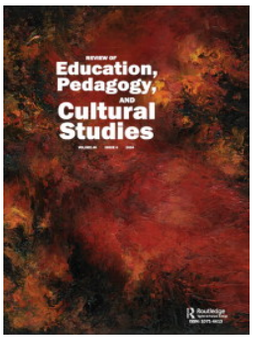

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Still-existing utopian pedagogy: Architecture, curriculum, and the revolutionary imaginary

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ABSTRACT

While the manifestation of a revival of a collective revolutionary imaginary is more pronounced in social movements, we see it evidenced in a renewed interested in utopian curriculum and pedagogy. This article advances this trend by following José Esteban Muñoz's methodology, returning an early Paulo Freire formulation of utopian pedagogy as a dialectic of denouncing and announcing, and building on Darren Webb's project of reasserting the centrality of direction in utopian imaginations. Contending that our inability to imagine a radically different world results from the dominant temporality in our conjuncture, we mine cartographic processes as both archaeological and architectural to disrupt the perceptual and ideological restraints that muzzle our ability to not only image and sense alternative possibilities but to *organize* for the power required for their actualization. We thread this through a concrete example of an architectural utopian curriculum that demonstrates how archaeology and architecture can be blocked together or held in dialectical tension, which entails emphasizing that utopian pedagogy emerges from and as part of concrete struggles. We look at the Warsaw Palace, a still-existing socialist utopian architectural project, that can serve as a cartographic node in combining the openings of utopian longings with the political direction needed for their realization.

KEYWORDS

Utopianism; temporality; Socialist Architecture; Revolutionary Imaginary; marxism

Identifying, addressing, and escaping the contemporary confinement of our collective revolutionary imaginary is a pressing concern across social movements, political organizations, and academic disciplines. Our tactical, strategical, educational, and theoretical decisions as organizers and teachers always respond in one way or another to the enclosure of our sensation of collectivity and ability to imagine a radically different future together, which are equally necessary for *building* a radically different world. Our capacity for revolutionary struggle is anything but imaginary; it is beyond dispute that revolutions are not only possible but actual. From within our worksite of academia, as participants in social struggles we look inside and beyond our place in the division of labor and see a nascent yet uneven trend from critique to creation. We experience and

work toward the reinvigoration of revolutionary traditions in which generative and *radically* better worlds are imagined, felt, realizable and actual.[1] In academia, the revolutionary—or utopian—project is a perfectly acceptable object of inquiry. Paradoxically, as Fredric Jameson (2004) points out, in the university "we are perfectly free to discuss utopia as a historical and textual or generic issue, but not to complicate it with politics" (p. 36).

Especially since the early 1990s, utopian projects are denounced or rejected *a priori* as naïve and outmoded, as an ignorant and unenlightened dream from which we have escaped. In educational studies, the early 2000s witnessed what Tyson E. Lewis (2007) called "a surprising return to the theme of utopia" in scholarship across the political spectrum, from "liberal curricular reformists" to left-wing educational theorists (p. 683). That curriculum studies of any bent would consider utopia is apt, for the *word* and *field* of curriculum is defined by movement. As Lewis (2023) elsewhere points out, "the etymological root of curriculum is *currere* or 'to run' or 'to run a course'" (p. 171). Herein lies the rub: by what direction as determined by what forces is the runner guided or is the student moved through the course? If there is a reemergence of utopian thought in education today, it is at best a modified or cautious return precisely because it stops short of answering such questions, as Darren Webb (2009) calls to attention.

We hold that the curriculum is always operative as a site or source of power and struggle. Insofar as education is an intentional act in which a teacher—as embodied in a person, collective, organization, network, think tank, etc.—directs specific students to distinct content, all education necessarily encompasses an orientation in time and possibility. As such, the content, orientation, and direction of the course are matters of curricular studies, which requires connecting curriculum, pedagogy, and politics, because divorced from teaching particular content for some determinate if incomplete end, the curriculum is merely an endless and rudderless course of movement. In our present moment, then, such directionless utopianism is an educational logic perfectly aligned with the dominant systems of oppression and exploitation: production for production's sake; movement for movement's sake.

