American Studies

Green Utopias? Flipping the Script on Urban Disaster

Barbara Buchenau   WS 2024/25

Green Utopias?

Green Utopia Essen?
The Case of the European Green Capital (2017)

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VON GRÜN ZU **GRAU** ZU GRÜN

Die Wandlung der Stadt Essen von einem vorindustriellen Stift mit Äbtissinnen-gärten und Kaiserparks über eine Kohle- und Stahlmetropole zu einer grünen Stadt ist beeindruckend. Um 1900 war Essens Stadtbild geprägt durch die Kruppsche Gussstahlfabrik, durch enge Quartiere nahe der Altstadt und große

Krupp-Kolonien wie den Nordhof, den Schederhof und den Kronenberg, durch Schlote der Kokereien und Gestelle der Hochöfen, durch Fördertürme und Halden. Die grüne Entwicklung von Essen ist untrennbar mit den sozialreformatorischen Idealen und Zielsetzungen von Robert Schmidt (1869–1934) verbunden.

Robert Schmidt und andere Städtebauer im Ruhrgebiet stellten sich die Frage, wie die ideale Industriestadt aussieht, wie sie zu organisieren und zu einem lebenswerten Ort für die Einwohnerschaft zu gestalten sei. Große, langgezogene Grünflächen wie das Siepental in Bergerhausen oder der Haumannpark in Rüt-

tenscheid brachten Luft in die Stadt. Die Wälder kamen unter Schutz. Grüne Viertel wie die Margarethenhöhe oder das Moltkeviertel entstanden. Mit Schmidt setzte in Essen eine Stadt- und Raumplanung ein, die sich am Menschen und seinen Bedürfnissen nach Grün, Gesundheit und Erholung orientierte.


UNESCO-Welterbe Zollverein, Blick auf das Fördergerüst von Schacht 3/7/10 Richtung Gelsenkirchen-Rotthausen

08   09

"The successful 150-year story of transformation from a city of coal and steel to the greenest city in NRW is a model for many European cities undergoing structural transformation. […] Our green infrastructure is the engine of sustainable urban development. The competence for change of our people is the key to success in this process of transformation.
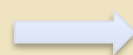
→ **Process knowledge**
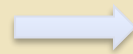
→ **Self-description**
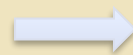
→ **Story connecting past, present & future**

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- J. Throgmorton. "Planning as Persuasive Storytelling in a Global-Scale Web of Relationships". *Planning Theory* 2.2 (2003): 125-51.

- L. Sandercock. "From the Campfire to the Computer: An Epistemology of Multiplicity and the Story Turn in Planning". *Multimedia Explorations in Urban Policy and Planning*. Ed. L. Sandercock, G. Attili. Dordrecht: Springer, 2010. 17-37.

- M. van Hulst, Merlijn (2012). "Storytelling, a Model of and a Model for Planning". *Planning Theory* 11.3 (2012): 299-318.

- ….

⇒ **"planning IS story-telling" (analysis of narratives in planning texts)**

⇒ Uses of literature in promoting plans (Helsinki, Emscher …)

Narratives – and Genres – in Urban Planning

J. Throgmorton "Planning as Persuasive Storytelling" (2003)

"I would suggest that at least five broad narratives are commonly told about urban areas in America […]

-   the city as a site of opportunity and excitement […]
-   the city as a nightmare […]
-   the city as a site of injustice, oppression, and exclusion (but also hope) […]
-   the environmentalists' interpretation. According to it, the city is a site of activities that are rapidly eroding the ecological base upon which those activities are founded. Cities, human progress, and all they entail are rapidly destroying or taming wild nature.
-   the city of ghosts. This offers a narrative of memory, of loss, of small towns drying up and blowing away, of farmland disappearing from the urban fringe, of neighborhoods being destroyed by urban renewal and interstate highway construction, of other neighborhoods being eviscerated by deindustrialization." (142f.)

- Example "pioneers on the new urban frontier"

  ➢ And who – if the city is the frontier – is the enemy ("the hostile Native American")?

- Other example: "the tragedy of Detroit"

- **Which outcomes/path dependencies/inclusions and exclusions are suggested by specific narratives, metaphors, images?**
  (for ideological implications of modes of emplotment, cf. Hayden White, *Metahistory* (1973); for the "ideological baggage" of narratives and metaphors, cf. Ameel 2021)

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Detroit redefined: city hires America's first official 'chief storyteller'

Irritated by the relentless focus on ruin porn, or pre-emptive stories about the city's tech resurgence, Aaron Foley will attempt to offer a more nuanced portrait

An image from Kathryn Bigelow's new film Detroit, which some critics say mischaracterises the city.
Photograph: Francois Duhamel/eOne

Flipping 'Scripts' in Urban Development (B. Buchenau, J.M. Gurr)

Scripts

Connect convincing stories with a world of matter-of-fact planning. Urban development and planning cannot do without "make-believe" – with optimism and vision.

