, internal, humans evolved by externalising through technology.

Complementing Leroi-Gourhan, Simondon approaches the genesis of an object as a process of refinement, which nevertheless should not be examined in terms of usefulness or profitability since such external criteria do nothing more but obscure the technicity of the object itself (Chabot 2013: 12). Simondon advances a process of examining the evolution of technical objects which is internal: what is broadly called refinement is in fact a process of concretisation. While human evolution involves a constant generalisation via the external de-specialisation of the species through its technicities, the technical objects, assisting in that generalisation, follow a process of a perpetual – yet peculiar – specification. What Simondon is claiming is that any technical object is located between an unstable event – the coming together of parts – and a consistent, stable structure – the parts when in operation. Different objects possess different degrees of concretisation, the levels of which determine the technicity of a given technology. The degrees of concretisation are themselves composed out of the relations of the parts which constitute the technical object.

Taking this into account, let us briefly focus on the Athenian urban unit, the *polykatoikia*. The *polykatoikia* is found throughout Athens, usually three to six floors tall, with multiple apartments on each floor and residents of diverse origin and income. Once the abstraction of the *polykatoikia* is there, we can examine each of the elements that it is made of: the structural parts, bricks, concrete and slabs that hold it together, the networks of pipes which transfer energy and water through it, the openings in its surfaces, its doors and windows. It goes without saying that I do not aim to provide an evolutionary account of each of these elements, and that is precisely the point: each of the elements that this abstract urban unit consists of has its own independent history, its own genealogy that needs to be unravelled. In other words, even in this abstract version of the urban unit, each of its parts fails to explain their coming together when examined in isolation. Technological, and consequently architectural, invention involves formulating a consistent and coherent system from disparate parts. The *polykatoikia* that emerges from the combination of these disparate elements is an example of concretisation. As Simondon claims,

the principle of this process is effectively the manner in which the object causes and conditions itself in its functioning and in the reactions of its functioning on its utilization; the technical object, issued forth from the abstract work of the organization of sub-systems, is the theatre of a certain number of reciprocal causal relations. (Simondon 2017: 32)

The relationships of reciprocal causality that Simondon mentions are in fact the operational modes of reticular technicity: *techne* in action. It is not a matter of how useful a technological object can be – for whom is an immediate question, much more complex than it initially appears – but rather a question of an immanent consistency, a faithfulness to the operation of an abstract machine. This faithfulness is the reason that Simondon claims that technical evolution is no different than biological. In this respect, the moment when a technical object reaches a high level of concretisation is the moment when it affords multi-functionality.

The *polykatoikia*, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is concretised precisely due to its ability to present such a complex level of abstraction. In its own right, this level of abstraction is a result of the multi-functionality of all the other technical objects that compose the *polykatoikia*: the pipes through which warm water runs, the dinner that is being prepared on the stove, the windows that allow visual but not thermal contact. It is not only the urban unit that becomes multi-functional, each of these elements become so too. A wall supports loads, protects from the outside, connects appliances to networks of electricity and communications while being a blank canvas for its resident's interventions. In other words, the affective capacities of the urban unit, its potentials to affect and be affected, have been amplified to such a degree that one can speak of a high-level Athenian technicity – and this is why any technicity is primarily an affective one. To put it succinctly, the effects of the *polykatoikia* exceed by far and in ways never imagined the initial problems that they were meant to confront.

In the case of Athens, the *polykatoikia* was the formation in which libidinal desire was invested. The housing unit, in its structures and operations, produced a lack on the libidinal level not due to its failure, but rather due to its immense success as a means of urban individuation. In the Athenian urban environment – or, better said, the Athenian urban ecologies – and in the gradual and intense involution by means of the *polykatoikia*, the desire for a radical becoming-other was produced precisely because the *polykatoikia* was working well. This is almost obvious at the level of political economies: for them to be productive, the technical individuals that form them should not be out of order. Therefore, for

the desires of a generalised subject to be individuated, there was the need of a concretised object that would assist the emergence of a lack. In its high-level technicity, the *polykatoikia*, decoded and multi-functional, has equally amplified its affects, so much as to produce a lack in the Athenian subject: what if I were to take my housing unit away from the rest, what if I were to stand apart? The moment, therefore, that the generalised Athenian subject and the concretised *polykatoikia* became aware of their affects was the moment that allowed for a direct perception of all the environmental choices available, which consequently brought forth the actualisation of active changes in the urban environment itself. In other words, it was the moment when the Athenian milieu – interior, exterior, membrane and energy – would no longer need the *polykatoikia* as its point of convergence, but would need to, literally, fold upon itself. Through the territory of the housing unit and through the territory of the whole Attica basin, Athens could not only be at once and everywhere, but crucially, could become at once and everywhere.