This article contributes to existing research on the educational and political significance of reviving utopianism, the radical imagination and, most importantly, *actualizing* that collective utopian imagining. We propose the utopian impulse in education lags behind its manifestations in social movements in our current conjuncture and write this article to think through how we might catch ourselves and colleagues up to speed, so to speak. We begin by defining the conjuncture in general and our present one in particular, denoting the subjective and temporal forces at

work that inhibit our ability to imagine the actuality of revolution. Surveying the dominant debates in utopian educational research today, we propose that combatting these forces entails a curricular disruption of the perceptual and ideological restraints that muzzle our belief in *organizing* for the power needed to work toward utopian longings. Threading these together with a concrete utopian architectural structure built during the global revolutionary era (between 1945 and 1970) that still emanates and produces alternative social relations serves as a cartographic node to prove another world is not only necessary and possible, but actual, not historical, forthcoming, or present, but all three simultaneously (Ford 2023b).

Our inquiry follows José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) method of utopianism, temporality, and revolution. The capitalists tell us to reject "the history of actually realized utopian enclaves" as one of failure, a past that defines our present and determines our future (p. 155). While he adheres to the tension between potentiality and actuality, he insists we "not be content to let failed revolutions be merely finite moments" and "should instead consider them to be the *blueprints* to a better world" (p. 146, emphasis added). *Queering* utopianism and its temporality projects us beyond the current temporal framework in the U.S. in which the present is endless and detached from living historical processes. Insofar as failures permeate the present, they reveal the facade of straight or abstract time. Our curricular project thus entails sensing the past and present existing alternatives that capital tries to paper over.

Naming the conjuncture: Mapping teaching politics, and curriculum

What the teacher calls students to attend to, how and for what purposes they do so, and according to what pedagogical logics this movement takes place, are educational and political matters that can reinforce, alter, expose, challenge, or otherwise disrupt the conjuncture through which education courses. By conjuncture, we indicate the myriad objective and sensible forces operative when space, time, and social location meet. As a reality and designation, the conjuncture is a political matter. More than a list of social factors or elements in society or an educational course, it is those factors that emerge as politically determinate in any convergence of the three realms indicated above.

Like the curriculum, the conjuncture is never static, although it is possible to generalize elements of the conjuncture in a certain historical moment. The primary defining feature of our conjuncture is a restrained collective political and historical imaginary. Marked by an enclosure of our experience and conceptualization of temporality and subjectivity, history is detached from the present and the apparent consensus is that all

alternatives to the current order have been exhausted. If we can envision a future at all, it appears as little more than a repetition of right now, perhaps with slight differences (like more apps). The potential for global *revolutionary* transformations that fundamentally alter our social relations and beings—in the future and present—is configured as nonsense by capital's perceptual and ideological networks. Given this conjuncture, radical educators and organizers should defend, demonstrate, and advance the *present* by confronting the time of the "now" that limits our imaginative capacities and funnels many into networks it can accommodate—and even profit from—. Gabriel Rockhill (2017) makes the useful distinction between the now and the present, writing that whereas we can see "the present as being deeply anchored in the past while constituting the chassis of experience in the moment," the "time of the now shakes off its historical inscription like an instantaneous flash that comes from nowhere" (p. 105). In the present, the past is alive, and the future is too, for the present is an active engagement with, the result of, and an opening for the contingency of the current moment. The now, on the other hand, is an inevitable sequence of events we undergo, suffer, and try to manage, a sequence of events that are each disconnected from any causality and protected by any alternatives.

The prison of the now resembles Alexander Means and Graham Slater's (2022) permanent presence of the same. Today, they argue, the U.S. is in a "historical conjuncture of collective disorientation" or "hypermodern disorientation" (p. 231). They locate our disoriented temporality in the gap between "a catastrophic reality and the absence of a pathway out," which produces "a historical mode of spatiotemporal abstract, reification, and dislocation" (p. 231). Importantly qualified as *historical*, the state of hypermodern disorientation breaks and dislocates the material and social factors that produce and reproduce our social being and relations, thus keeping us trapped in a prison-like present that seemingly will never permit our freedom.

