

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, MILITARY URBANISM AND NEOLIBERAL DYSTOPIAS. THE ARAB SPRING AND EUROPE

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«In effect, neoliberal discourse is not just one discourse among many. Rather, it is a ‘strong discourse’ —the way psychiatric discourse is in an asylum, in Erving Goffman’s analysis. It is so strong and so hard to combat only because it has on its side all of the forces of a world of relations of forces, a world that it contributes to making what it is... In this way, a Darwinian world emerges— it is the struggle of all against all at all levels of the hierarchy, which finds support through everyone clinging to their job and organisation under conditions of insecurity, suffering, and stress».¹

1. Introduction

I would like to start this article with so-called «general knowledge» we confront in the media, to move forward and engage with various theories in urban sociology. The reflections developed here remain in the form of snapshots, and scattered thoughts, shifting between Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, with reference to Singapore. I will also try to raise questions about the future of the urban reshaping of the cities of the Middle East that is currently taking place, in order to provide a mosaic of contradictions between the further militarization of urban life and the burning theme of the disappearing cities, increasingly surrounded with walled islands of consumer culture and «smart» and «informational» cities while

1. Pierre BOURDIEU, «The Essence of Neoliberalism, Utopia of Endless Exploitation», *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), (December 1998), <<https://mondedipto.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>> (Read: 13 November 2019). Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro.

sprawling slums continue to expand. I will then move to some questions social scientists have raised concerning the future and the shape of the kind of cities we will end-up living in, if the dominant and hegemonic neo-liberal mindset we are all subjected to will continue to dominate. And how these visions can affect the Mediterranean European cities. It seems that we are confronted with restrained models —or rather, very limited «ideal types» in the Weberian sense— with respect to the future of urban life in the Middle East.

2. Dubai / Singapore models

Dubai —the Singapore of the Middle East, the «Arab Riviera», the dream world of conspicuous consumption, the paradise for money laundering, according to Mike Davis,² containing the largest shopping malls and tallest towers in the world, segregated compounds, palm islands, and futuristic postmodern architecture, the magnet for world-class architects— is idealized as the only possible utopia for the entire Middle East. It is no secret that the securitized island archipelago has flourished at the expense of the over-exploitation of Asian workers. It stands as an interesting example of hybridizing corporate capitalist worldviews with feudal forms of rule, as Kanna has argued.³ Certainly, it

2. Mike DAVIS, «Fear and Money in Dubai», *New Left Review* (London), vol. 41 (September-October 2006), p. 46-68.

3. Ahmed KANNA, «Flexible Citizenship in Dubai: Neo-Liberal Subjectivity in the Emerging City Corporation», *Cultural Anthropology* (Hoboken), vol. 25, num. 1, (February 2010), p. 100-129.

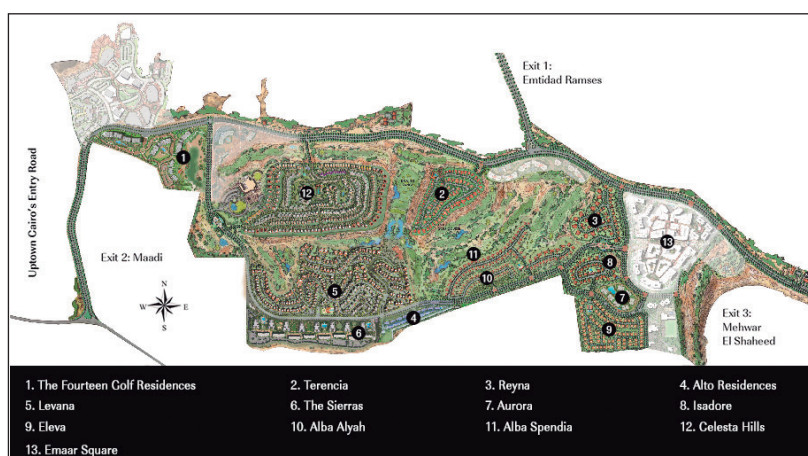


FIGURE 1. Uptown Cairo Emaar
(Cartography: <http://www.uptowncairo-egypt.com/en/MasterPlan>).

allows very little space for political contestation or any possibility of organized trade unionism.

