

1. Society and Communication

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The United Kingdom Is(a)land of Utopia: Self-Representation of City Councils and Communicative Strategies towards Citizens

1. Introduction

The concept of utopia has always been associated with a place, a territory, a confined space in which the utopia is realized. And once its boundaries have been overstepped, it could become universal. Utopia inevitably references a social ideal and offers a model of coexistence, imagining how men should or could organize their lives.

A utopian model of society and the institutions upon which this society should stand becomes visible in the communicative acts through which public administrations speak about themselves. While the great literary utopias of the past seem to have faded into the background, they reemerge in today's institutional communication.

The utopia that I will try to outline in these pages is, in fact, a contemporary utopia, one concerning "public communication," an expression that may sound like an oxymoron, especially for historical reasons, since institutions and governments have generally not been known for excelling in their communication with the public.

But the profound transformation that has taken place in recent decades in western public administrations has greatly influenced the ways in which public bodies can communicate with and thus relate to the citizens they serve. At the center of what has been called "new public management", "entrepreneurial Government", or "neo-managerialism" (Hackney and McBride 1995; Terry 1998) is the adoption of good management and, above all, effective marketing strategies focused on the needs of the community. This increasingly business-like orientation, both in terms of practices and of discursive strategies, addresses citizens who are no longer considered to be simple users, but rather stakeholders and customers to keep satisfied.

2. Background and Aims

The utopia of the contemporary city becomes a common city project, an opportunity and a means of social change to be built upon the basis of joint decisions.

In this dynamic of change, new technologies have played a key role and have radically changed the modes of interaction between public agencies and companies, as well as the ways in which institutions can relate to citizens, as they not only help to implement the self-representation of institutions for propaganda purposes, but encourage participation, the creation of networks and, ultimately, greater democratization and better governance (Wilhelm 2000; Coleman 2001; West 2004; Karakaya 2005).

The institution or, in this analysis, the municipality, becomes visible and is forced to submit, consciously and strategically, its realistic (or utopian) vision of the city, a socio-political transposition of the utopian ideal, of imaginary and literary places. The result is a continuous (electronic) democracy based on the discussion, the recruitment and the aggregation of collective energies through the web.

The Internet has potentially disintermediated most of the informational actions between institutions and citizens. Informing is not enough: the actions of institutions should be supported by marketing and communication strategies to guide the customer / user towards their own structure by sharing their own point of view with them, and at the same time impacting the guidelines and perception of what institutions are and what they are doing. Online presence “help[s] build an image, foster an identity, drive social and economic development, and fortify the cohesion of a local community” (Jeffres and Lin 2006: 957). The unique nature of online discourse transforms Habermas’ notion of the public sphere (Habermas: 2006) into a revived version, a sphere where public opinion and consensus are formed through communicative action, thus paving the road for a democratic utopia, “a discursive arena that is home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement and action” (Villa 1992: 712).

3. Data and Methodology

In order to investigate how strategic objectives deployed by institutions are discursively represented, I have selected the websites of four cities or district councils in the United Kingdom (UK) for the purposes of comparison (Chichester, Exeter, Leicester, Norwich)¹. Texts describing the institutions’ present commitment (e.g. mission statement) and future plans (e.g. vision statement) were taken from the respective websites and stored on a computer to provide text file formats for the current analysis, yielding an entire dataset of approximately 150,000 words.

1 <<http://chichestercity.gov.uk/>>, <<http://exeter.gov.uk/>>, <<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/>>, <<http://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/>>. All websites were accessed from 13/11/2014 to 16/10/2015.

Sections labelled as “mission statements”, as well as other similar sections under different headings such as “vision”, “aims”, “priorities”, “business responsibilities”, “values”, and so forth have been taken into consideration. These texts were examined to identify possible common traits which may provide evidence of an ideal collective identity to be constructed with the help of different subjects (public authorities and citizens).

The number of words per individual dataset is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Number of words per dataset

City or District Council	Number of Words
Chichester	32,880
Exeter	33,417
Leicester	25,821
Norwich	53,062

The methodological approach I use draws on principles and analytical tools from the tradition of discourse analysis. Particular attention is given to linguistic features such as evaluative language (Hunston and Thompson 2001) and specific lexical choices revealing a contamination between two different domains (private and public), thus outlining a dual vision of utopia, based on the principles of justice and equality, but promoted as making use of market-oriented strategies.

4. The Place of Utopia: Discursive Strategies And Linguistic Features

The British websites examined in this study display a range of different textual genres. In the context of the kind of strategic communication that was a prerogative of businesses and private organizations in the past, these genres refer to the mission of institutions (Bait 2008, 2009). Terms like vision, values, aims, priorities or business responsibilities are very common, as we can see in the following examples:

Extending horizons for the whole community. Our vision is quite simply: to improve the lives of those in our community, and to maintain and enhance the environment. Our values are what govern us as an organisation and we as people serving the community and by values we mean being responsive, open, fair, supportive, caring. (Chichester District Council)

Our city, Our Future. We want to maintain and build upon Exeter's position as a regional capital and work with all sectors of the local community to provide a healthy, prosperous and safe place for people to live, work and visit. (Exeter City Council)

Making Leicester more attractive for our diverse communities to live, work and invest in. Our values are: building trust, valuing staff, cultivating leadership and delivering quality. (Leicester City Council)

Putting the city and its people first. Everything we ever do as an organisation, whether in teams or as individuals, will be done with our core values in mind: Pride, Accountability, Collaboration, Excellence. (Norwich City Council)

These extracts clarify the intentions of the institutions to depict themselves as actors for change and as efficient service-providers, capable of responding to the needs of citizens and ensuring their satisfaction:

[...] a leading authority, a trusted partner and an organisation that is both outward looking and good to work with [...] (Norwich City Council)

The reference to partnership and cooperation highlights that the representation of 'ideal' institutions also entails the representation of 'ideal' citizens. To actually be realized, the action taken by the institution must be accompanied and supported by citizens, who, in turn, become not only users of services but also actors, co-builders and propagators of change.

4.1 Actors And Actions

At the linguistic level, textual analysis allows us to acknowledge that the partnership between institutions and citizens is confirmed and emphasized by the use of strategic pronominal references (Benveniste 1966; De Fina 1995; Wilson 1990). On the one hand, the exclusive *we* – and the attribute adjective 'our' – present the institution as committed to the development of positive actions and the implementation of projects:

At Chichester District Council, we try to make sure that you always receive a first class service. We hope you will never need to complain. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

We remained focused on our two main challenges... (Leicester City Council, emphasis added)

Exeter City Council intends to meet these challenges in the next 15 years. It will not be easy, the future will demand that we make things happen in the right way and we may have to adjust our plans in response to changing times and world events.