The production of ideas—including academic scholarship—is inevitably determined (or delimited) by the dominant classes and systems, and even critical or radical scholarship often accompanies these shifting demands (Ford 2023a). As one example, Means and Slater (2022) mention the contradictory way that many academics on the left in imperialist countries embraced the transitory, flexible, culturalist, atomizing tendencies of capital's new regime of accumulation. For Rockhill (2017), one mechanism that confines us in the now is issued to revolutionaries when we suggest or organize large-scale systematic transformations to *intervene* in the ongoing production of history. This blackmail isn't a mass phenomenon, but one mostly confined to the pages of scholarly journals, and utopianism is particularly vulnerable to it for two reasons. First,

anti-utopianism's lineage dates back to the 1940s–1950s and the beginning of the "Cold War." Second, as Ruth Levitas (2013) clarifies, its origins in the West came from both right-wing anticommunists like Friedrich von Hayek and Karl Popper as well as liberal anticommunists like Hannah Arendt. As two scholars partaking in the publishing of our ideas, we acknowledge a promising yet still nascent *progressive* shift in the openness of academics to revolutionary traditions like communism and national liberation.

We believe one reason utopianism is back on the agenda of scholarship is because it is back on the agenda of global revolutionary struggles. After more than a three decade-long break in the continuity of people's struggles after the early 1990s, in recent years the experience of a new generation of organizers and fighters merged with the accumulated experience and knowledge of previous generations as the Left is again organizing and mobilizing in an internationalist setting, debating pressing issues of ideology, strategy, and tactics, and creating united fronts around specific struggles. Contemporary utopian scholars are thus faced with the confined now of our radical collective imaginary that renders invisible the reality that revolutions are not only possible but have happened—and are currently in process. How to respond to this contradiction?

Albeit in different ways, Rockhill and Means and Slater respond to our conjuncture through cartography. For Rockhill, our imaginary maps aren't images or (false) representations of the real world but a general perceptual apparatus. As a result, the cartographic curriculum works to "dismantle 'the given world,' that is, the common ecosystem produced by a world-image and inscribed in the practical common sense of the prevailing political imaginary" (Rockhill, 2017 p. 28). By redrawing the maps we see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, we foreground the ongoing struggle over, in, and for history. Mapping our conjuncture both provides a tactical understanding of the forces at play and the possible openings for struggle in part by intervening in the struggle to produce a new common sense, for mapping the elements defining our conjuncture identifies openings. The question arises, of course, openings for *what* political struggles and social relations?

Mapping the elements defining our conjuncture provides leverage points, and we find Means and Slater's (2022) call for combatting disorientation by returning to and updating Fredric Jameson's project of cognitive mapping precisely such an activity. As an historicizing project for a historical mode of being, cognitive mapping reorients us toward the world we encounter as one specific moment in a particular time and social order. They further state that disorientation reorients us away from normative capitalist directions into a state of disorientation from which new openings for a radical imagination of and for futures emerge. However,

reorientations, in turn, can open new dangers by producing new orientations that will inevitably point us toward and away from different things, goals, objects, and processes. In this way, Means and Slater remain consistent with the revolutionary tradition, insisting that "struggles for the future should resist certainty and prescription" because revived future orientations won't "occur through blueprints fit for application and assembly" (p. 244). Inhabiting, expanding, and maintaining the openings in disorientation to forge a new collective imaginary and create a new social order are possible only through ongoing collective political struggle, thought, and testing. Invoking the *blueprint*, associated primarily with political (and modern) architecture, as the metaphor through which they condense, clarify, and conclude their call for a new utopian project of cognitive mapping is a compelling jumping-off point for our project. In educational utopian debates, the blueprint, the role of architecture, and the function of politics are contentious and politically relevant points of struggle.

The lackluster return of utopian education

David Halpin's (2003) *Hope and Education* is often cited as a signal of utopia's reemergence in educational scholarship (e.g., Lewis, 2007; Webb, 2009). The book articulates a "utopian realism" that, we are constantly reassured, is pragmatic, something resting in the middle of minor reforms and a long march through the institutions. Education must move toward "a specific better future for society" possible only via "progressive and patient incremental social reform" (p. 5). His utopic curriculum moves young people from students to "creative learners" defined by their (1) openness to new ideas and experiences; (2) capacity to translate knowledge and skills across different contexts; (3) understanding that learning is or can be hard; and (4) motivation to redress social problems. Utopian curricula create "situations in which pupils are led to create for themselves sustained structures of thinking and meaning around well-chosen subject matter" (p. 114). However, what appears as a combination of movement and direction is, on closer inspection, a subsumption of direction under movement and, hence, a movement for movement, a curricular accommodation to the present conjuncture.