In this sense, during the years before the Olympic Games of 2004, a dual process was at play. On the one hand, the intense construction activities throughout Attica; on the other, the stratification of multiple micro-desires, in the form of overcoded rhetorics and practices regarding Greece's assumed economic and geopolitical role. It was in 2001, when Greece entered the European monetary union, that a long-lasting quest seemingly ended. Greece was now officially part of the West; expressed in both minor and major modes, an ongoing process of modernisation that started at the formation of the Greek state was now declared successful. Greece was financially growing while its capital could prove itself capable of hosting the most popular event in the world. New metropolitan infrastructures were under construction. At once and everywhere in the basin of Attica, Athens wished even to cross its territorial limits; the basin itself. In the years just before the Games, many masterplans, conferences and actual real-estate values were intent on dictating the same thing: Athens no longer needed to be constrained by the mountainous volumes that form the basin. Envisioned as a coastline metropolis, Athens would cease its inward development and would open to the sea that surrounds it, both north and south, east and west. Therefore, all the Olympic constructions had to be placed accordingly. Dispersed throughout Attica, not only in the basin, the now deserted buildings and infrastructures of the Olympic Games are indeed an Athens that never came.

What did come, nonetheless, would alter profoundly the Athenian technicities. Ever since the emergence of the *polykatoikia*, the logics of the Athenian involution were individuating in a relative continuity.

After the turn of the century, a radical dephasing would occur, a bifurcation that would reorganise the diagram of the Athenian urban ecologies. Due to its complexity, one needs to approach this shift from multiple points of view. In doing so, a bold claim will also start to emerge, one that brings ostensibly different – for some directly opposite or even clashing – Athenian instances together.

Urban Black Holes

Since 2003 and continuing until now with varying intensity, hundreds of thousands of refugees from Asia have arrived in Greece, most of them settling in Athens. While the first group of immigrants, those coming mainly from Albania or the countries of Eastern Europe, would be assimilated into the Greek population relatively easily (common religion and traditions were crucial in this), this time the situation would be different. In all its variations over the past two decades, the arrival of refugees from Asia was never close to the slow and steady influx that occurred after the fall of European communist regimes. As a result either of conflict (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria), political persecution (Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine) or ongoing political and economic instability (Pakistan), massive numbers of people have arrived on the Greek coast, only to be gathered and left in Athens. While for most the ambition was to secure entry into the European Union, the very migration policies of the EU do not allow them to move further than Greece. In this respect, and similarly to what has occurred and continues to occur in other Mediterranean countries over the past two decades, an entire population is found in a continuous transitional limbo. Most of them have dispersed to various neighbourhoods of Athens, residing in empty apartments. Simultaneously, an exodus from the centre of Athens is occurring, encouraged by both a strengthened economy and the ongoing infrastructure construction throughout Attica, the concretised *polykatoikia* and the generalised Athenian subject.

The new wave of refugees would assist in the further individuation of the Athenian technicities. However, in its coupling with other structures and operations that emerged during the years after the Olympic Games, a radical bifurcation would occur in the technicities themselves. In order to approach this bifurcation, this dephasing of the Athenian diagram, we will examine the structural couplings that produced the germs of this, most recent, disruption in the metastable field of the Athenian urban ecologies. At the same time, another coupling will come to the fore: that of Athens and its own futurity.