Dubai is a frequently proposed model that begs for systematic comparison with Singapore. I am referring here to the working paper of Ahmed Kanna, published in 2009.⁴ Kanna draws an appealing comparison between these two «Asian», global city-states. Dubai and Singapore have both been labelled as neoliberal. Both city-states were part of the British Empire and the Indian Ocean trade routes. Both have very important ports with voluminous shipping traffic, and both are considered free trade zones. Oil and the refinery industries also unite the two city-states. And both sell a specific global image of luxurious tourism and leisure.⁵ Above all, the two cities are advertised as the perfect utopias or empires of consumption (the positive side) while clearly their workers' rights are suppressed (the negative side). In spite of numerous similarities between these two countries, the «feudal capitalism» style of rule, whereby power is monopolized by the Maktum family in Dubai, clearly diverges from the meritocratic system on which Singapore was founded, or at least it is regarded as such, even if it doesn't function in that way, since inequalities are far from being erased.⁶

My aim is to transpose the discussion raised by Chua Beng Huat on «Singapore as model» and its practical implications in our part of the world. More precisely, it examines how «mimicking» and «cloning»⁷ this frequently cited model can lead to distasteful unintended consequences elsewhere, since no other place is quite the same as Singapore. In the Middle East, the similar idea of promoting Dubai as a model continues to create multiplying dystopias—even more so since the «Arab Spring». It is no coincidence that the dominant post-January 2011 literary genre is the dystopian novel, in which Cairo is depicted as an inferno, overwhelmed by urban war zones, snipers, and uprooted destitute and hungry masses in the midst of utter chaos in devastated and ruined landscapes.⁸

It is actually the virtual dream of an imagined Sin-

4. Ahmed KANNA, *A Tale of Two (Asian) Cities: Dubai and Singapore Before and After the Crisis*, Hartford, Centre for Urban and Global Studies at Trinity College, 2009.

5. Ahmed KANNA, *A Tale of Two (Asian) Cities: Dubai and Singapore Before and After Crisis*, 2009, p. 12.

6. Teo YOU YENN, «Singapore Sociology, After Meritocracy», *Global Dialogue* (on line), vol. 7, num. 4 (December 2017), <<http://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/singapore-sociology-after-meritocracy>>.

7. Beng Huat CHUA, «Singapore as Model Planning Innovations, Knowledge Experts», in Ananya ROY and Aihwa ONG (ed.), *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, San Francisco, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011, p. 36.

8. Mona ABAZA, «Cairo After the Event: Fiction and Everyday Life», in Reinhard SCHULZE, Florian ZEMMIN, Johannes STEPHAN and Monica CORRADO (ed.), *Islam in der Moderne, Moderne im Islam: eine Festschrift für Reinhard Schulze zum 65. Geburtstag*, Leiden, Brill, 2018, p. 425-450.

gapore/Dubai model that is being encouraged by the military and decaying authoritarian/neoliberal regimes. The mega real estate companies, one of the most lucrative economic sectors in the Middle East today—companies like Emaar, Sodic, and Solidere, or the Ismaileyya Company and the Gulf Investors in Egypt—continue, with pervasive aggression, to sell «the success story of Singapore/ Dubai», of the «possibility of success», of imagined tropical greenery in the new «walled cities», the mushrooming gated communities in the Arab deserts. No matter how loudly the official discourse advertises, for example, the new capital city of Cairo as a virtual Dubai, neither the twenty-million-population mega city of Cairo nor any other Middle Eastern city will ever be Dubai or Singapore. To the contrary, it is estimated that, by the year 2020, some 66 per cent of Greater Cairo's population will be living in what is called «informal areas».⁹

The repertoire of aspiring to replicate the utopia of Dubai since January 2011 remains not only an obsession for the neoliberal military establishment but a dream of countless youngsters (who participated in Tahrir) who wish to escape Cairo's pollution. It is no coincidence that Dubai's neoliberal subjectivity as an urban utopia¹⁰ was the inspiration for the plan for reshaping Cairo by 2050 that was proposed by the government before 2011. In that plan, broad streets, highways, skyscrapers, and gentrified neighbourhoods will necessarily lead to massive evictions of countless slum dwellers. The recent announcement of the futuristic new capital of Egypt in the eastern desert, with impressive virtual scale models burgeoning with skyscrapers, reconfirms the Dubai dream. The media are full of virtual, aerial, and satellite plans of science-fiction desert cities populated with good-looking yuppies. In the most extreme of these simulacra, as if the virtual has become real, all of Egypt's slums and informal settlements have been erased.

But where is the novelty in these virtual magnifications? This is, regretfully, a déjà vu that was well manipulated by the former neoliberal Mubarakist tycoons. One need only recall the pre-January 2011 television advertisements for the satellite city Madi-

9. The word 'ashwaa'i ('ashwaa'iyyat pl.) is a term used to define the spontaneous, unplanned, informal constructions of squatters or simply slums; the 'ashwaa'i spontaneity is thus associated with chaos. These informal areas are not exactly like Latin American slums. Some of them were previously agrarian land, around the fringes of the city, turned illegally into red brick buildings, up to seven to ten stories high, tightly glued to each other. See: David SIMS, *Residential informality in greater Cairo: Typologies, Representative Areas, Quantification, Valuation and Causal Factors*, Cairo, Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies and Institute for Liberty and Democracy, 2000.