At the center of Halpin's utopian pedagogy is promoting "a commitment to a form of creative lifelong learning," where creativity and all of life are justified by the need to reshape themselves to hypermodern disorientation and the lifelong adjustments to which the endless "now" subjects us (p. 108). In other words, if there is a direction, it is a direction back to the beginning, back to learning that he defines "as a *process of discovery* that

generates in people new understandings about themselves and the world around them" (p. 109). As such, proper utopian education is progressive in the sense that it "takes for granted and promotes a less passive and more active role for the student, who is viewed, with the teacher, as a co-constructor of curriculum and knowledge" (Halpin, 2007, p. 245). The teacher is thus not really a teacher but a fellow learner who demonstrates the endless circle of learning how to remain open to the shifting coordinates of contemporary capitalism.

Based on a questionable reading of Terry Eagleton, Halpin draws "a sharp distinction" between acceptable and unacceptable utopias. Good utopianism "is practical and pragmatic, open and realizable under current conditions" while bad utopianism is "grounded in *mere* wistful thinking" from which "detailed blueprints for change" emerge (p. 39, emphasis added).[2] Reiterated throughout, there is no question the project "is about 'good' utopias and their application in the education context," in which "good" utopias entail "positive, unusual, but ultimately practicable visions for the reform of schools and teaching and learning generally" (p. 59). Bad utopias envision futures that are "impracticable ideal states" whereas good utopias "are capable of transforming it for the better in the future, so as to provide a significant dynamic for action in the here and now" (p. 59). The very invocation, let alone dismissal, of "impracticable states" and therefore of "bad utopias," expresses the maxim "there *are* alternatives to the current order, but only ones the current order can accommodate." "Good utopias," then, are not utopias at all.

Webb's numerous interventions in utopian pedagogy have helped reclaim bad utopianism or, at least, to reassert not only its significance to but its centrality in the utopian project. First, abandoning blueprints means abandoning the real "stuff" of utopianism: *politics*, or the ideological commitments that *direct* utopian curriculum. It should go without saying that no one, to our knowledge, denies that the generation of imaginative capacities for alternative possibilities is central to utopian education. Webb's (2009) primary critique of Halpin and other contemporary reiterations of utopia is that they are necessary but insufficient. "Articulating a vision grounded in contemporary trends and potentialities… can be very fruitful," he acknowledges, yet "the question of what is 'possible', given a 'realistic' grasp of present potentialities, is purely evaluative in nature" (p. 747). The potentialities of the utopian pedagogic imagination are thus limited by the present order of things. We can only imagine what is presently possible and, apparently, cannot *question* the forces operative in our conjuncture that set limits on what is practical or mere wistful thinking. The utopian *process* supplants the utopian *direction*. Good utopianism is an endless process of imagination and bad utopianism is the political vision that

guides such explorations, a utopia that is bad, again, because we can't imagine its practical application right now.

In sum, Webb sees educational utopias today as one-sided, taking up utopia as *process*, or the immersion in the possibility of other possibilities, and neglecting utopia as a system or project. This latter side of utopian pedagogy maps out a specific utopian totality in elaborate ways with a vision of not merely a *different* but a *radically better* world. Such a directed vision is not unlike a prescription or a tactic that serves to inspire and guide social struggles (Webb, 2013). To reclaim the essence of utopia, education must combine imagination with action, and openness with direction, imagination, and struggle. In Paulo Freire's formulation, it must sink head-first into the dialectical tension between denouncing and announcing.

Freire (1970) remarked early on that the very process of humanization is the human's "utopia, which they announce in dehumanizing processes" (p. 456). Many appropriations of Freire's utopian pedagogy only attend to one pole of the dialectic (denouncing) while neglecting the core of it (announcing), which is akin to divorcing Freire's political work from his pedagogical work. As Webb (2017) correctly argues, they "*reject* the suggestion that it might involve announcing a utopian vision (a 'blueprint') of humanity and the world" (p. 553). This is indeed contrary to Freire's vision of utopian pedagogy, for his formulation of utopia as the coupling of denouncing and announcing is accompanied by several qualifications, including the need for an end point. Freire (1970) turns to Marx's distinction between the worst architects and the best bees, noting as good as bees may be at constructing cells, the worst architect at least has a vision and a *plan* to build its housing.[3] One who enters a situation intending to teach without a plan is, by definition, not a teacher.