We will strive to do things well and look for ways to innovate and improve... (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

On the other hand, the use of the inclusive *we* helps to construct a shared social identity in which both producers (institutions) and users (citizens) play a role, as seen in the following example:

The Core Strategy represents the Council's vision and objectives to take us up to 2026 and [...] by working together we can achieve them. (Exeter City Council, emphasis added)

Moreover, the pronoun *you* introduces a significant interpersonal component in the text (Halliday 1994: 69–158), a sign of a wider process of “informalization” (Wouters 1986; Featherstone 1991) and “conversationalization” (Fairclough 1995) of public discourse. In particular, directly addressing the reader with ‘you’ simply does not build a relationship of “equality, solidarity [...] intimacy” (Fairclough 2001: 52), but also identifies readers as the ultimate addressees of the institution's initiatives, as is apparent in the following example:

We hope you will never need to complain. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

More importantly, the fact that the pronoun *you* is the main deictic marker of dialogue strengthens the impression that the text producer is engaging the reader in a real dialogic conversation by means of questioning:

Would you like us to produce an Annual Report, available on our website, which would give a summary on our performance and our financial position? What would you like to see featured in future editions of an Annual Report? (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

Defining issues of public concern in the public interest helps to create a real participatory culture for which the community becomes an actor of change in civic affairs:

[...] other services are not statutory, but the community, through its elected representatives, deem them to be highly desirable and want them carried out. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

The Core Strategy represents the Council's vision and objectives to take us up to 2026 and I hope that, by working together we can achieve them. (Exeter City Council, emphasis added)

The city council has a civic leadership role and our elected councillors have a mandate and responsibility to represent and work on behalf of their communities for the broader interests of the city. (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

Citizens are not seen as isolated entities, but as members of an interdependent community where transparency in public administration and urban democracy becomes possible.

We are keen for as many people as possible to get involved in the process and will be in contact with key groups including Parish and Town Councils.

We use a variety of methods to consult and involve the local community, such as surveys, focus groups, exhibitions or consultation leaflets. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

In addition to the aforementioned lexical item ‘together’, the emphasis on the concept of community and partnership is further strengthened by the frequent use of the terms *everyone*, *each of us*, and *all*, which express the idea of sharing resources, information, experiences:

The aim of sustainable development is to create a society where everyone has a good quality of life while maintaining and enhancing environmental resources.

Chichester District Wellbeing Programme has something for everyone. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

We must ensure everyone benefits from the new prosperity this Corporate Plan provides each of us with a direction of travel. And if we all pull in the same direction, we really can make Leicester more attractive for us all. (Leicester District Council, emphasis added)

Interestingly enough, a significant change has occurred over time in the level of the textual communication level by the city of Exeter. The local authority seems to fade away as a subject, leaving space for an operational presentation of the city that is *prosperous, learning, accessible, safe, and a city of culture*. In this sense, the changes made to the latest version of the text are particularly significant if compared to the previous ones. “A city where people are healthy and active” becomes “a city that is healthy and active”; “a city where the environment is cared for” becomes “a city that cares for the environment”; “a city where everyone has a home” becomes “a city with homes for everyone” (emphasis added). Therefore, the (ideal) city is mostly represented as an active entity, as performing an active role, or better, personified. In fact, the city has become the meeting point of institutions and citizens’ interests and needs.

4.2 Verbs

In line with the communication strategies outlined above, the use of the active voice is far more common than the passive. This stylistic choice avoids any impersonal or indirect connotation when it comes to describing the initiatives undertaken:

The council supports local businesses in a number of ways.

The service successfully runs throughout the District.

The Council plays a key role within the community, from offering community grants to helping to tackle anti-social behaviour. (Chichester District Council)

On the one hand, the institution announces a policy and, on the other, it ‘invites’ the community to agree with it by calling upon that community, the very people. Active verbal forms help construct a set of responsibilities for local authorities, but also for citizens, who are called upon to take individual and collective action. This textual strategy depicts responsibilities for success and failure as shared, and this contributes to building consensus by assuming that there is no difference between the interests and values of the population and those of the institution:

This is to assure us that the panel is as representative of the district as possible and that we get a wide range of people from the community. If you haven’t received an invite to be on the panel you can still take part in other local consultation.

The community is thus seen as the true actor capable of influencing policies on the matter.

Such “empowerment” of community groups is expressed throughout the texts, making use of verbal forms such as “will give”, “will enable”, and “enabled”:

[we have] enabled more service users and carers to be involved in planning services. (Leicester City Council)

The use of the simple present tense has a dual function. It implies a categorical commitment of the producer to the truth of the proposition (Fairclough 1992), and this in turn supports a transparent perspective of the world, where facts are reported as categorical truths:

Exeter has much to be proud of in terms of its rich heritage as well as well-established arts, civic events and community-based activities.

Exeter is a great place to live and its people are proud of their city and are enthusiastic and energetic in their contributions to community life.

Exeter is a prosperous city and people want to keep it that way. [...]

This provides the basis for building an inclusive city where everyone has a role to play and is encouraged to take part. (Exeter City Council)

It’s a challenge, but we have a roadmap to follow: this Corporate Plan provides each of us with a direction of travel.

We want to try to make life better for every man, woman and child in a more welcoming city. (Leicester City Council)

Values focus on the present and future realization of outstanding performance, individual achievement, and community improvement. The modal verb *will* is

used to highlight the strong desire to implement new future solutions to problems. This tense also serves a promotional purpose, as it is aimed at increasing the institution's credibility and creating consensus, as the following excerpts show:

To achieve our strategic objectives we will...

[...] we will improve our services over the next five years to achieve our ambitious objectives. (Chichester District Council)

Better communication will help ensure that our services meet our citizens' needs. (Leicester City Council)

In many areas our priorities will be achieved through working in partnership with others [...] to deliver the very best we can for Norwich. (Norwich City Council)

Another modal verb that seems to occur frequently is *can*. As it is most frequently used, *can* seems to indicate ability (which we infer to suggest possibility) as a result of the roles the participants assume, projecting a cooperative, collaborative stance, as the following excerpts suggest:

Here you can discuss common issues and discover new solutions relevant to your particular business area. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

But we can't make real and sustained progress on our own. Only by working with our partners and service users can we address the issues.