10. Mona ABAZA, «Downtown Cairo Imagined: Nostalgia and/Or Dubaization?», *Urban Studies* (Glasgow), vol. 48, num. 6, (May 2011), p. 1075-1087.

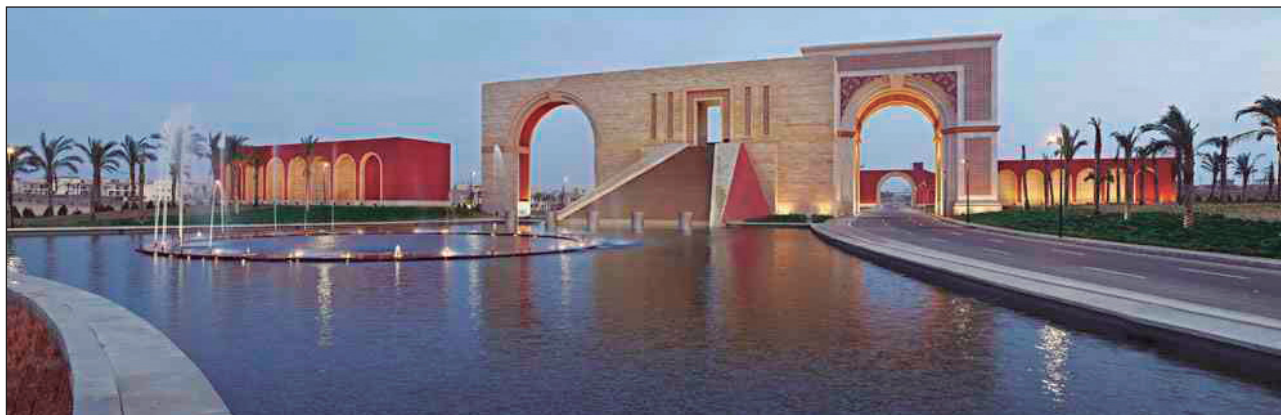


FIGURE 2. Advertisement of Madinaty City (Picture: <http://www.madinaty.com/en>).

naty (My City), constructed in the northeastern desert by the real-estate mogul Hisham Talaat Mustafa, to be assured that we are experiencing continuity rather than change with respect to desert cityscapes.

The 2015 update of Madinaty's website, proposing images of a gargantuan «Thousand-and-One-Nights» city, shows that the same magnates are duplicating the same failed and controversial «desert dreams» that have been going on for some decades. The benchmark is the gated, isolated compound.

It is fascinating to see how the advertisement of the new capital is taking a biblical twist. The magical numbers of seven and 12 keep reappearing in its descriptions. Thus, the new capital is intended to be seven times bigger than Paris and 12 times bigger than Manhattan.¹¹ The new capital will be roughly the size of Singapore, housing five million residents and providing two million jobs. The lure of Dubai has mesmerized the entire world by investing in orientalist imaginaries, not only seducing international star architects but appealing to the fantastic and defying nature by erecting a fabulous artificial archipelago and palm islands. Nonetheless, Egypt's population of over 80 million can never possibly be transformed into a Dubai-style postmodern city of two million.

I see more affinities between Cairo and Jakarta when I read the work of Abdoumalik Simone on the dilemma of the descending/declining middle classes, marked by ill-defined and poorly remunerated daily informal economic practices that are quite often labelled as «bizarre».¹² Cairo and Jakarta are becoming

cities of «assemblages»¹³ of collective endurance, defined by precariousness in habitat (even for the middle and upper middle classes), and by precarious life histories as a collective trait of the floating masses.

Equally fascinating, as Ahmed Kanna argues, is the way in which the Dubai model has come to predominate over the Singapore one. It is astonishing how Singapore emulated Dubai, or was inspired by Dubai, in investing in mega real estate projects and in the promotion of gated communities and new cities. These are advertised today in Egypt, by the way, as the only so-called «decent» and «livable» spaces, feeding on middle-class neurosis and enhancing further physical segregation between the sprawling slums and the new walled cities. Kanna argues that the Sentosa Cove mega project in Singapore is a replica of Dubai's Palm Jumeirah.¹⁴ Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the late Zaha Hadid, whose remarkable architecture remains strongly associated with Dubai, was invited to develop the billion-dollar residential project d'Leedon,¹⁵ which is now being advertised as «Singapore's Zaha-Topia».¹⁶

3. Smart cities

Dubai's futurist imaginaries triggered even more utopias based on technology and what Castells has called

ro, Personal Reflections on Enduring Daily Life», *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* (Oslo), vol. 16 (2016), p. 234-252.