Utopian education is not an endless dialogue of imaginative potentialities, and the utopian project need not *always* entail or move through dialogical processes; *that* would be wistful thinking. In applying or extracting utopian education from a revolutionary project, Freire (1970) defines the revolutionary as one who adopts "their action to historical conditions, taking advantage of the real and unique possibilities that exist" in order "to seek the *most efficient and viable* means of helping the people" accomplish the revolutionary project (p. 470, emphasis added). For the educator, this would ideally entail dialogue, although revolutions rarely occasion the opportunity for dialogue during the insurrectionary rupture. However, after the revolution and the seizure of power, the revolutionary is acknowledged as such by those who witnessed their leadership and verify if after the fact. Political utopian education, then, is a *fight* to denounce and announce over, in, and for concrete historical conditions, which accounts

for Freire's engagement with and admiration for concrete utopian struggles (e.g., Freire, 2020; Malott, 2022).

Blueprints, architects, and the ongoing revolutionary utopian project

The significance of the architect in utopian pedagogy emerges when we consider the dominant temporal force of our current conjuncture: that of the endless now, a deluge of events detached from any larger totality of space, time, and society.

Webb (2017) traces the contemporary form of utopia in education studies back to an early writing in which Freire argues utopian pedagogy starts with an archaeological excavation of subordinated knowledges, or the capacities existing but repressed in the order of the social. This is certainly not an objection to recovering subordinated knowledges or ways of being in the world, which are necessary pedagogical movements in reinvigorating a radical collective imaginary. It is necessary for contemporary revolutionary pedagogy to produce sensations that the world has been, is, and could be completely (even unimaginably) different than it is. The issue is that such endeavors are presented as *sufficient* in themselves. Webb refers to this utopian education as "educational archaeology" because it burrows into "the ideological and material conditions within which student experiences are embedded…to 'unearth' the desires, longings, memories and histories that are buried beneath" (p. 558). Educational archaeology lacks any political vision that can determine where to dig, why to dig, and what to do with what is found. Without the ability to determine what to *denounce* and *announce*, we are left with dialogue as an open-ended process instead of the Freirean dialectic of leading and following.

Rather than an archaeological practice, then, Webb argues utopian pedagogy is an architectural one. Because archeological inquiry neither (pedagogically) directs students where to burrow nor provides any (political) content to evaluate a discovery as utopian or not, movement erases direction. The architect, even the worst among us, *at least* has a blueprint in mind. Put differently, today's conceptions "of utopian pedagogy reduce it to a method which takes the *process* of questioning, participation and dialogue as an end in itself" (p. 560). With an ideological vision guiding such excavation, however, the reclaimed subjugated knowledges can indeed serve to inspire new visions and actions of the world. To do so, Webb must defend the blueprint, and he does so by rejecting the *notion* that planning is *necessarily* "totalitarian or repressive" (p. 560). The equation utopianism-blueprint-totalitarian is, first, an "irrelevant" carryover from the Cold War. Second, the blueprint isn't a doctrinaire rulebook but "the outcome of a long iterative process of consultation and evaluation" (p.

560). A blueprint is a path forward announcing the *possibility* of a better world and *guiding* possible paths struggle for it. As any teacher knows, blueprints—such as lesson plans—are not reproducible across time, space, and social formations and, more importantly, as the blueprint materializes, unexpected obstacles and possibilities arise.

We agree with Webb's second response but believe the first is insufficient and argue that it remains the primary obstacle holding our collective radical imaginary back in our current conjuncture. This is significant because, as Gregory Bourassa (2020) reminds us, the stories we tell ourselves and each other about the present and the potential matter because they construct our ideological field of thinking and imagining. To produce the radical collective imaginary today, Bourassa (2020) argues, we need stories and histories that "nourish efforts to develop alternatives," stories that don't come from thin air but rather from "a specter [that] is haunting the progressive educational imaginary—the specter of Marx!" (p. 43). To push this further, we need to let the specter of past and *present communism* haunt our educational imaginary and *guide* it as we collectively participate as educators in political projects. It is not socialism or the history and present of socialist projects in the world that are totalitarian and dogmatic or that somehow eradicate difference. Instead, the overarching reason for dismissing utopian blueprints and the very notion of utopia itself *in advance*, the justification for limiting our imaginary within the confines of the capitalist now in academia is anti-communist dogma, or the "grand narrative" that world-historic revolutionary transformations are a thing of the past, thereby keeping explorations in any setting within capital's boundaries.