Scripts connect

- Figural expression

- narrative exposition

- mediale presentation

 (Buchenau/Gurr, 2020, 146)

Scripts combine

- Acts of framing

- Acts of inscription

- Acts of description

- Acts of re-scription and re-invention

- Acts of normative ascriptions

"Scripts are artful combinations of narrative, medial as well as figural acts of framing, inscription, description and prescription. In their combination of stories, tropes and media, scripts serve three contending functions simultaneously: they activate procedural knowledge, they serve as self-description, and they provide blueprints for the future. Thus, scripts establish contingent connective tissues between the past, the present and the future."

(Buchenau/Gurr, 2020, 142)

1. Originally (since the 14th century): "Scripts" as "something written, a piece of writing" (*OED*)

2. Since the 19th century: use as a legal term, meaning the original of a legal document (normative implications: original as the true or authoritative version as opposed to derivative rescripts)

3. Related notion: "scripture": sacred writings, any writings that appear unassailable, sacred, authoritative, beyond critique

4. Film industry and film studies: "script" as the "typescript of a cinema or television film; the text of a broadcast announcement, talk" (*OED*) – both descriptive (transcript) and prescriptive (an instruction to be carried out, a pre-defined sequence of actions and dialogues)

5. Psychology/transaction analylsis (Eric Berne, 1970s): "script" as an unconscious life plan formed early in life – a plan that can be discovered, modified, and thus rescripted.

6. Social psychology: script as "[t]he social role or behaviour appropriate to particular situations"

7. Artificial intelligence research: "script" as "a standard event sequence" and thus a form of procedural knowledge (Schank and Abelson 1977) – the "restaurant script" (sequence: sit down, order, be served, eat, pay, leave) [how much of human behaviour is "scripted"?]

Script: Synthesis

- "Script" as procedural knowledge, self-description and template/manual/recipe

- Scripts combine documentary **and** normative in unmarked transitions (descriptive and prescriptive)

- Scripts make use of and are coded in and transmitted through Narratives, Media and Figures (of thought and speech, figurations)

Flipped Scripts? The Research Group "Scripts for Postindustrial Urban Futures: American Models, Transatlantic Interventions" (Volkswagen Foundation, 2018-2024)

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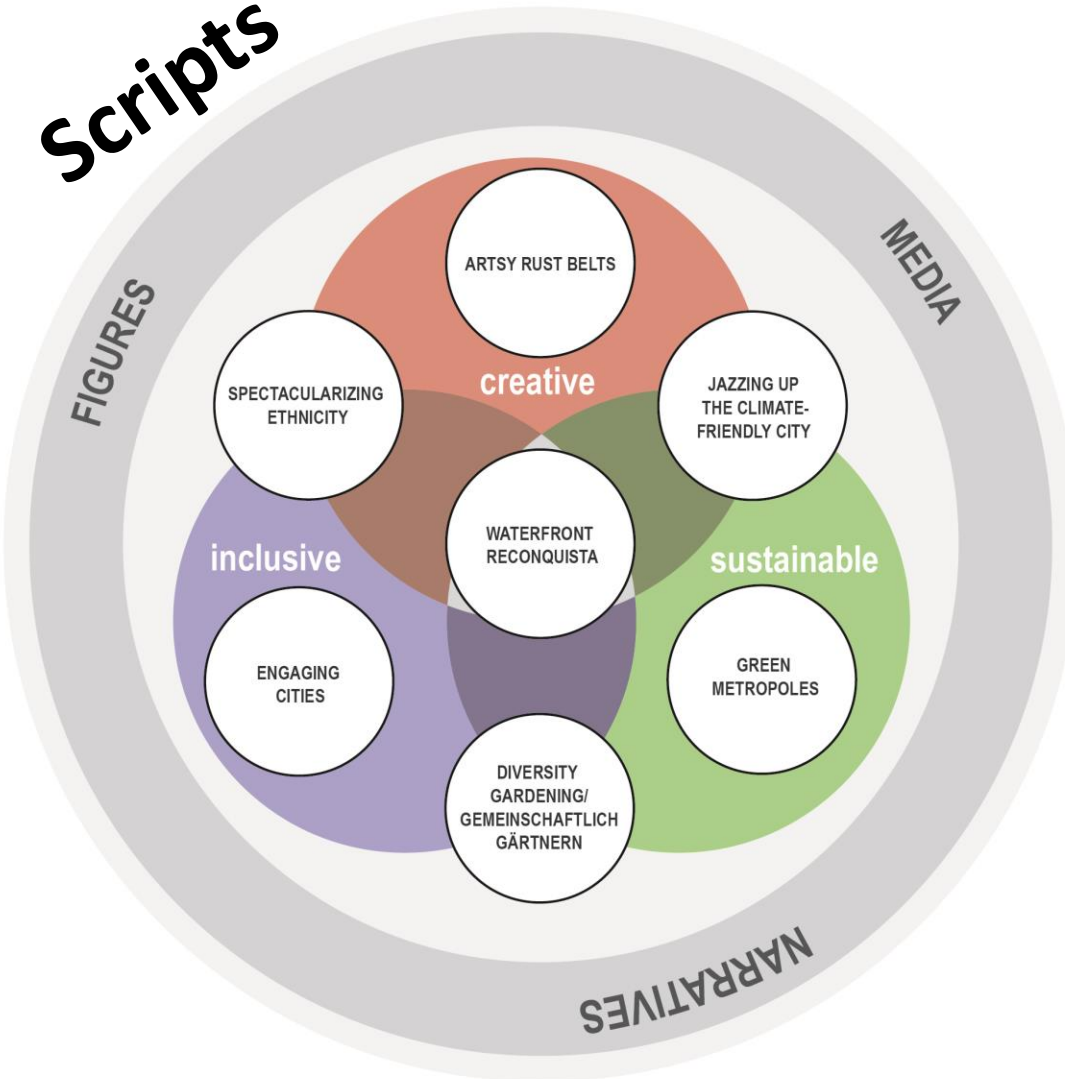
- Manuals for "success" copied and adapted across cities
- "Creative", "Sustainable", "Inclusive" and "Smart" city as some key recent 'scripts'