And if we all pull in the same direction, we really can make Leicester more attractive for us all. (Leicester City Council, emphasis added)

In many areas our priorities will be achieved through working in partnership with others [...] to deliver the very best we can for Norwich. (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

The promotional message conveyed by nominal and pronoun references, and by verbal structures and tenses is also reinforced by the use of predicates, which are typically associated with the council in the role of an actor. The most salient feature is represented by the choice of verbs belonging to the general semantic area of "improvement", such as *develop*, *innovate*, *regenerate*, *enhance*, *promote*, *build*, *cultivate*, *achieve*, and so on:

The strength of the City Centre lies in its ability to support a wide range of retail uses [...] that help to enhance the character and vibrancy of the centre. (Exeter City Council)

On the one hand, reference to the need to improve suggests that something was not adequate in the past.

Many milestones and targets set three years ago have been achieved. (Leicester City Council)

On the other hand, public institutions aim to highlight the continuity of positive performance and achievements reached from the beginning of their mandate. On a linguistic level, this is realized through the use of presupposition, by iterative verbs (Levinson 1983) such as *continue*, *maintain* and *remain*, as seen in the following examples:

We remain committed to our overall aim...

Our commitment to partnership working is stronger than ever, as we strive to maintain the path of continuous improvement we embarked upon

(Leicester City Council, emphasis added)

The City Council will continue to work with identified partners in provision to ensure that delivery of those key items continues (Exeter City Council, emphasis added)

We will continue to argue for a 'fair deal' for Norwich. (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

Presupposition clarifies the validity of the implied statement, i.e., a standing level of good performance that is presented as shared opinion. Verbs expressing belief and commitment, such as *consider*, *believe*, *want*, *aim*, as well as *create*, *ensure*, *improve*, *maximize*, *minimize* are used to convey authoritativeness and a willingness to take on responsibilities, but also accountability for results:

The team coordinates all our corporate consultation and offers advice and guidance to services to maximise the benefits of consultation. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

Where there is a shared enforcement role or interest, either with other parts of the City Council, or with other agencies, we will work together to ensure consistency and a coordinated approach to make best use of available resources.

[...] we expect to meet the challenges [...] in a way that minimises the impact on the environment and maximises the quality of life. (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

We want to remain a 4 star council, continue to improve services and provide value for money to citizens. (Leicester City Council, emphasis added)

Actions that need to be taken in order to achieve results usually come in the form of a set of 'priority areas' or 'corporate strategy pillars', making use of a typical communicative strategy in business. This is the case in Chichester and Leicester, where their vision statements are broken down into priority themes:

- **Balancing the Local Housing Market**
We consider decent housing to be a basic and fundamental requirement in today's society, and we recognise the relationships which exist between housing, personal health, education, employment and family stability[.] (Chichester District Council)
- **Improve quality and equality in teaching and learning**
Support children and parents, especially protecting the most vulnerable children. (Leicester City Council)

Imperative forms, which express advice, suggestions and recommendations, are used in the texts to encourage citizens to contribute to the improvement of their cities, thus reinforcing the dialogic component, as is visible in the following examples:

Please see the study in the related content section for more information.

Just click on the link to view the most recent edition.

Have your say!

To read the most recent Annual Letter for Chichester District Council [...] please view the related document. (Chichester District Council, emphasis added)

4.3 Nouns and Adjectives

The key verbs mentioned above (e.g. *provide, ensure, increase, encourage, develop*) are almost always associated with adjectives such as *best, efficient, effective, good, value-for-money*. This language serves a strategic, promotional function and stresses the agent's active role.

The following example epitomizes the increased importance that is attached to achievement and top performance, which are placed at the same level as the traditional concern for addressing citizens' needs by delivering quality services:

The fastest growing economy in the east of England, it is home to the headquarters of 50 major companies, is one of the top shopping destinations in the country, and is the regional cultural capital.

Growth will be used to bring benefits to local people, especially those in deprived communities, to regenerate communities, local economies, [...] by creating safe, healthy, prosperous, sustainable and inclusive communities. (Norwich City Council, emphasis added)

The frequent use of implicitly or explicitly positive terms such as *development, renewal* and *regeneration*, often related to health, education, training, and work, as well as adjectives like *welcoming, healthy, active, prosperous, attractive, vibrant* to describe the city represent an obvious reference to ideal living conditions for citizens:

Attractive, safe and accessible parks and green spaces contribute to positive social, economic and environmental benefits improving public health, well-being and quality of life. (Chichester District Council)

Moreover, comparatives (e.g. better, higher, brighter) used in regard to the future of the city underline the institution's commitment to provide services that can help improve quality of life.

One final but important observation to be made relates to the use of the website as a medium of communication. Despite the fact that public communication, being institutional, must have a primarily informational purpose, and therefore refers to the rational sphere of its recipients, great emphasis is also put on the visual presentation of the place.

Figure 1: Images displayed on Leicester City Council website.



In the case of the figure above, the active role played by the institution (in this case, with reference to jobs opportunities and childcare facilities) is highlighted by being represented by its citizens. Images perform a strong emotional and evocative function and are not only meant to make the city more tangible, but also help underpin the logical arguments conveyed by the written text by enhancing, through the association of ideas, the interpretation process of the message.

5. Conclusions

This analysis exemplifies and clarifies the intention – expressed in such acts – of institutional communication to build a society which, if not as perfect as utopian models, should at least be a better one. It should be a society able to recognize the needs of present and future generations: sustainable development, economic prosperity, cultural vitality, social cohesion.

The following excerpt from Norwich City Council website seems to best summarize the concept:

- Everyone will have access to suitable housing that reflects their needs.
- People will enjoy healthy, safe and fulfilling lifestyles, have equitable access to high standards of health and social care and make informed choices about their own health.
- There will be excellent opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development and people will have high expectations for their own educational achievement to meet their needs, to contribute to the life of their communities, and to the economy.
- The area will be renowned for its culture, creativity and spirituality, with high quality cultural and leisure opportunities that improve people's well-being.

The reformed public sector struggles to combine “partnership” with competition, giving shape to an alternative perspective of publicness in which the system from the “public” becomes of “public utility”, and the state is no longer a “subject” but a “function”.

By using technological tools as facilitators in inclusion processes, this contemporary utopia is therefore an e-utopia, the project of an ideal and idealized, but also desirable and possible, democracy. It thus becomes an e-democracy where the utopia wants and manages, or may be able to be attained.

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Federico Boni

The Utopia of Communication

The Myth of Communication as a Positive Value

1. Introduction: Communication, Utopia and Myth

This chapter aims to investigate a particular kind of utopian communication: the idea of communication as a positive value. In order to understand how communication can be framed within the context of utopia, it is important to remember that the history of communication itself (interpersonal, mediated and mass-mediated communication) is full of cultural, social and political utopias and, in particular, technological utopias. Communication studies have been characterized by the traditional binaries of communication versus miscommunication, and utopia versus dystopia, which are embedded within communication theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (from the social constructivists to the pragmatists; from information theory to the psychological models).