In the remainder of the paper, we follow Webb's move from archeology to architecture by turning to a material example of architectural projects that can serve as curricular content that does more than reveal the need for direction; it *provides* such direction. One curious thing about Webb's research is that it doesn't offer much in the way of an ideological alternative to the present conjuncture and that, in some ways, his interventions could be read as utopian processes without direction, rather than his correct insistence that (utopian) education requires direction.

The practicality of revolutionary transformation

Our curricular project thus entails sensing the past and present existing alternatives that capital tries to paper over through curriculum and pedagogy. Neither our project nor the socialist revolutionary struggle in the U.S. today is, despite refrains to the contrary, premised on an uncritical celebration of every aspect of concrete socialism or aimed at merely reclaiming it in our current moment, something that would be decidedly

anti-marxist. Nonetheless, reclaiming utopian pedagogy and politics entails confronting anti-communist dogma by *investigating* the equation of utopianism, socialism, "totalitarianism," and failure, particularly when it comes to the first successful socialist revolution. Many are more than happy to admit that the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution were world-changing and progressive but, the narrative goes, it wasn't long before socialism was "betrayed" or "abandoned."

The Soviet Union lasted from 1917 until it was dissolved and overthrown (against the democratic input of almost 90 percent of the population) in 1990–1991. It lasted just seven decades. The first materialization of socialism as a *national* and *global* project persisted only as long as the average life expectancy of Black people in the U.S. as of 2018 (Hill and Artiga, 2023). It wasn't born in an abstract space, but in a global totality of imperialism. The U.S. and 13 other countries immediately mobilized to overthrow the revolution through military intervention and by providing "guns, funds and troops to try and, in Winston Churchill's words, 'strangle the Bolshevik baby in its crib'" (Pelz, 2016, p. 124). Not long after, the Soviets faced the brunt of the Nazi battalions, eventually liberating the death camps and winning World War II, at the cost of 27 million lives and much of their newly built infrastructure (Prashad 2019).

During its remarkably short life span "the Soviet Union did not know one day of peaceful development" (Parenti,1997 p. 85). Nonetheless, it made tremendous strides across the board. For a few examples, Vijay Prashad (2019) champions not only their rapid spread of literacy (from 20 percent to 65 percent for women in 20 years), but also how they "followed the policy of indigenization… promoting regional languages so that people could develop their knowledge and wisdom in their native tongues" (p. 58). On the social front, racism, national oppression, as well as individual acts of bigotry were made "social crimes" and were thus "far more serious," as Harry Haywood (1978) writes, "than assault and battery" (p. 340). On the economic front, standards of living increased radically and, even as late as 1973, "the spread between the highest and lowest paid groups was 2.12 times," and the former, or highest-paid groups were made up of cultural workers, educators, and researchers (Szymanski,1979 pp. 63–64).

To evidence the actually-existing realization of what were formerly utopian dreams, consider one moment in Walter Rodney's (2018) book on the Soviet Union. At one point in *The Russian Revolution: A View from the Third World*, Rodney (2018) demonstrates the socialist projects dismissed as wistful thinking or "bad utopianism" by their class enemies were not only pursued but *accomplished*. In the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, literacy rates, education, housing, wages, and more increased in quantity and quality. When the first Five-Year Plan

(1933–1937) was announced, it was ridiculed as wistful thinking that "would be grand if… fulfilled in 50 years, but it is utopia," Rodney quotes a German economist as saying. "The working people of the Soviet Union," however, "gave the skeptics a lesson" (p. 163). In other words, the masses demonstrated the actuality of utopia, showing the impossible was possible. Prashad (2019) ends *Red Star Over the Third World* by asserting the USSR "provides us with the assurance that a workers' and peasants' state can exist, that it can create policies to benefit the vast masses of the people rather than merely the rich, that it can heal and educate rather than simply starve and kill" (p. 125). Its legacy holds immense unmined content for utopian curricula. We are still in the process of a world-historic transformation; revolutions are our past, present, and future realities that serve as the present grounds for future utopian projects. The future is here, and the present and past are too.