Found in a position of extreme poverty, the majority of refugees would be forced to share basements and lower-floor apartments in huge groups. Twenty to thirty people would live together in spaces of sixty square metres, with rent being paid not per apartment but per head and per day. It is an operation that continues, one that is largely overlooked in accounts of the recent urban history of Athens, even though, as I will claim, it assisted in the most radical bifurcation of the Athenian technicities. Its effects were almost immediately visible in the public spaces of the centre: thousands of people, not able to afford to spend any time in their apartments except during their sleeping hours, would spend most of the day in the streets, squares and parks of Athens. Following specific agreements, the residents of each apartment would roughly spend one third of their time working, one third sleeping and the rest in public spaces, taking turns so as to fit as many people in as possible. Even at the level of its micro-architectures, the *polykatoikia* no longer regulated urban involution. Interior, exterior, their reversals and the energy exchanged among them was now regulated by the human body itself. To live in Athens was no longer determined by what was singular for the *polykatoikia*: apartment sizes, floor plans, pavements and stairs all became suddenly irrelevant and insignificant. What determined the centre of Athens, in its micro-architectures, was how much a body could afford and how many bodies it could afford. For the thousands of refugees arriving in Athens, the question was how many days and with how many others they could afford in an apartment. For the apartment owners, the question was how many refugees they could fit in without irreversibly damaging their property while assuring the maximum profit from it. A micro-management of the breathing body, a micro-architecture of instant profit; both, the first whispers of a black hole.

One could claim that this shift in the Athenian technicities was only relevant for a small percentage of the population of Athens: refugees seeking housing and apartment owners who could take advantage of this. However, the importance of a singularity is not to be measured by the amount of ordinary points that it relates to; on the contrary, a singularity appears as such by its capacity to affect other singular points – that is, to reorganise the continuum. In this sense, the absolute deterritorialising and decoding of the housing unit that emerged in these years is not to be approached in terms of how it relates to an established past but, rather, in its composability with a futural urban ecology. The prosperity and capital accumulation of the first decade of the century would result in the establishment of an advanced private banking system that was practically absent from Greece in previous years. For the first

time, housing loans on a massive scale and in an accessible form were available. Athens could individuate beyond the limits of its overcoded and informal building constructions and operations. In an environment that facilitated quick and carefree access to bank loans, there was no longer any need for all the nuances of a technicity that had developed in order to overcome the absence of an extended banking system. The ties between landowners, constructors and apartment owners were no longer compossible with what, simply, worked faster: a loan for buying a plot, a loan for constructing a *polykatoikia*, a loan for buying parts of it. Soon the structure of the *polykatoikia* would transform as well, from the decoded and adaptable housing unit of previous decades, to an overcoded expression of each owner's financial status, preferably in the up and coming new suburbs. A black hole starts to vibrate.

So far we have been examining two parallel individuations, one at the centre of Athens and the other in its suburbs. In their coupling they start to potentialise the total and radical dephasing of the most dominant Athenian technicity, that of the *polykatoikia*. At a level that involves the micro-architectures of the city, the *polykatoikia* would face its absolute decoding and deterritorialisation, both in the city centre where rents would be now operating in an even more generalised fashion, as well as in the new suburban constructions where bank loans would bypass the *quid pro quo* land allowance operations. In both cases, the result was a gradually growing incompossibility of the Athenian technicities of the time with the ones to come. The technicities would fully bifurcate when coupled with the effect that the Olympic Games had on the involution of Athens.

Aside from functioning as attractors to newly developed areas of Athens, the infrastructure and large-scale constructions of the Olympic Games would also alter the Athenian ecologies in a more profound manner. The preparation and construction process for most of the Olympic facilities was largely serendipitous, initially coordinated by the Greek state but with a growing involvement of the private sector, especially as the deadline for the Games was approaching (Phokaides et al. 2013: 95) The 'urgency' of fulfilling a desire that traversed multiple assemblages (of different populations and of different interests) justified the development of mechanisms that could bypass legislative frameworks and bureaucracies as well as any reactions to them. If this was a common and successful operation until that moment, it was because of the fact that it involved the quasi-crystallisation of an economy of agglomeration: a commonly beneficial technicity of proximal distances, of shared knowledge and of the capacity to auto-regulate land, building

and rental prices through a non-centrally controlled relation between offer and demand; these were some of the elements that made the involution *qua* the *polykatoikia* so successful.