13. Abdoumalik SIMONE, «Cities of Uncertainty: Jakarta, the Urban Majority, and Inventive Political Technologies», *Theory, Culture & Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore), vol. 30, num. 7-8 (December 2013), p. 243-263.

14. Ahmed KANNA, *A Tale of Two (Asian) Cities: Dubai and Singapore Before and After Crisis*, 2009, p. 24.

15. Leslie SKLAIR, *The Icon Project Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globalization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 162.

16. Jonathan CLOE, «Singapore's Zaha-Topia», *Urban Architecture Now* (Singapore), (31 March 2015), <<http://www.urbanarchnow.com/2015/04/dleedon.html>>.

11. Adam WILLIAMS, «Ambitious plan unveiled to create new Egyptian capital», *Gizmag* (Victoria), (March 2015), <<http://www.gizmag.com/capital-cairo-egypt-som/> 36648> (Read: 31 July 2015).

12. «Bizarre» is a bit of an exaggeration here. For example, for the descending status of the middle classes, renting out flats as furnished to foreigners, the transformation of entire residential buildings, to rent these as commercial lucrative spaces and in the past, the construction of mosques in the ground floors to evade taxes, are flexible survival strategies, that teach us about how space is negotiated in Third World metropolises. See: Mona ABAZA, «Cai-

the «informational society». The concept of islands of smart cities has materialized in Dubai, Cairo, and Brazil. For example, we are told by Elsheshtawy that downtown Cairo has been negatively affected by the creation of an entire new city for high-tech and professionals, the Smart Village Project in the desert. The village was meant to emulate Dubai Internet City.¹⁷ It consists of a 300-acre park to host more than 50 offices with some 20,000 to 30,000 employees. Today it hosts Telecom Egypt, the Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

As Rodrigo José Firmino argued, with a focus on Rio de Janeiro's Smart City, these emerging global «smart cities» are founded on «code, automation, data, surveillance, monitoring, control, connection, smart, and things».¹⁸ Such sites are concerned with managing, distributing, manipulating, and regulating an endless, if not often an uncontrollable, amount of information. But above all, according to Firmino, we will be witnessing new constellations between technological concentration and territorial sites. In the concentrating spaces of information, surveillance and «dataveillance» will evidently mean more control, walls, and barbed wires to be implemented as normalcy.

Deborah Cowen points to one more futurist project: the Logistics City of Dubai, nicknamed the «luxury labor camp». Logistics City is composed of a high concentration of specialized zones, in which «urban space is conceived and produced for the singular purpose of securing the management and mass movement of globally bound *stuff*».¹⁹

I quote Cowen once again: «Dubai Logistics City is ordered electronically through biometric access cards, security gating, cameras, and other technologies. Yet, the most significant form of spatial containment is likely the 'Labor Village'. Officials promote the 'village' as the 'provision of integrated blue collar housing with full range of facilities'. But despite the clean design and lavish landscaping, artists' renderings still conjure an air of prison architecture».²⁰

17. Yasser ELSHESHTAWY, «From Dubai to Cairo: competing global cities, models and shifting centres of influence?», in Diane SINGERMAN and Paul AMAR (ed.), *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 2006, p. 236.

18. Rodrigo José FIRMINO, «Connected and Controlled Surveillance, Security, And Cities», *LA+Interdisciplinary Journal of Landscape Architecture* (San Francisco), vol. 3 (Spring 2016), p. 43.

19. Deborah COWEN, «Containing Insecurity: Logistic Space, U.S. Port Cities, and the 'War on Terror'», in Stephen GRAHAM (ed.), *Disrupted Cities When Infrastructure Fails*, London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2010, p. 69.

20. Deborah COWEN, «Containing Insecurity: Logistic Space, U.S. Port Cities and the 'War on Terror'», p. 70.



FIGURE 3. Cairo (Picture: Mona Abaza).

4. Coordinated terrorist attacks

The revolutionary momentum that lasted for almost two years in Egypt from 2011 to 2013 is clearly over. The Arab Spring euphoria that swept numerous countries in the Middle East proved to be ephemeral. Spring evidently turned into an Arab winter, counteracted by the collapse of several Arab states. It is no coincidence that the mounting securitization of Egyptian cities through «the war on terror» seems to have been a counteractive strategy that effectively destroyed the Tahrir effect.