Successful and still-existing utopian socialist architecture

At this point, we examine a utopian architectural project that materialized in built form and remains an architectural socialist structure and relation even in our current conjuncture. These inscriptions in the built environment render revolutionary utopianism not only a possibility but an actuality. At the same time as we defend the architectural aspect of utopian pedagogy, we demonstrate a concrete example of how utopian curriculum as archaeology and architecture can be blocked together as denouncing and announcing are for Freire. Michał Murawksi's work on the "actually-existing success" of socialism is most relevant to our project of constructing an architectural utopian curriculum. Elaborating on Muñoz's insistence that the socialist revolutionary enclave is not relegated to a past and finished failure, Murawski (2019) highlights the irony that "western marxists, brooding over the impossibility of creating noncapitalist spaces, paid relatively little attention to socialist Eastern Europe" or other social formations not dominated by capital (p. 23). Today it is rare that scholars even attend to such formations *at all*.[4]

The empirically false trope of socialism/utopianism as failure is repeated explicitly by omission, by Harpin and his critics alike, perpetuating the anticommunist dogma limiting our *collectivity* and radical *imaginary*. The continuation of this normalized and unquestioned discourse is perplexing considering the endless catastrophic scholarly output on privatization and neoliberalism, particularly in the former socialist states. In such a setting, Murawski (2018) suggests, "we may, in fact, have a lot to learn from the still-existing achievements and enduring legacies of built socialism" (p. 910). By limiting his investigation to the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, Poland, he demonstrates that the success of *socialist architecture*

exists even after decades of neoliberal and imperialist devastation, as do the social relations it produced and made possible.

The first interesting thing to note is that in 1935, as the Nazis destroyed their country, communist architects in Poland openly admitted their designs for a future city were utopian. Yet within 10 years these "purely utopian" foundations "moved quickly from 'theoretical premises' to implementation" (Murawski, 2019, p. 44). This process of envisioning and enacting the blueprint was certainly not "totalitarian." Thus, the second interesting observation is that the movement entailed myriad struggles within and between Soviet and Polish architects, politicians, citizens, planners, suppliers, designers, and myriad others.

The Soviets "gifted" the Palace, which was officially inaugurated in July 1955, as part of an effort to promote socialism and rebuild the lands devastated by the Nazis (without any speculation or private ownership). Despite the dominant narrative that the Soviets shouldered the entire cost of the project, the Polish people contributed concrete labor power (such as that of interior designers and artists), meaning it wasn't a "pure" gift, although it wasn't an economic exchange either. Indeed, no calculations or estimations as to the exchange-values contributed by which group exist. The real gift was the utopian aspiration that came before the project, as the Palace's construction "was preceded by the mass expropriation of property from private landlords" after the liberation of Poland (p. 66). The real gift was the gift of non-capitalism, the gift of public life made possible by eliminating private property and enshrining it in legal codes.

The towering skyscraper is 42 stories tall and, until 2022, was the largest structure in Poland. The goal was to produce a space through which social differences could encounter each other. As late as 2015 it included numerous theaters for performances and screenings, universities, a Congressional Hall with several thousand seems, the War City Assembly room, a Palace of Youth, in addition to dance schools and entertainment facilities. The Palace functioned as a physical space for formal and informal encounters, a shifting center where "the sheer intensity and diversity of intra-urban interactions, associations, and events that *condense*" is one of a kind (p. 192). A single center makes shifting centers possible; a plan enables divergences and unexpected encounters.