By contrast, from the state of exception that the Olympic Games imposed – or, better said, from the desire for it – emerged the formation, for the first time in Athens, of economies of scale in the construction sector: not a shared technicity, but rather the internalisation of a technicity within a large private investor, maximising profit by minimising costs due to the fully centralised control of massive construction projects. Growing large due to their involvement in the Olympic Games, these newly formed construction companies would start to operate in the housing market as well. Needing to use their personnel and equipment after the Games, they would focus on both real-estate and housing constructions throughout Attica, albeit deploying a technicity that had nothing in common with that of the *polykatoikia*: large-scale capital investments, massive land acquisitions and the construction of whole city blocks instead of housing units (Issaias 2014: 145). In the structural coupling of these three individuations (from the deterritorialisation and decoding of the *polykatoikia*, to the bank loans substituting for its operations and the formation of economies of scale), the germ that would reorganise the Athenian ecologies emerged: an absolute retreat to the private, understood not in financial or market terms but in terms of stratification and rigidification. Never being a matter of decision but always the effect of a contingent technicity, the Athenian ecologies up to that point were always operating and structuring themselves in terms of a continuous modulation. More than being positioned between built forms and construction operations, the modulatory processes that transductively propagated in the Athenian milieu demanded the reticular formation, investment and involvement of an extended assemblage that would allow the co-determinable establishment of multiple alliances. This is why, despite its modulations, the *polykatoikia* had never been operative as a means of separation; it constantly resolved any disparate tensions on a level that negotiated between micro- and macro-architectures.

What seemed the erosion of the *polykatoikia*, an absolute porosity of it at the level of a meso-modulation, was in fact the opposite. Any informational and energetic exchange within the Athenian milieu was becoming more and more incompossible with the futurity of an urban ecology that was retreating to segmentarity. The Athenian subject was gradually becoming what philosopher Quentin Meillassoux calls a *reactive* one (Meillassoux 2007: 99). A reactive subject undergoes a line of

becoming which actually consists of a constant retreat, a reassurance of its own supposed givens and limits, a perpetuation of modes of thinking and practices which are never to deviate from its own immediate and short-term interests. It is a form of subjectivity shielded behind its own stubbornness, operating in terms of 'idiocy'. Interestingly, the noun 'idiot', when examined etymologically, derives from the Greek *ἰδιώτης*: a private citizen, the one that has no interest for the commons, enclosed in herself, refusing any opening to anything exterior. Therefore, with the particles of Athenian involution shifting towards an absolute and enclosed interior, an absolute privacy, there was no regulation of any informational or energetic exchange in a trans-affective manner. Consequently, in the plane of a shared urban becoming, both the interior and the exterior became redundant: everything and nothing was possible, everything and nothing was crucial. The informational values that the Athenian milieu was producing became significant in as much as they referred to the possibility of a privately consumable future, and not to the virtuality of a co-determinable futurity. Another whisper of a black hole.

How can one, therefore, speak of an Athenian futurity, of an Athens yet to come? In both architectural and urban theory, when it comes to speaking of the future, the dominant approach is that of a vast array of exclusive disjunctions: either this possible future or that one. Exclusive disjunction is an application in futural terms of what philosophically is known as the law of the excluded middle. The law of the excluded middle presupposes that a statement is either true or false. Nothing can simultaneously be both, as it would violate the very law itself. It is also what characterises modernity's relations with futurity; deeply rooted in its propositional logics and representational means, modernity assumes a possible future and not a futural future. In other words, not a future based on virtuality, but a future based on possibility. For that possible future to come, either a set of rational rules and propositions will be applied or we 'may have the impression of something akin to a nightmare' (Le Corbusier 1986: v). As philosopher Claire Colebrook claims,

exclusive disjunction operates with an 'either/or' while . . . it allows the subject the somewhat good conscience of compromise . . . It precludes any future that is not ultimately subjective . . . As long as there is a subject, a being for whom the world exists as a historical entity with decisive outcomes, a subject who deems himself to be the outcome and agent of history, then there will be 'a' future that will emerge from an interpreted line of time. (Colebrook 2017)

A future that is governed by exclusive disjunctions is a future of a reactive subject: either this or that future for either us or them. In the past two decades in the Athenian urban ecologies there have been three major instances when a future was abruptly brought forth. I will not examine each of them in detail since this exceeds the scope of my argument. What will become obvious through them is that in all cases, it was a future that was attempted to be brought into the present from a realm of possibilities. In other words, in all these opposing moments, the Athenian subjects that dreamed of an Athens yet to come did so from a point of view that was fundamentally uninterested in anything that did not appeal to its segmentarity; a point of view that constantly shrinks, uninterested in anything that implies an affective transformation, invested solely in securing a rigid self-referential stability. In 2004, 2008 and 2011, a black hole was formed in Athens, one that still attracts anything that is captured by it.