Further, it is important to understand exactly what is meant when we talk about communication, utopia and myth.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of definitions of communication. The first sees communication as a process by which A sends a message to B; accordingly, this message has an effect on B. The second type of definition sees communication as a negotiation and exchange of meaning; messages, people and society interact to produce meaning. While the aim of the first type of definition is to identify the stages through which communication passes so that each one may be properly identified and studied, the second type focuses on the relationship between constituent elements required for meaning to be produced within a cultural and social context.

From a sociological point of view, communication is a very particular kind of social interaction. The most comprehensive typology of the main forms of interaction was proposed by John Thompson (1995). According to his model, the main three types of interaction are face-to-face, mediated and mediated quasi-interaction. In face-to-face interaction, the actors involved in the interaction are present, which affords the possibility of using a variety of symbolic cues. Under mediated interaction, we have communicative processes such as letter writing or telephone conversations, and of course all the types of computer-mediated communication. The defining characteristic of mediated interaction is the use of

a technical medium, which narrows the availability of symbolic cues and makes individuals more dependent on their own interpretations and contexts. Finally, the mediated quasi-interaction is the communicative process established by the traditional mass media, based on a monological interaction.

For our analysis of the utopia of communication, a useful point of reference is Karl Mannheim's (1976) classic sociology of knowledge. His emphasis on the 'concreteness' of utopias means that utopian thinking is considered as an active social force affecting the transformation of societies. Mannheim frames his concept of utopia within the theoretical framework of the sociology of knowledge because he argues (indeed, in a very sociological fashion) that the history of ideas should be seen as the history of their uses. Thus, the argument is that utopias do not impact history as abstract ideas but rather have an effect through the concrete use of those ideas by individuals, social movements, institutions, etc.

Far from an everyday and commonplace understanding of utopian thinking (where utopia is seen as wishful thinking), Mannheim turns utopia into a situational and socially conditional concept. As we will see, utopian (and dystopian) thinking about communication are conditional at least at a discursive level, given that we define 'discourse' as 'language in use', that is, language used in some context, for some purpose. If discourse is what we create when we use language in social contexts, it is possible to see how a linguist's definition of discourse as 'language in use' might relate to a social theorist's definition of discourse as 'a social construction of reality', a 'form of knowledge'. In the end, this whole process is actually a communicative act, a kind of performative 'speech act,' and in this way, communication becomes the method through which we can construct utopian (or dystopian) discourses about communication itself in a self-reflexive process of social construction of reality.

By analyzing discourses, we are able to argue that certain ways of representing communication processes have become 'naturalized', so that people no longer recognize them as incorporating a political or ideological stance. The discursive pattern is a clue to what is taken as simple common sense on a particular issue (in our case, communication), and the repetition of the pattern means that it will continue to be common sense.

This leads us to the concept of 'myth'. Our use of this concept is far from the anthropological meaning, where 'myth' refers to a narrative that offers explanations of why the world is as it appears to be, and why people act as they do. Our use of the concept is closer to the semiotic understanding of the term, where 'myth' refers to an unarticulated chain of associated concepts and discourses by which members of a society understand certain topics. Its prime function is to

make the cultural natural, which is a distinctive feature of ideological discourses. The ideological productivity of naturalization is that circumstances and meanings that are socially, historically, economically and culturally determined (and hence open to change, as they are the result of signifying struggles) are experienced as natural, that is, inevitable, timeless, necessary, unarguable (Barthes 1973).

The concepts of discourse and myth are useful tools because they help us be attentive to the distinct uses of language and communication. As discourses and myths, utopias are contextual and situational and are therefore expressed and used in a number of different articulations. In the struggle between utopians and representatives of the existing order, those articulations are contested, and differing, even contradictory interpretations are produced.

2. The Utopia of Redemption

In his book *L'Utopie de la communication*, Philippe Breton (1992) traces the origin and development of the notion of the utopia of communication to the growth of cybernetics during and after World War II. Breton argues that the idea of communication is not modern, as it has existed for centuries. What is new and truly modern, however, is the manner in which it has expanded to encompass the entire intellectual landscape by the end of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first.

Born of various attempts to formulate theories of command and control in weapons systems in the effort to win World War II, cybernetics provoked an incredible theoretical explosion that led to speculation in fields soon removed from the context of war. Breton argues that the computer was a counterpoint of the atomic bomb, a kind of moral redemption of the bomb: the theorists of information theory and cybernetics were the same people who worked on the creation of the deadly weapon. The information age, which was in force during the second half of the twentieth century, was marked by a struggle for redemption and purification between Good (the new utopia of the democratization of communication brought by the 'information age') and Evil (the world of war where this utopia was born).

Nevertheless, the relationship between war and communication persists, especially in the age of electronic mass communication. The structural relationship between war and media presents forms and patterns that vary depending on the kinds of conflict and actors involved. A common theoretical assumption is that the wars that took place in the media era represent the failure of McLuhan's prediction. Foreseen more than 40 years ago, McLuhan argued that since the war in Vietnam, we have entered the age of the "TV war", where the audience, from their homes, "participate" in each stage of the conflict (McLuhan and Fiore 1968). On

the contrary, we can argue that war, in the age of media representation, is *negated* through the use of linguistic and discursive rhetoric; furthermore, the very representation of the conflict is heavily censored, with restriction – and sometimes the impossibility – of its visibility.

Another theory is about the structural relationship between war and media, where this relation must be understood as a flow of information on – and a representation of – the conflict, but also as an organic connection between the media system and the political and military powers. Thus, the media can be understood as a means of communication between politicians and citizens, but also between politicians and diplomats, and between military strategy and public opinion (the so-called ‘media diplomacy’, see Cumings 1993).

From the point of view of the media discourse strategies, another theory is the ‘mediatization of war’, a concept which has to be defined and analytically explored. The concept of the ‘mediatization of war’ refers not only to the relationships among war, the media and political and military systems that we have seen before, but also uses media languages and codes to define and frame war (Malek and Kavoori 1999). In this sense, it is necessary to include in the definition of media the modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which account for the contemporary communication technologies more accurately and realistically. As a matter of fact, information technologies play an important role in the very emergence of the forms contemporary conflicts take. The cycle of war is fulfilled within an IT logic, from remote sensing (surveying territory from the satellite) to ‘photo finishing’ (photos taken after a raid). This ‘visual’ nature can be seen within media discourse strategies, which tend to minimize the prices of war in terms of human lives, through an ‘aseptic’ representation of conflict. It is aseptic, and thus surgical, just like the very definition of wartime activity in Western countries, by using representational strategies that are precise and abstract.