The Palace survived the counterrevolution that brought capitalist chaos and poverty to Poland and continues to stand despite ongoing attempts at privatization. It not merely represents, but *is* a vision of utopia etched in mortar. Thus, instead of the descent from utopia into terror, the Palace represents the opposite: its persistence "makes for an unmistakable instance of the supreme effectivity of a state socialist economic aesthetic over a democratic-capitalist one" (p. 136). What is most *fundamental* is that the social relations it created and that persist were rooted in the expropriation

of the expropriators. "The palace," as Murawski puts it, isn't a relic of socialism in a capitalist city but a "still-socialist one" that persists "thanks to the economic aesthetic and public spirit built into it by its designers" and the expropriation of the landlords, survives "as an enclave of a non-capitalist aesthetic, spatial, and social world the heart of a late capitalist city" (p. 24). He even suggests it can still function as a "socialist horizon" (p. 271). We don't take this to mean a return to the past but as a present immanent condition of not only alternatives, not only possibilities of alternatives, but real, existing, and more just alternatives. Utopia is not only a process, not only an aspiration, but an actuality, and together these constitute the raw materials of curricular utopias in our conjuncture. In other words, the actuality of revolution is both an accomplished fact, an ongoing struggle, and a goal to achieve. The curriculum is a movement *from* the domination of capital and exchange value *toward* its elimination and the reign of use and use value.

Conclusion: Pedagogical operation of existing utopian socialist architecture

If a dominant factor inhibiting our contemporary radical imaginary is inhibited by the temporality of the ever-present now, as we wager along with Rockhill, Means, and Slater, then the utopian openings of alternative possibilities is certainly a necessary step in political education. Cartographies of the world that connect the *present* with the past and possible futures mitigate against the prison of the now by dismantling common sense as ahistorical. When directed toward a general political aim, such cartographies seize on the openings provided by hypermodern disorientation. As Webb identifies, the crux of the status of utopia in education today concerns both the exposure and realization that alternative worlds exist *and* some kind of political framework by which we can judge what alternatives we *should* realize.

As a central node in our map of the world and a curricular object, the Warsaw Palace provides a model for utopian education today. First, it demonstrates that alternative social worlds are not only possible but *actual* and that what is utopian today might be common sense in a decade. Second, it combines process and direction, or archaeology and architecture. The reason the Palace continues to survive not only as a representation but as an experience of a better world is precisely because of its *foundation* and *direction*. The excavation was guided by the pursuit of use value over exchange value, its blueprint(s) made utopia mappable, and the product was the result of centralization and decentralization. Curiosity and radicalized hope directed, but did not determine, the direction of the colletive. Some of the Palace's original architectural figures, which admitted their plans were utopian, could not but emerge from a past that determined the present.

Their present remains our utopian longing and imagining: a future of collective ownership that facilitates shifting centers and unexpected encounters.

Through the collective struggle of envisioning and implementing blueprints, in this instance the utopian vision was realized. Today, even after the temporary defeat of the global revolutionary struggle, the Palace exerts the force of its past on the present and introduces a surplus of the future within our present, one that accomplishes the pedagogical experience of defamiliarization and the political experience of a direction or horizon to achieve. The still-socialist building evidences the success of socialist projects and might serve as an example to help reinvigorate the revolutionary utopian pedagogy required for revolutionary projects today. We might consider it a revolutionary curriculum through which utopianism still moves *through* its built form and the *ground* on which it rests: the expropriation of the expropriators.

Notes

1. This is evident in the emergence of the International People's Assembly, the World Anti-Imperialist Platform, and other growing networks of social movements and parties.
2. Perhaps partial is more correct. Halpin cites Eagleton (2000) who, in *The Idea of Culture*, notes a distinction between, on one hand, "the purely subjective mood of 'bad' utopia, which consists simply in a sort of wistful yearning" without any material basis and, on the other, a "good utopia" that links the present to "a desirable future [that] must also be a feasible one" (p. 22). Yet not only is this part of an argument about how the idea of culture functions, but Eagleton proceeds to show Marx rejected the *subjective* mood of bad utopia and, further drawing on Lenin, argues their political form "is the infantile disorder known as ultra-leftism" (p. 22).
3. Note that this definition is a presupposition for labor under capitalism and Marx doesn't make a qualitative judgement between humans and other animals overall by, for example, merely stating humans are better than bees.
4. Think of Andy Merrifield (2002) whose argumentation is generally diligent unless it comes to concrete socialism where, for example, he designates the Bolsheviks as "anti-urban" because they transformed "whole cities into giant factories," as nothing more that "row upon row of steel cranes and girders" producing urbanites as "little more than productive fodder, mere automatons in a massively centralized industrial process" of Fordist or Taylorist production' (p. 179). To be fair, Merrifield does include one citation, but it is to a science fiction novel written by anti-Bolshevik Yevgeny Zamyatin!

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