Athens beyond Us and Them

If in the case of the Olympic Games we have already examined the proliferation of a desiring-machine that wished and managed to transform the Athenian technicities accordingly, then what remains is to highlight how these desires individuate into what for many has been positioned in the exact opposite political field: the youth uprising of December 2008 and the Squares Movement of the summer of 2011. Let us briefly examine each of them. As architect Stavros Stavrides summarises,

on 6 December 2008, a police car was passing in front of one of the coffee shops where young people meet . . . What a few boys did was to yell at these policemen . . . But the policemen in the car did something so disastrous that it immediately triggered a huge youth outburst. They parked their car and they returned armed to respond to the insult. One of them took out his gun, aimed at one of the 15-year-old students and shot him. The boy died on the pavement. (Stavrides 2010: 132)

On the same night, an almost immediate wave of rage swept through the city – massive clashes between protesters and the police, hundreds of shops attacked and destroyed, as well as numerous public buildings. In the days that followed, many public buildings were occupied in various areas of Athens and were temporarily transformed into organisational centres for all the different aspects of an ongoing urban unrest. To name a few examples, the National Opera was occupied by artists and became a centre of artistic experimentation, the building

of the General Confederation of Workers was transformed into an information centre for any form of protest, while a huge, empty, central plot was transformed into a communal park. Interestingly, throughout the uprising there was no specific political or organisational centre, but rather a number of them, most of the time with opposing assumptions, goals and practices. What bound them together was an abstract request for an upcoming social and urban justice, one that would be achieved either by massive demonstrations, building occupations or riots and looting. In all cases, a supposedly repressed subject was opposed by its repressive counterpart, demanding its right to the city. However, the issue with any demand to a given urban right is precisely that this right is given, either as an allowance from an equally abstract subject in power or as a generality that, instead of explaining anything, sums up the complexity of an urban ecology in the form of a reified vagueness. The December uprising ended as suddenly as it started; ironically, the Christmas break was meant also as a break from urban struggle.

Only a couple of years later, Greece and its capital would spiral into a debt crisis. The bailout package of 2010, as well as all the ones that followed, composed of various transnational agreements between Greece, the Eurozone and the IMF, had severe effects. The Squares Movement in Syntagma, the most central square of Athens, was a direct result of this. Lasting for about two months, throughout the summer of 2011 almost 2.6 million Athenians either protested, occupied, discussed or passed regularly through the square (Leontidou 2012: 306). Contrary to the 2008 uprising, the square was clearly the physical centre of opposition to the economic policies of the Greek government and the European Union. Nonetheless, in the square itself, one could witness two parallel dynamics: that of its upper part, almost next to the Parliament building, where anger and resentment prevailed, and that of the lower part, where leftists would debate 'the preconditions of direct democracy, organised self-help, mutual aid, solidarity and collective action' (Leontidou 2012: 306).

Chronologically, the rise of neo-fascist political parties in Greece coincided with the events of the Squares Movement. However, could one speculate on a more complex relation between the two – while avoiding the naïve error of equating them? If its leftist part was debating direct democracy, controlling and forbidding the presence of any official political organisation in the square, in the upper part of Syntagma hatred was growing: the ones in the Parliament, they are the thieves, they are responsible, they should pay. Therefore, a dual process of

segregation was at play. On the one hand, we who will construct an alternative model of life; on the other, they who are responsible and have to pay for their actions. When in August 2011 the Squares Movement dispersed, its effect would be a radicalisation of segmentarity: while the December uprising produced the very technicities of a renewed yet still uncontrolled segregation, the Squares Movement rigidified a fundamental exclusion, an 'either/or' who claims the right to both an urban subject and to its enunciations, to both the 'good/bad' historical agents, the 'good/bad' interpretations of a temporal line and to both 'good/bad' possible futures. The black hole is formed.

In their involution, the Athenian technicities were eventually internalised as an absolute informational proliferation that made information itself valueless. In this regard, they assisted in the formation of an infinity of subjects that at once desired their becoming-other, without, however, any affective interest in anything-other. In its deterritorialisation, any subject that can dislocate itself from itself in order to formulate novel assemblages can always become something less than what it was: becoming is not progress, individuation is not fine-tuning. Due to the technicities we have been examining, or to be more precise, due to the individuation of the Athenian technicities and their bifurcations, equally radical bifurcations occur on the level of any Athenian subject. In this sense, a black hole is nothing else but a failed line of flight (Message 2010: 34). Therefore, a black hole in a process of individuation is always a potential outcome, caused either by a threshold crossed too quickly or by an intensity that becomes destructive precisely because it is no longer bearable (Message 2010: 34).