The interference of the American and Russian superpowers, preceded by the failure of the American invasion of Iraq, did certainly foster the expansion of Islamic terrorism, leading to the militarization of urban life and the prioritizing of martial and emergency laws on the global scale. But it is important to situate the phenomenon of terrorism as a response to what Stephen Graham calls the uncontrollability of «big systems» produced by fluid capitalism, leaving the situation «open to 'asymmetric' violence from non-state



FIGURE 4. The Mohamed Mahmud Street leading to Tahrir Square (Picture: Mona Abaza).

actors who could never hope to counter conventional Western military might».²¹

Unfortunately, the outcome of this asymmetric violence was that terrorist attacks made military and police establishments more publicly visible than ever on a planetary scale, leading to their further interference in civilian and urban life. The «war on terror», the very essence of the neocons' philosophy, was Bush's popular metaphor, whose seeds were planted under the Reagan administration and which seems to have been replicated globally today. The «war on terror» has become the catchword, or the alibi, for why the transition to democracy in the Middle East is repeatedly stifled, as national security is time and again prioritized and human rights continue to be violated.

That the military establishments are becoming the problem-solvers and the rescuers in moments of disasters, that they are and will be the dominant future urban planners of our cities, as Stephen Graham has convincingly argued, may well become second nature to our future cityscapes. It reminds us of Le Corbusier's quote that «city planning is an adjunct to the science of war».²² This déjà-vu repetition of what Mike Davis described as a «neo-military syntax», insinuating violence and «spatial apartheid»,²³ is becoming a normalized reality. This global urban militarization has recently focused on the increasingly fascinating field of walls and segregation and/or their piercing in the reshaping of cities,²⁴ in which striking similarities, despite local differences, are to be observed. It should be noted here that, after 2011, the violent confrontations between the protesters and the security forces led to the erection and multiplication of walls, creating «green zones» à la Baghdad in the center of town.

This militarization of society has become evident in Egypt before and after the military take over in 2013. The military gained legitimacy by fighting a war against «terrorists» in Sinai, while the government's long history of marginalizing the local population,

leading to a collective dissent from the tribes, is consciously ignored. The military became the main contractors for expanding the infrastructure by building roads, highways, and bridges. Today, the military establishment is the largest owner and speculator of desert land, multiplying the neoliberal dreams of satellite cities and gated communities more than ever. It is no coincidence that El-Sisi's populist, nationalist credentials are based on the enlarging of the Suez Canal, evoking in the collective memory the late Gamal Abdel Nasser's anti-colonialist rhetoric when the Canal was nationalized. But El-Sisi equally toyed with Egypt's colonial (cosmopolitan) past by displaying the flotilla of former King Farouk, evoking the involvement of Khedive Ismail and Napoleon III with the construction of the original canal.

However, the years 2015/2016 have displayed an unprecedented chain of synchronized and terrifying terrorist attacks in both Muslim and Western countries. Terrorist operations have been perfected by appropriating and reimagining paramilitary tactics and doctrines aiming at causing the utmost damage to civilian lives. This results in the «city as target»,²⁵ the city itself as the site of violence and warfare. The practice of targeting large densities such as transport nodes, as had happened earlier in Madrid (2003) and London (2005), proves particularly effective.²⁶

Ryan Bishop and Tania Roy's futuristic analysis of the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, published in 2009, predicted what was to come as a replicable pattern in numerous metropolises. In fact, they pointed to a forthcoming paradigm of terrorist attacks and argued that this case could serve as a «metonym» for the future (and rightly so). I am here summarizing Bishop and Roy's descriptions of the attack. They stressed the fact that only about 10 terrorists, who came by boat from Karachi, headed to downtown Mumbai and succeeded in randomly killing 172 persons in just 60 hours. They organized themselves into four groups; they used weapons, cars, and pedestrian paths. But their primary weapon was the creation of panic and collective chaos in the city. To this end, they chose two luxury hotels, a Jewish cultural center, a café, a metropolitan railway station (the site of the largest number of casualties), and a hospital. Roy and Bishop emphasize that the terrorists used the principle of «simultaneity» by splitting itineraries. This technique was also witnessed later in the terrorist attack in the Bataclan bar in Paris, and in the simultaneous terrorist attacks in different countries, such as in 2015 when a man was decapitated in

21. Stephen GRAHAM, «Disruption by Design: Urban Infrastructure and Political Violence», in GRAHAM, Stephen (ed.), *Disrupted Cities. When Infrastructure Fails*, New York and Abingdon, Routledge, 2010, p. 113.

22. Ryan BISHOP and Tania ROY, «Mumbai City as Target», *Theory, Culture & Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore), vol. 26, num. 7-8 (December 2009), p. 265.

23. Mike DAVIS, «Fortress LA», in Richard T. LEGATES and Frederic STOUT (ed.), *The City Reader*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 195, 197.