Abstraction itself, along with stylization, is an element of the mediatization we are defining: according to an established media logic, the rhetoric of conflict focuses on some image-symbols, which sterilize and stylize the war. This is certainly a targeted discursive strategy, but this is also part of an established routine practice, typical of media language. An important aspect of the mediatization of war is that it is connected to concepts of ‘personalization’ and ‘narrativization’. Personalization concerns not only the enemy, but also the victims. This can be seen in the paradigmatic individual stories that give a name and a face to the masses of refugees shown on TV. Again, the dramatic narrative formula that amplifies individual stories belongs to the media logic used in ‘reality television’.

Finally, the concept of the mediatization of war acknowledges the role played by the new media, mostly by the Internet, in the new wars. The theoretical importance of the entrance of new media into the relationship between media and war is obvious with regard to the possibilities of communication and information (either interactive or not), but mostly with reference to the agenda-setting process (McCombs et al. 1997). Hypertextual information sources maintain few to none of the typical forms of presentation used in traditional media, leaving the user with the task of selecting and hierarchically ordering news and information.

3. The Utopia of Communication as Democracy

In Breton's analysis, the social theory that emerged from communication theory can be seen as an ideology that clearly reiterates some of the principal elements characterizing the utopian thought of nineteenth-century socialist thinkers. From the notion of small communities to that of the absence of social hierarchies, communication theory in its form as social philosophy and social theory puts a modern face on old utopias.

Further, as mentioned in the previous section, the very thinkers who championed cybernetics and communication as a means to win the most dreadful war in human history – people like Norbert Wiener – then turned around and presented communication as a means to end all wars. It is paradoxical that the very means of contemporary communication are so closely connected to warfare, as we saw in the previous sections. The transparency of human relations that communication supposedly fostered would bring a permanent end to the possibility that the dark secrets of genocide could be reproduced in the shadows, hidden from the sight of society at large and shielded from public opinion.

The utopia of transparency of communication is one of the most enduring discourses and myths in our contemporary age. Electronic and digital media (television and the Internet) are seen as 'windows', an image that relates the idea of mass and personal communication to the idea of openness and transparency. Endemol's *Big Brother* is one of the most interesting metaphors depicting television's openness towards the world, where we can find the utopian element of television as an open (reversed) window and the dystopian element as 'prison as entertainment', which involves the deliberate sequestration of participants in contained spaces. In fact, *Big Brother* essentially mirrors the contemporary social experiment in which neo-liberal economic doctrine is extended indiscriminately into the fabric of intimate life. When the self is experienced as a media commodity, the modern project of 'openness' loses its way, and the dream of transparency is turned into a nightmare.

After all, the idea of communication as democratization can be linked to classic political liberalism, its conception of individual freedom and the idea of public sphere. In this sense, the mythical utopia of communication as the process of democratization represents the reinterpretation of liberalism in the context of the information society, media society, and, later, network society. The democratic utopia of communication constructs a vision of a society in which new media and all new forms of communication technology would open up a way towards the 'polis', the democratic community of equal individuals. These new information and communication technologies would facilitate the direct participation of people in political and social debate, as well as in decision-making, without the control of the bureaucratic state. This utopia is characterized by a nostalgic return to the concept of 'community', without realizing that the very concept of 'community' is at the same time an inclusive and exclusive one, including few and excluding many from the communicative process.

Technological changes in the possibilities of community in information societies have been accompanied by radical philosophical rethinking of the meaning of community and association (see Nancy 1991; Agamben 1993). The concept of a 'virtual community', like the very concept of utopia, is seen as inherently flawed if it is based on existing modes of interaction. Cameron Bailey argues that the vision of the Internet as an ideal democratic community in the mold of the Greek agora "contains its own ideological dead weight [...]. Like the democracy of the ancient Greeks, today's digital democracy is reserved for an elite with the means to enjoy it" (Bailey 1996: 31). We should ask whether or not the Internet possesses enough stability for the ongoing recognition of members of Internet 'communities' and the stability of their own sense of self. Further, it is quite difficult to refer to this new media scenery as the formation of 'communities' because it is based on a very vague acceptance of the word 'community', given that 'social networks' such as *MySpace* have over 100 million members.

The perverse effect of this typically utopian view is the systematic denial of conflict, which is demonized, reduced to the only dimension of violence.

Another discursive and mythical utopia of communication as a positive value is that of the 'networked society', which is linked to the idea of the 'web' and the 'net'.

The 'cult of the network' is historicized by Armand Mattelart in his *The Invention of Communication* (1996), in which the French scholar argues that the different utopias regarding communication 'invent' the very different concepts of 'communication', thus creating the discourses and the myths that frame both the theoretical and common-sense thinking about communicative processes.

In Mattelart's opinion, every technology involved in "the multiple circuits of exchange and circulation of goods, peoples, and messages" was a technology of communication (1996: 34). For example, the Saint-Simonian conception of a communication technology, the 'cult of the network' as Mattelart calls it, was broad enough to include a network of railroads and an advertising network, along with networks of journals, banks, and industrial fairs. In a very fascinating way, Mattelart argues that the contemporary rhetoric about a communication revolution was the ideology (and the utopia) of the whole of historical capitalism. Further, he makes a clear case about the depth and breadth of the pattern of ideologizing communication as an agent of social revolution.

Mattelart organizes his argumentation around four histories: (1) communication technology as producing social flow (rational fluidity / enlightened state administration; market fluidity / liberal political economy; evolutionary fluidity / Darwinian social theory); (2) place (world's fairs, Fourier's Phalanstery); (3) space (national and imperial, linguistic and cultural, religious and military); and (4) norm (of a psychological and physiological social individual, of a market consumer). Mattelart employs a definition of communication technology that includes the whole circuit of exchange, adding the exchange of materials and people to the exchange of signs and data. By employing this historical perspective, he makes the argument that this utopic ideology has been a force in recent centuries, not just in recent decades.

Nevertheless, it is true that the recent democratization of access to Internet tools promotes a significant intensification and acceleration of the trend of circulating exchanges, transactions and practices of creating or adapting-appropriating existing cultural content to redistribute this content once it has been transformed. Mass communication assumes a new meaning in this context, as new forms of communication are emerging: alongside interactions between individuals (telephone and email) and a growing amount of group communication (chat, forums and discussion lists), new patterns are emerging. Thanks to new social media, individuals can achieve instant visibility and can speak to the masses on a global scale. These phenomena become particularly visible during terrorist attacks or natural catastrophes: bloggers are the first to broadcast the first information and photos (taken with their mobile telephones) from the scene of the event. Moreover, we are witnessing the intrusion of amateurs into the world of professional journalism. Web 2.0 ushered in an era of communication of the masses, but also *communication by the masses, for the masses*. In light of this trend, the view of the majority assumes new importance regarding the authority of experts. Some media elites may be shaken by this explosive informational trend.

