

## Unit 10: CJ Lim and Simon Dickens

# Relocation: The Making of Utopia

'Arrival of the Floating Pool after 40 years of crossing the Atlantic, the architects/lifeguards reach their destination. They have to swim toward what they want to get away from and away from where they want to go.'

– Rem Koolhaas, 'The Story of the Pool', 1977

In the tradition of science fiction tropes of Jonathan Swift and Jules Verne, the Russian modernist architects used a portable pool infrastructure to escape Soviet oppression to the United States of America in Koolhaas' 'Delirious New York'. Meanwhile, the architects of the 'Wandering Turtle', Brodsky and Utkin opted instead to remain in Russia to produce 'an escape into the realm of the imagination that ended as a visual commentary on what was wrong with social and physical reality and how its ills might be remedied'. Both the decisions to relocate or to remain are basic human rights, and can be applied as strategies for the making of utopia. According to the 2006 Stern Review, around 200 million people will be permanently displaced by 2050 – often the amalgamation of complex economic, social and political drivers, which are exacerbated by increasingly unpredictable environmental conditions. Rather than 'fighting', governments together with planners and architects need to envision built environments that embrace the enemy.

Relocation of capital cities is not uncommon. Ancient Egyptians, Romans, and Chinese changed their capital frequently. Some countries choose new capitals that are more easily defended in a time of invasion or war; others built in undeveloped areas to spur unity, security, and prosperity. The decision to relocate the Brazilian capital from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia was intended to not only symbolically relocate the seat of national power but also shift the demographic and economic focus away from the European colonial powers and toward the vast hinterland.

In 2016, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) reported that older couples 'downsizing' to smaller properties could free up much-needed housing stock in urban areas. Also, at £320bn a year, the third age now account for around 47% of all UK consumer spending, and is helping to keep the UK economy moving. In Detroit, it is the cheap housing and incentive programs that are enticing the relocation of the middle class and creative population from neighboring states to fuel the regrowth of the Motor City. 'Write A House' provides vocational training to Detroiters to renovate vacant dilapidated homes, help incoming writers and artists overcome the obstacles to home-ownership, and establish a sustainable creative landscape. Strengthening community resilience that can adapt in uncertainty can reduce relocation – this is both an opportunity and a challenge.

'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. Progress is the realization of Utopias.'

– Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', 1891

JG Ballard has written that the psychological realm of fiction is most valuable in its speculative function. Can the appropriation of fiction and narrative inform the shaping of an urban and architectural vision, while addressing real and urgent social politics, economy and environmental concerns? For the 1979 Venice Biennale, Aldo Rossi's 'Teatro del Mondo' romanticized the floating theatres, which were so characteristics of Venice and its carnival in the eighteenth century. Its ephemeral apparition, and its very transience has become its 'raison d'etre.' Rossi described his innovation as 'a place where architecture ended and the world of the imagination began'. PROJECT 1, students will speculate, prioritize and redefine the poetics of 'relocation' and 'utopia'. The interpretations and identified issues will provide a speculative framework and program for the year. PROJECT 2, Utopia has to be located at a place of 'Undesired'. Does 'Utopia' occupy the territory of 'urban', 'suburban' or 'landscape'? Banksy's anti-establishment 'Dismaland' in the disused lido on the seafront, brought hundreds of thousands of visitors and an extra £20m revenue to Weston-super-Mare. The temporary environment was controversial but it made the world reflect on issues relating to relocation. We encourage expressions of personal ideology, scale and working methods in search of visionary and innovative architectural proposals.