24. Eyal WEIZMAN, «Walking through walls: Soldiers as architects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict», *Radical Philosophy* (Canterbury), vol. 136 (March/April 2006), p. 8-22; Eyal WEIZMAN, «Thanato-Tactics», in Ryan BISHOP, Gregory CLANCEY and John W. PHILLIPS (ed.), *The City as Target*, London, Routledge, 2012; Mona ABAZA, «Walls, Segregating Downtown Cairo and the Mohammed Mahmud Street Graffiti», *Theory, Culture & Society* (Los Angeles), vol. 30, num. 1 (2013), p. 122-139, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412460062>>.

25. Ryan BISHOP and Tania ROY, «Mumbai City as Target», *Theory, Culture & Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore), vol. 26, num. 7-8 (December 2009), p. 263-277.

26. Stephen GRAHAM, *Cities under siege: The New Military Urbanism*, New York, Verso Books, 2011, p. 114.

France while two other attacks were perpetrated in Tunisia and Kuwait.²⁷

To come back to Mumbai, the horror effect was amplified by real-time coverage. But the point Bishop and Roy stress is the way this «Indian 9/11» incident was read by the Anglo-Saxon media: it focused on the two luxury hotels, as if the main target was the rich and the leisure class. The complex internal ethnic and racial politics of India (recall the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1993 and the state-initiated massacre of 2000 Muslims in the Western state of Gujarat in 2002), together with the long history of terrorism since the 1990s, were obviously neglected.

I think that further reflection on the question of coordinated or simultaneous terrorist attacks is called for, since it bears a certain affinity to the fascinating work of Eyal Weizman on the philosophy of the Israeli military establishment, the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), which has excelled in the theory of «swarming». Swarming primarily aims at causing a maximum panic effect in the urban warfare against Palestinians. Weizman relates the development of the tactics of swarming to the reimagining of piercing walls, immaterializing these walls and rendering them transparent. In a way, it could be seen as the art of defying gravity. For Weizman, the concept of «swarming» is paramount for understanding how the IDF has been penetrating, confusing, and ultimately destroying Palestinian urban life. Weizman describes «swarming» by quoting a leading Israeli military figure: «A state military whose enemy is scattered as a network of sporadic gangs ... must liberate itself from the old concept of straight lines, linear formations of units, regiments and battalions ... and become itself much more diffused and scattered, flexible and swarm-like... In fact it must adjust itself to the stealthy capability of the enemy».²⁸

5. Mobility, refugees, and cityscapes

Two major phenomena which have changed the world today are related to what Mimi Sheller and John Urry²⁹ termed the «new mobility turn» or the «new mobilities paradigms». According to this theory, humankind has recently witnessed historically unprecedented mobility, as demonstrated by an incredible velocity of population

27. Ben HUBBARD, «Terrorist Attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait Kill Dozens», *The New York Times* (New York), (26 June 2015), <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/27/world/middleeast/terror-attacks-france-tunisia-kuwait.html?_r=0>.

28. Eyal WEIZMAN, «Walking through walls: Soldiers as architects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict», *Radical Philosophy* (Charlottesville), vol. 136 (March/April 2006), p. 8-22.

29. Mimi SHELTER and John URRY, «The New Mobilities Paradigm», *Environment and Planning A* (London), vol. 38, num. 2 (February 2006), p. 207-226.

movement, aided by novel technology manipulation. This theory has once again raised the question of whether this mobility has led to further democratization, or whether instead we might be experiencing novel forms of mind control and collective forms of surveillance leading to unrecognizable manipulations. The Snowden and Assange affairs are relevant in this context: two people who paid a high price for exposing the U.S. war-mongering in the Middle East and the monstrous collective and mass surveillance to which we are all exposed.³⁰

I quote here Sheller and Urry regarding the question of mobility to support this point: «Internationally there are over 700 million legal passenger arrivals each year (compared with 25 million in 1950) with a predicted 1 billion by 2010; there are 4 million air passengers each day».³¹ But most acute is the problem of refugees, as any European is aware of, totalling about 65.3 million worldwide annually, according to a 2015 UNHCR report.³² Syria alone has some 11 million displaced persons, while 4 million have fled into neighbouring countries. We are told that Egypt has some five million refugees, of whom 500,000 are Syrians.³³

In 2010, about 214 million people were defined as international migrants, constituting 3.1 % of the world population. In the Arab world, about 13 million people were considered migrants, of whom 5.85 million were living in the Arab world and 7.15 million in other places. There are some 4.9 million in the OECD countries.³⁴

Further questions have been raised concerning the emerging phenomenon of permanent refugee spaces evolving into autonomous towns in their own right, like Domiz in Turkey today, and formerly in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Jim Kennedy calls such artificial scapes «emergency landscapes». These spaces started as refugee camps on the borders of a no-man's-land. As time went by, they developed into autonomous towns with supermarkets, shops, bakeries, and expanding infrastructure, including water and electricity supplies.³⁵

30. See the interview of Julian Assange with John Pilger on Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sbT3_9dJY4>.