All this has made it possible to reach a new level in the paradoxical realization of the utopia of universal access to knowledge formulated by some of the Internet's founding fathers. This utopia is paradoxical because this explosion of knowledge in the spread, distribution and creation of information (e.g. texts, photos, music and videos) may, at the same time, induce a feeling of incompleteness on the part of heavy users, with its invitation to the frantic and infinite search for information that is constantly being updated, and to which information can always be added, creating an infinite, ongoing search without end.

4. The Utopia of Effective Communication

There is another way in which the communication made possible by new media is paradoxical: with Web 2.0, many scholars observe the return to the 'old' patterns of interpersonal communication in the form of 'word of mouth'.

Word of mouth is a 'pass-along' process of interpersonal communication, a 'social diffusion' that has particularly powerful effects, especially in its ability to influence people as messages are 'passed' and transmitted from person to person. Based on the traditional model of the 'two-step flow of communication', under which media messages are mediated through interpersonal relationships, word of mouth includes face-to-face discussions as well as so-called 'word of mouse' online interactions taking place on social media. Word of mouth can be considered a new utopia of 'effective communication' with which it is possible to achieve new kinds of communication possibilities by using a very old communication tool.

Broadly speaking, word of mouth is considered one of the most common and influential channels of communication. In general terms, it can be considered the main feature of interpersonal communication. The first channel of word of mouth is face-to-face interaction, but we can have word-of-mouth communicative processes with different technologies of communication (e.g. by telephone or computer). As such, word of mouth includes literal interpersonal communication, or face-to-face conversations and discussions, as well as mediated communication and the so-called 'word of mouse', that is, online interpersonal communication.

Word of mouth is a communicative process that focuses mainly on face-to-face and mediated interaction, but its importance stems from its ability to connect interpersonal communication to mass communication (Thompson 1995 – see Introduction).

In fact, since the beginnings of communication research, the most relevant studies and theories of mass communication have shown that studying the media inevitably entails studying the processes of word-of-mouth interpersonal communication. The works of Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz have clearly indicated

the importance of interpersonal interaction, even if we want to investigate the social effects of the media. In an early study which focused on the analysis of the motivations and the ways in which political opinions are formed (in this case, the panel comprised six hundred voters of Erie County, Ohio, during the 1940 presidential campaign [Lazarsfeld *et al.* 1948]), the findings were quite interesting: the effectiveness of mass communication is deeply – and causally – linked to processes of interpersonal communication. Lazarsfeld speaks of a “two-step flow of communication” to illustrate the role of the mediation of “opinion leaders” (people with a good level of information, in direct contact with the media) between the media and other individuals of the public. The effects of the media are thus only a part of a broader process, namely personal influence. This assumption was taken up by the same author in a subsequent search, conducted by Katz, which focused on consumption (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). The findings confirm the hypothesis of the ‘two-step flow of communication’, showing that interpersonal communication has a greater degree of flexibility in the face of the resistances of the receiver compared to mass media. If, in a communication process, the credibility and the reliability of the source affect the influence of the message, then it is likely that the impersonal source of the media is at a disadvantage compared to the reliable sources of interpersonal relationships.

The role of interpersonal communication is also irreplaceable as a source of information, albeit not a primary one. In a study of how the news of the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy reached the public, Bradley K. Greenberg (1964) showed that many people had been informed of the event not directly by the media (e.g. radio, TV, newspapers), but by friends and acquaintances (who, of course, had heard the news from the media). In more general terms, it would seem that face-to-face interaction is particularly important in acquiring both the most groundbreaking news, along with news more related to the local context or to specific personal interests.

Further research on word of mouth has shown that the main effects of this kind of communication impact individuals in two key ways: awareness (informing people that a behavior exists, or that a fact has occurred, as in the cases shown above) and persuasion (word of mouth can change opinions about whether something is right or worth doing, or a particular party or political leader is right or worth voting for). Word of mouth can also influence the social identity of individuals associated with a particular party or behavior, which may, in turn, affect the likelihood of interest or vote.

One of the main features of word of mouth is the source. People tend to listen to more credible and reliable sources, or those that come from sources considered

to be trustworthy or to have expertise in a certain area, such as political issues. Thus, what should be stressed here is the importance of the strength of the ties (friendships or acquaintances, that is, strong or weak ties). On the one hand, strong ties may have a greater impact and stronger effects because people tend to trust them more, since they know more about their interests, tastes, lifestyles and behaviors. On the other hand, people generally tend to have a greater number of weak ties, or acquaintances, so the overall influence of these individuals may be stronger. While word of mouth from similar people may have a greater impact (because, for instance, their tastes and political views are similar), word of mouth from individuals who are less similar may offer access to different information and alternative views and perspectives.

Traditional research on word of mouth in political communication has focused on small groups (especially primary groups) and small communities in local contexts. A study conducted by Lenart (1997) investigated the spread of name recognition of candidates seeking the 1992 U.S. Democratic presidential nomination in the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary election. The study demonstrates the comparative influence of media exposure and interpersonal discussion. As the author argues, interpersonal communication depends on the logics of media coverage, in both complementing and strengthening media effects when they are strong, and substituting for media effects when they are nonexistent.

In discussing the role of the mass media and interpersonal discussion in local political participation, McLeod, Scheufele and Moy (1999) focused their study on community integration in mass and word-of-mouth communication, showing that viewing television news had no direct impact on political participation, but it did have a certain effect on more institutional and conventional forms of participation. A few years after, a study conducted by Scheufele (2002) focused on the idea that interpersonal discussion among citizens is the 'soul of democracy' (an idea that, as Scheufele argues, has been treated almost as a truism in mass media and interpersonal communication research), showing that while it is generally true that interpersonal discussion of politics is a key precursor of political participation, the relationship between hard news media consumption, interpersonal discussion of politics and political participation is a complex process. While consuming hard news media has a great influence on political participation, this effect is more evident for people who talk to others about politics than for those who do not. Scheufele et al. (2004) focused on different settings for primary discussion networks (the workplace, church and volunteer groups) and their effects on political participation, showing that the social setting where citizens discuss politics is an important predictor of political participation. For example, discussion

networks in volunteer groups had a great impact on recruitment, thus demonstrating that discussing politics frequently in this setting is directly (and positively) linked to political activity. Conversely, the impact of conversational networks in church and workplace settings on participation was only indirect. Another study focusing on word-of-mouth communication, media exposure and political participation (Sotirovic and McLeod 2001) examined how communication patterns mediate the influences of values on political participation. According to the authors, individuals' efforts to think about news and search for additional information and perspectives has a modifying effect on what people get from the media. The more people integrate information from various sources, the better they understand the political world, which ultimately has a positive effect on political communication.