In the case of Athens, both causes apply. Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Athenian technicities were individuating by means of a continuous prolongation of their own singular points. The germ that at once deterritorialised and decoded the *polykatoikia* and its operations, while simultaneously informing any individual as the particle of urban involution qua loaning, marks both a rapid crossing and an unbearable intensity. There is no longer a co-determination that is affectively shared and constantly bootstrapped, but rather the exchange between a molar economy and a molecular particle of urbanity that depends solely on its molar counterpart and not on its affective, technical alliances. Before the formation of molar fascist assemblages in the Athenian urban ecologies, there was the formation of infinite microfascisms: one for every body, for every *polykatoikia*, for every loan granted and every debt still owed, for every immigrant and every other, for all of us and all of them. As Deleuze and Guattari put it,

micro-fascisms have a specificity of their own that can crystallise into a macro-fascism, but may also float along the supple line on their own account and suffuse every little cell . . . Interactions without resonance. Instead of the great paranoid fear, we are trapped in a thousand little monomanias, self-evident truths and clarities that gush from every black hole and no longer form a system, but only rumble and buzz, blinding lights giving any and everybody the mission of self-appointed judge, dispenser of justice, policeman, neighbourhood SS man. (TP, 228)

Any fascism, any black hole, be it in molar or molecular desires, be it still at the level of the libidinal or the political, does not emerge out of an ideological nowhere; it emerges precisely in the in-between of the reticularity of any technicity. To avoid any misunderstanding, what in the case of Athens is conceived as the proliferation of infinite micro-fascist subjectivities is none other than the emergence of infinite reactive subjects out of the Athenian urban ecologies and their technicities themselves. If any environmental manipulation affords its individuation without the reticular manipulation of the subject that attempts it – if in other words transformation occurs only on the extensive level (by means of a debt attributed to the supposedly powerless from the supposedly powerful) and not reticularly on the intensive level (as a co-determining affective amplification via the individuation of shared technicities) – then any present and any future are always fundamentally exclusive. The question, therefore, is how can one escape a black hole, not by creating another – that of a grand narrative of an alternative possibility, left or right – but through the very technicities that made it emerge in the first place?

For the Athenian urban ecologies, the fact is that both the housing market and the construction sector – the particles of the Athenian involution for almost two centuries – have now collapsed. In a decline that exceeded all expectations, especially after 2010, Athens is no longer individuating in any way that even barely resembles its past. Another fact, nonetheless, is that Athens is still individuating; that is precisely why it is both necessary and timely to thoroughly examine what are the current Athenian technicities. More than simply identifying them, one needs to reveal the spatial and temporal nuances of both their structures and their operations, in order to extrapolate from the urban ecologies that they form. Such a task exceeds the scope of this chapter. However, it bears the promise of an extrapolation on the future of Athens that would not be based on any possibility – architectural, urban, economic, social, political – but rather on the virtuality of its current technicities at play, those that we have examined individuating, reorganising

the Athenian metastable field, producing subjects and objects that are reticularly producing them anew. In addition, it is an extrapolation from the current affective repertoire of Athens and its multiple assemblages, those of both micro- and macro-architectures, molecular and molar architectural technicities. To affectively attune oneself with the current Athenian technicities does not involve the production of yet another narrative (of urban change, social justice or political emancipation) but rather the affirmative production of a futurity through the actual and virtual potentials of an environmental manipulation that occurs 'here and now' while aiming at a 'not-here-and-not-yet'.

In this sense, to examine the Athenian technicities and out of them extrapolate on the futurity of their urban ecologies is deeply political. However, it is political in a fundamentally non-subjective sense; to be more precise, it involves the political enunciation of a subject that no longer remains reactive and captured by the attractive allure of any microfascist lines, but rather catalyses the reorganisation of an active subjectivity. Contrary to a reactive subject, an active subject follows a becoming that connects it to the becoming of a world – or, the becoming of the urban ecologies it produces and is produced by. It is a subject that has no interest in maintaining its stability just for the sake of existing, but instead wishes to actively seek the violence of the encounter with the technicities that manipulate it and its environment. Following Meillassoux, an active subject that is attuned in the affective amplification of its manipulative repertoire is

capable of an innovative, inventive becoming . . . Its increase of force does not come from an autonomous decision of a constitutive subject, but from an experience that is always undergone, an affective test in which a radical exteriority gives itself, an exteriority never felt before as such. (Meillassoux 2007: 101)