31. Mimi SHELTER and John URRY, «The New Mobilities Paradigm», *Environment and Planning A* (Thousand Oaks), vol. 38, num. 2 (February 2006), p. 207.

32. *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2015*, Geneva, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016, <<http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>> (Read: 10 September 2017).

33. Omer KARASAPAN, «Who are the five million refugees and immigrants in Egypt?», in *Brookings* (Washington, D.C.), (4 October 2016), <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2016/10/04/who-are-the-5-million-refugees-and-immigrants-in-egypt>> (Read: 4 April 2017).

34. Louise CAINKAR, «Global Arab World Migrations and Diasporas», *Arab Studies Journal* (Washington D.C.), vol. 21, num. 1 (Spring 2013), p. 130.

35. Jim KENNEDY, «Emergency Landscapes», *LA+ Interdisciplinary Journal of Landscape Architecture* (San Francisco), vol. 3 (Spring 2016), p. 84-89.

6. Walls

Protective walls around cities and fortresses were one of the main features of ancient and medieval cities. In fact, there is no novelty about cities with separating walls. Even after the fall of the Berlin wall—which was museumized, commodified as a tourist attraction, and iconized by landmarking its traces all over Berlin, in the hope that this partition of the city will never happen again—walls continue to multiply globally. The notion of building a GREAT wall along the southern U.S. border became the populist ticket for gaining the votes of countless frustrated working- and middle-class white Americans. To that extent, Trump's racist propositions against immigrants worked. It remains to be seen whether his apartheid wall will materialize. Similarly, Israel has established not only a physical but most crucially a metaphorical wall of denial that it is part of an endless Middle Eastern tragedy. By excluding the other «barbarians», the wall is an affirmation of Israel's constant denial not only of the Palestinians, but of all of their Middle Eastern neighbours. The tunnels in Gaza remind us, in a way, of the experiences of the former East Germans before the collapse of the wall. Still more metaphorical walls seem to be forthcoming in Europe, prompted by the influx of refugees and the strengthening of right-wing parties, who systematically reject possible solutions for the incoming immigrants and refugees. After November 2011, Cairo witnessed violent confrontations between the protesters and police forces that led to the erection of numerous concrete walls in the center of the city, which paralyzed traffic and movement for almost three years. One can speak of a «green zone» around the American and British embassies in the Garden City quarter of Cairo.

For European and American cities, it is clear that the decades to come will be concerned with the main question of social integration of the marginalized sub-



FIGURE 5. A wall in Cairo on 9th October 2015 (Picture: Mona Abaza).

urban «banlieux» and «estates» populations and with escalating urban violence and ethnic and racial riots, as the 2011 incidents in London revealed. The media portrayed these as acts of hooliganism or vandalism, as incidents without a precedent or a cause. Lark Duggan, the best friend of one of the main (black) actors in the riots, was shot by the police, who claimed he was carrying a gun, which turned out not to be true (see the documentary *The Hard Stop* by Georges Amponsah). Since 1990, 153 blacks and other minorities have been killed by the police forces in England.³⁶ There seems to be a pattern in the nature of state violence enacted by the police that explains the recent racial riots in the United States after African American citizens were once again shot «by mistake». Similarly, riots took place all over France in 2005 after two youngsters in Clichy were electrocuted when hiding in a plant after they were chased by the police who had mistaken their identity. The fascinating work of Alice Goffman³⁷ on the African American community in a neighbourhood in Philadelphia testifies the vicious circle of the excessive state violence perpetrated on the poor blacks. Goffman convincingly unravels the stigmatizing mechanisms and witch hunting established by the pervasive law enforcement apparatus system, which practically leaves no alternative outlet to the spiral of delinquency, further ghettoizing and marginalizing then the poor black community.

7. Disappearing cities

I would like to return, at this point, to the Middle East and try to focus on realities related to how cities have been shaped, constructed, or destroyed either as imagined utopias or as real dystopias. The «Arab Winter» has become synonymous, for many, with the emerging reality of «disappearing cities» and decomposing states. Syria, and earlier Iraq, provided a case in point, in wars that resort to the targeted bombing of civilians and the deliberate destruction of infrastructure, like electricity plants and water and sewage systems, the deliberate and repetitive bombing of hospitals, the increasing role of drones in warfare, and the military's vertical aerial control of cities,³⁸ which ensures further flexibility and mo-

36. See: Lola OKOLOSIE, «*The Hard Stop* Is a Refreshing Representation of Black British Men», *The Guardian* (London), (18 July 2016), <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/18/george-amponsah-the-hard-stop-2011-riots-black-british-men>> (Read: 10 May 2017).