In this vein, scholars argue that powerful political campaigns are not only those that inform and persuade, but also those that motivate further interest and talk, thus confirming Carl and Duck's (2004) previous conclusion that "a person is more likely to be influenced by messages that stimulate discussion between the individual and his or her groups of significant others or associates" (26). Voters use oral communication as a tool while making a decision and getting opinions from their social circles.

With the advent of social media, word-of-mouth communication has gained more attention. The 'online' version of word of mouth, known as 'word of mouse', includes all new channels of the digital media, such as chat rooms, blogs, news-groups, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and social media websites in general. Research on word of mouse differs from traditional research on word of mouth because electronic word of mouth can be easily accessed, linked, and searched. Compared to traditional word of mouth, online word of mouth has the potential to be far more influential and make a greater impact due to its speed, convenience, wide reach, and the absence of face-to-face pressure and intimacy. Furthermore, by using search engines such as *Google*, it is possible to seek out the opinions of strangers, an opportunity which is quite rare in traditional word of mouth processes. Finally, electronic word of mouth provides opinion leaders with a more efficient means of disseminating information, and facilitates the searching of information for opinion seekers.

The emergence of the Internet and of online social networks has led to a self-organizing propagation process that recalls the dynamics of an epidemic, a 'cascade of influence'. On the one hand, this new form of the 'information cascade' allows citizens to voice their opinions, and it mobilizes communities and voters around their candidates. On the other hand, new participative media have changed the way elections take place by allowing politicians to reach new audiences with new 'viral' forms of political marketing. In addition to this, electronic word of mouth

is likely to change collective and political behavior by transforming traditional 'old' social networks, which are normally limited in size and scope, into networks potentially composed of millions of individuals.

5. Conclusions

In the preceding sections, we have seen that the 'dialogical' model of communication – that is, the model of interpersonal communication – is considered the most effective form of communication, adding positive value to communicative processes. To move towards a conclusion, it is worth arguing that this isn't always true. According to some scholars, the myth of 'good communication' is attainable through the old model of mass-mediated communication, the 'one-way' model. In the sensible link of thought, 'good communication' (communication as a positive value) is based on the dialogical model: there must be no secrets or locked doors between communicators. Each should be fully, genuinely and sincerely open to the other.

In his book *Speaking into the Air* (1999), John Durham Peters identifies two great models of communication: dialogue and dissemination. Each is a principle and a practice, and their exemplary practitioners were Socrates and Jesus. Socrates' model is a 'love model' of communication, a love connection between two people, both of which are alive and present to each other. The ideal (utopian) human relationship is the fusion of both. Socrates, Peters tells us, argued that insemination is more virtuous than dissemination. Insemination is to implant the seed in another where it will bear fruit. Dissemination is like the sin of Onan who spilled his seed upon the ground. It is wasteful to scatter seed, for there is no guarantee that the seed will bear fruit. Cast in these terms, Christ's method of communication appears scandalously inefficient.

Jesus's discourse and methods stand in sharp contrast to those of Socrates. Both are exemplified in the parable of *The Sower*; a story with a message told to a large crowd on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Instead of the Socratic one-to-one dialogue, a form of two-way communication, we have one-way communication between a single speaker and an anonymous mass of listeners. The story of the sower makes explicit the significance of communication as mass dissemination or broadcasting. The sower in the parable scatters his seed indiscriminately. Some, as Jesus tells it, fell on stony ground and were picked up by the birds of the air. Some fell among thorns and were destroyed. Some fell on shallow soil and grew quickly but soon withered and died. And some fell on fertile ground and yielded a good harvest; thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. It is, of course, a parable about parables – Jesus's own account of his way of spreading the Word.

Peters, then, offers two paradigms of communication; one a dialogue of intimacy and reciprocity, the other of indiscriminate mass dissemination. It is a contrast between the personal and impersonal, individual and social, present and absent, embodied and disembodied relationships. Today, we generally take the intimate paradigm as the norm and see the impersonal paradigm as deviating from the mark. But it is rather clear that Peters prefers non-reciprocal, one-way communication. And he shows – quite convincingly – that the idea of ‘communication’ (the *invention* of communication, as Mattelart would put it) emerged from a late Victorian cultural milieu combining spiritual mysticism, scientific experimentation, and popular fascination with communicating with souls and angels, and exchanging messages with the dead. Modern modes of communication – photographs, phonographs, telephones, radios – resulted in “a new kind of quasi-physical connection across the obstacles of time and space” (5). In a culture fascinated with paranormal phenomena, these technologies produced new sites for the ghostly presence of disembodied others, and inspired reflection on the mysterious channels of communication. Peters reveals the irony surrounding new technologies of communication that reactivated primal doubts about the division of the mind and body and chasms in communication.

The spectral utopia of communicating with the dead is a common feature of all the technologies of communications of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To be sure, communication and media technologies became ‘haunted’ as soon as they were introduced: as Jeffrey Sconce (2000) argues, a fascination with communication developed in both the occult and scientific fields as soon as the new communication technologies appeared. The telegraph merged ‘electromagnetic’ and ‘spiritual’ communication, thus connecting technology with spiritualism and the occult. Alexander Graham Bell’s assistant was also a medium, and Bell himself attended séances; Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi both conceived of the theoretical foundations for their devices as ways to contact the dead. And if radio broadcasts appeared as a mysterious ‘voice from the void’, a way to contact ghosts via wireless, the ‘television ghosts’ created by the eerie images appearing on a TV set during signal interference seemed to bring the spectral world into the home, rendering television the quintessential ‘haunted medium’. The technological ‘medium’ shares the uncanny qualities of the human ‘mediums’, connecting the world of the living with the world of the dead, and the prefix ‘tele-’, used in so many electronic media devices including the television itself, is also attached to ‘telepathy’ and other paranormal phenomena such as ‘telekinesis’ and ‘teleplasm’ (Warner 2006).

Interestingly enough, the television as the uncanny medium is strictly connected with the dystopian and dysphorian Gothic trope of the haunted house.

After all, television is a mysterious device which is simultaneously inhabited by ghostly images of ourselves and it inhabits our homes (Lewdon 1993). If television is “a profoundly domestic phenomenon” (Ellis 1982: 113), then it can create a sense of the uncanny by introducing the unfamiliar to the familiar, thus bringing the uncanny (*unheimlich*) into the familiar (*heimlich*) of the home (Lewdon 1993). Just as the *heimlich* contains the *unheimlich*, so too does the domestic environment of the home contain the paranormal potential of television. Television is “the ghost in the home” (Lewdon 1993: 70), a communication device which serves as an access point for horror to enter the home (Wheatley 2006), whose very presence in the living room becomes a metaphor for the anxieties and paranoid of the domestic space and family life. Thus, if we consider the Gothic trope of the ‘haunted house’ and the Gothic concerns for the electronic media of communication, we have two different houses, the first being that of one of the most domestic genres (Gothic) and the second being that inhabited by the ghostly and paranormal presence of the television set (Wheatley 2006).