Sample Projects

- Using "sustainability" to further "inclusive" urban development in Essen ("community gardening")
- Using local narratives ("Jazz Quarter") to support sustainable development
- Sustainable, creative and inclusive Waterfront Development

Possible Readings for Green Utopias

- Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*, 1975

- Octavia Butler, *Fledgling*, 2006

- *Broken Earth* trilogy (2015-2017)

- Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (2014)

- Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* trilogy (2004-2007)

- *Cosmopolis* (David Cronenberg 2012)

- *Spaceship Earth* (Matt Wolf, 2020)

- *WALL-E* (Pixar 2008)

- *Tomorrowland* (Disney 2015)

- *Megalopolis* (Zoetrope 2024)

- *Treme* (HBO 2010-2013)

- *Girls* (2012-)

UE 3	EUROPEAN PLANNING AND STUDIES (1)
EC 3.2	Plans and Projects in European Cities
Professors in charge	Manon Eskenazi, Marcus Zepf

TEACHING OBJECTIVES: This module seeks to provide a comparative understanding of projects and planning in European cities and metropolis. On the one hand, the planning systems of several European countries are examined comparatively. Drawing from case studies in European cities, the module explores national and local variations in the practices of urban and metropolitan planning that reflect differences in political and social history, economic conditions, and traditions of law and governance. On the other hand, plans and projects are analysed in terms of their relations with the transformation of urban economies and societies in Europe. This module analyses urban transformations from the standpoint of their complex interactions with the emergence, implementation and outcomes of project-led development.

This year, the module will explore three key issues in the planning of European cities:
* Gender planning;
* Active mobilities;
* Tactical urbanism.

MODULE OUTLINE: This module is built around case studies from metropolitan areas in France and in Europe. It combines lectures with fieldtrips in the Parisian metropolitan area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: A detailed bibliography with compulsory reading material will be provided at the beginning of the module.

Key works include:

* CARMONA, Marisa, BURGESS, Rod and BADENHORST, M. S. (eds.), 2009, Planning through Projects: Moving from Master Planning to Strategic Planning—30 Cities (Amsterdam: Techne Press).

* MARCUSE, Peter and VAN KEMPEN, Ronald, 2000, Globalizing Cities: a New Spatial Order? (Oxford: Blackwell).

* NEWMAN, Peter and THORNLEY, Andy, 2002, Urban Planning in Europe: International Competition, National Systems and Planning Projects (London: Routledge; 2nd edition).

* SALET, Willen, and GUALINI, Enrico (eds.), 2006, Framing Strategic Urban Projects: Learning from Current Experiences in European Urban Regions (London: Routledge).

EXAMINATION: Students' participation and final written exam.

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Workshop

Scripting Urban Resilience

- **Registration:** https://t1p.de/qx2zn

- **Date:** Oct 15, 3-6pm

- **Location:** College for Social Sciences and Humanities (Lindenallee 39-41, Essen)

15.10.2024
3 pm – 6 pm
College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Essen
Remote Access Available

ΛURORΛ

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Offen im Denken

Scripting Resilience: Navigating Disaster and

Urban Sustainabilities

Join us for the workshop "Scripting Urban Resilience: Navigating Disaster and Sustainable Futures," which brings together interdisciplinary and global perspectives on how cities are confronting disasters and planning for sustainable urban futures. This event is hosted by Barbara Buchenau, Florian Freitag, and Zohra Hassan-Pieper.

Focusing on the critical impact of disasters from climate-induced storms and wildfires to pandemics, police violence, or political propaganda, our speakers from Wilmington, the US, Naples, and the Czech Republic will offer interdisciplinary insights on how cities are overcoming challenges and striving toward ecological and social sustainability. This gathering is linked to our ongoing focus on urbanities in Aurora and our UDE seminars "Green Utopias" and "Sustainable Urbanities in North America and Europe," allowing students from all over Europe to participate, foster rich discussion, and develop new ideas. Engage in a conversation that is shaping the future of urban resilience and sustainability!

For: Students, Researchers, Administrators and Practitioners
Focus: Intersection of Urban Research, Sustainability, and Storytelling

Register here

Co-funded by
the European Union

Urban Lab

- **Date:** Nov 5 and 12, 12-2 pm
- **Location:** **T03R04D10**

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