37. Alice GOFFMAN, *On the Run. Fugitive Life in an American City*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2014.

38. Peter ADEY, «Vertical Security in the Megacity Legibility, Mobility and Aerial Politics», *Theory, Culture & Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore), vol. 27, num. 6 (November 2010), p. 51-67.

bility in surveillance. For many Egyptians who witnessed the January revolution and its aftermath, helicopters remain omnipresent in their memory.

All these strategies need to be studied as part and parcel of enhancing military doctrines on a planetary scale. They have proved to be efficient in causing extensive civilian destruction, as carried out in Lebanon, in Gaza by the repetitive Israeli aerial bombings, and definitively in the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The borderline between allegedly minimizing collateral damage, together with resorting to the alibi of the doctrine of causing «lesser evil» (although still qualifying as war crimes), is increasingly blurred in the language of the international community. Here once again, Stephen Graham argues that U.S. military doctrine «practices a systemic demodernizing of entire urbanized societies that are deemed to be adversaries»³⁹ —in other words, aerial bombing is understood by the military as one way of «backwardizing» enemy societies.

But the connection with today's «disappearing cities» does not apply only to the conscious destruction of archaeological sites like Palmyra. Its main purpose is to target vital urban nodes, with the specific purpose of paralyzing and degrading entire populations, with the most vulnerable (women, children, and the elderly) suffering the most. The list of «disappearing» or destroyed cities is increasing by the day, to include Aleppo, Homs, Sanaa, Baghdad, Mosul, Ben Ghazi, and the particular situation of the open-air prison of Gaza. Strangely enough, several urban sociologists have been prophesying about a replicable paradigm of segregating walls, by means of «green zones» like those in Baghdad and Cairo, and through isolated compounds and gated communities.

The devastated landscapes undergoing deliberate destruction by urban warfare are reminiscent of Naomi Klein's Shock Doctrine and shock therapy.⁴⁰ She cites the American invasion of Iraq as an example, as a strategy to implement further draconian neoliberal measures. It is, in reality, leading to the reshaping, rebuilding, and reformulating of an entirely new militarized urban life⁴¹ in which segregating walls and smart-technology surveillance in spaces like «smart villages» and «smart cities» lead to a mosaic of tiny securitized archipelagos of walled-off spaces. In contrast to them, the

sprawling slums and neighbouring informalized spaces have to be kept away—an impossible effort, as these continue to mushroom. As Mike Davis has predicted, the rapid march towards the planet of slums seems inescapable.⁴²

8. Conclusion

What are the implications of these urban imaginaries/realities, or «urbicides», on the entire Mediterranean world? How would a Braudelian, «longue durée» perspective make sense with the Dubai/Singapore models? If we believe that the Mediterranean world took the form of multiple coexistent seas (as Braudel argued) which, as separate entities, have historically all been interconnected as parts of one whole mosaic, then certainly the ongoing dystopias or fictitious utopias of the Middle East can be viewed not just as fascinating laboratories for the metropolises of the North and of Southeast Asia. The ongoing collapse of states, and the manipulated wars by global forces feeding on internal corruption, mean that the European continent cannot resolve the endless tragedy of the refugees by simply closing borders or by listening to right-wing populist sentiments. At the risk of sounding cynical, if there is any positive lesson to be learned from the mounting spiral of violence, terrorism, and wars in the Middle East, it is that the fates of the various shores of the Mediterranean cannot be untied easily, nor can walls undo the crossing paths, affinities, and love-hate sentiments embodied in the histories of mentalities of the multifaceted Mediterranean world. Nor can terrorism be fought by mere walls, when the terrorists represent the doppelgängers of the American neoconservatives who feed on the long histories of state violence in the Middle East.

Mass surveillance and the new flow of digitized information systems guaranteeing the efficient flow of «things», created by the emerging «intelligent» consumerist cities, are certainly homogenizing and highly quantifying the world in such a way that one wonders whether alienation in urban life will not be equated with dystopian nightmares, constantly in denial of the labor of smart weapons, drones, and the endlessly growing slums, which reinforce informality and social segregation. Clear visions of urban apocalypse and repeated urbicides seem to be what will unite the futures of the urbanites of the world.

39. Stephen GRAHAM, *Cities under siege: The New Military Urbanism*, 2011, p. 270-271.

40. Naomi KLEIN, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, New York, Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt, 2007.

41. Stephen GRAHAM, *Cities under siege: The New Military Urbanism*, 2011,

42. Mike DAVIS, *Planet of Slums*, London, Verso, 2006.