In this respect, diagramming the current Athenian technicities can separate the political from the personal, the collective assemblages of micro- and macro-architectures from the segmentarity of a reactive subject. As philosopher Brian Massumi underlines,

personalising narratives actually occlude this affirmative power of resistance, because they are focused first on defining the present event in terms of the individual's past, and only then look to opening the collective future in a break from narratives from the past . . . We live toward the future transindividually, in excess over our personhood. The political is not coming home to a familiar face. The political is estrangingly intensive. It is rewilding. In its movement, we are stranger to ourselves . . . The political acts in the

name of a life we have not lived. It acts for the life we have yet to live. (Massumi 2017)

Consequently, if the political is collective, then the future it produces is collective as well. However, it is a collective future in a dual sense: it is both a future of multiple assemblages and their structural couplings, as well as a multiple future itself. Not this or that, not a future for either us or them, but a future for us and them: a future which we co-determine, trans-individually and trans-affectively, through the technicities that we produce. At the same moment, the future itself determines who, when, where and how we are: the ways we structure and operate the manipulations of an urban ecology, how we modulate it and ourselves, how we individuate alongside that which individuates us. The Athenian technicities, therefore, do not only manipulate an actual space, they manipulate a virtual future, they mediate between the uncertainties of a futurity and the certainties of an actuality. In other words, collective futures pass through the technicities that potentialise them, a way of conducting the present into the future, the actual into the virtual: any technicity is a way of ordering time and events through micro- and macro-alliances, aberrant nuptials between the molecular and the molar. If one affirms the present of Athens via the technicities that individuate it, then the issue of its futurity is no longer that of a radical temporal break, but rather an issue of collective affectivity and the manipulative means that amplify it or diminish it. No longer a line of time which is to be broken, but rather bifurcations; intensive thresholds of fundamental qualitative change. In other words, not an Athenian future to choose from, but an Athenian futurity that chooses us.

References

Altamirano, M. (2016), *Time, Technology and Environment*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chabot, P. (2013), *The Philosophy of Simondon: Between Technology and Individuation*, trans. A. Krefetz, London: Bloomsbury. Translation of *La philosophie de Simondon*, Paris: Vrin, 2003.

Colebrook, C. (2017), *Futures*, <www.academia.edu/21696436/Futures> (last accessed 15 May 2022).

Foucault, M. (2000), 'Space, Knowledge and Power', in J. D. Faubion (ed.), *Power*, New York: The New Press, pp. 349–64.

Issaias, P. (2014), *Beyond the Informal City: Athens and the Possibility of an Urban Common*, Delft: TU Delft.

Le Corbusier (1986), *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. F. Etchells, London: Architectural Press. Translation of *Vers une architecture*, Paris: Les Éditions G. Crès, 1927.

Leontidou, L. (2012), 'Athens in the Mediterranean "Movement of the Piazzas":

Spontaneity in Material and Virtual Public Spaces in City', *City*, 16 (3): 299–312, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.687870>>.

Leroi-Gourhan, A. (1993), *Gesture and Speech*, trans. A. B. Berger, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Translation of *Le Geste et la Parole*, Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1964.

Massumi, B. (2017), 'Histories of Violence: Affect, Power, Violence – The Political is not Personal', interview with B. Evans, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 13 November, <lareviewofbooks.org/article/histories-of-violence-affect-power-violence-the-political-is-not-personal/#!> (last accessed 15 May 2022).

Meillassoux, Q. (2007), 'Subtraction and Contraction: Deleuze, Immanence, and Matter and Memory', in R. Mackay (ed.), *Collapse*, vol. 3, Falmouth: Urbanomic, pp. 63–107.

Message, K. (2010), 'Black Hole', in A. Parr (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 33–5.

Phokaides, P., I. Polyzos and L. Triantis (2013), 'Reconsidering the Greater Urbanism Agenda: Crisis, Planning and Architecture in Metropolitan Athens', in B. Upmeyer (ed.), *Monu: Greater Urbanism*, vol. 19, Rotterdam: Board Publishers, pp. 94–9.

Simondon, G. (2017), *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. C. Malaspina and J. Rogove, Minneapolis, MN: Univocal. Translation of *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, Paris: Aubier, 1958.

Stavrides, S. (2010), *Towards the City of Thresholds*, Trento: Professional Dreamers.