At the same time, we have two different kinds of uncanny presences within the familiar space of the home: the presence *of* television, and the presence *in* television, which add a paranormal and ghostly layer of meaning to television’s quality of ‘liveness’.

The fear of the ‘live’ quality of television is connected to the ‘live presence’ of the medium in the home of the viewer; this uncanny presence turns ‘liveness’ into a ghostly and spectral ‘deathness’ which links the television set and content to the *unheimlich*, the ‘unfamiliar’. Television’s ‘liveness’ assures that what we are watching is happening right now, thus enhancing the utopian illusion that what is being shown is ‘real’. It is important to stress here that ‘liveness’ is seen by many media scholars as an ideology, a utopia, an argument that, as we have seen, can be extended to the claim that television shows us ‘reality’ (Feuer 1983). That of ‘liveness’ is not only a ritual category, as it “guarantees a potential connection to our shared social realities as they are happening” (Couldry 2003: 96–97), but it is probably the longest-standing myth of television’s ontological presence and essence. Vianello (1985) argues that ‘live television’ is a strategy of business practice and domination, a “power politics” which, in spite of the old fears of “Deathness”, is “still alive” (Bourdon 2000) – perhaps as a specter haunting our television sets and our everyday lives.

This dystopian scenario of a very ghostly kind of communication represents the concerns and the anxieties of almost 150 years of electronic communication and nearly 100 years of scholarship on the effects of media. Popular representations of ‘media *presence*’ offer a fascinating counterpart to the established scholarship on media and communication studies, often letting the ghost of repressed issues

haunt the spaces and the times of the media and of our lives. As we have seen, this dystopian and dysphorian scenario stems from the utopia of communicating with the dead in another dimension. This is the 'dark side' of the paradoxical quality of all communication utopias, which began at least with the myth of the Tower of Babel, simultaneously the symbol of a utopia of communication and of the disastrous consequences that followed when attempting to build that very utopia.

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Paola Bozzi

Sex and the City: Berlin and the Utopia of a New Discursive and Visual Urban Frontier in the Branding of the Creative Place

1. Introduction

Arthur Herman coined the term 'declinism' to refer to a kind of deep pessimism that sees the West as horribly flawed, in a state of severe decay, and usually teetering on the edge of catastrophe. Herman finds this radical doubt pervasive both today and in the recent past: "We live in an era in which pessimism has become the norm, rather than the exception." (1997: 2). Herman grounds this theory by citing a considerable range of thinkers who believe that things are getting worse – and getting worse rapidly. For many, the demise of state communism in Central and Eastern Europe tarnished the case for utopia, as attempts to create the perfect society on earth by eliminating poverty, suffering and social injustice, along with establishing the necessary conditions for human flourishing were undertaken in large parts of the world in the twentieth century, and they failed spectacularly.

As the argument goes, the utopian desire to build a better world (and it is often a compelling one) is hubristic and breeds violence, and we are better off without it. In the immediate aftermath of communism's collapse, liberal Western-style democracy on the economic foundation of free-market capitalism was frequently touted as the only viable global solution to the problems that communism has attempted to eradicate as well as the framework for future developments. What Herman did not consider, however, is the persistence of an opposing tradition of devout optimism. The specters of financial meltdown, international terrorism and the global ecological crisis have since combined to render even this anti-utopian utopia untenable.

Nevertheless, the rush to declare utopia dead is premature. Profound instability, rapid change, the bankruptcy of established systems and ideologies — these are, in fact, precisely the conditions under which the concept of utopia has flourished in the past. The grand old idea and myth of progress still has its adherents, and their views are extremely well represented in the marketplace of signs: utopia remains a tenacious and diverse concept in the human imagination. Reports of the death of utopia have been greatly exaggerated (Saage 1990; Fest 1991; Jacoby 1999; Gray 2007). If anything, the death of utopia is a conceptual pawn in the broader game

of redefining the political and intellectual traditions of the left and right in the post-communist world, as the case of Berlin demonstrates.

2. Berlin's Post-Unification

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Berlin in 1989, a decade of intense and rapid urban development took place across the city. Berlin can be considered an atypical and extreme case: it is atypical because of its unique and peculiar history as a divided city in a divided country, and extreme because of the intensity of the urban restructuring processes which unfolded over a short period of time following reunification. The acceleration of history represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the sudden absorption of East Germany into the capitalist democracy of the Federal Republic of Germany brutally confronted the city with the economic, social, and political challenges faced by many other Western cities over the past several decades. At the same time, Berlin is a fascinating laboratory of urban change that illustrates several (partially interrelated) transitional processes: the transition to a unified city after a history of conflict and division; the transition to a capital city in a nation redefining its national identity; the transition from a socialist to a capitalist city; and the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial or post-Fordist metropolis.

It is precisely because of the peculiar situation of the city that a flurry of practices of place marketing and urban imaging suddenly appeared, with a kind of visibility and intensity rarely witnessed in other (European) cities. In the mid-1990s, visitors to the city's central areas were greeted with an endless landscape of cranes and construction sites. Equally striking was the highly visible presence of images and texts surrounding the construction sites. Public-private partnerships were set up specifically to market the 'new Berlin' to different target groups, including potential investors, tourists and Berliners themselves. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the production of the new buildings in Berlin's reunified urban environment was also accompanied by the construction of a particular image and meaning. This was part of the political responses to the enormous challenges unleashed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent reunification of the city, ranging from responses to the loss of the political status of exception, the retrieved status as capital city, intense economic restructuring and deep social and demographic transformation. Place marketing refers to "the various ways in which public and private agencies — local authorities and local entrepreneurs, often working collaboratively — strive to 'sell' the image of a particular geographically-defined place, usually a town or a city, so as to make it attractive to economic enterprises, to tourists and even to inhabitants of that place" (Philo and Kearns 1993: 3).

More recently, the term ‘place branding’ has become increasingly popular, referring to a process of “forging of associations” between a place and some desirable qualities that resonate with particular target audiences (Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). This “forging of associations” can be achieved through physical interventions in the city’s landscape through forms of communication that reference particular aspects of local identity, history, and culture. This is, in essence, “a highly selective process that imposes single-stranded images onto urban diversity and reduces place identity to a constricted and easily packaged ‘urban product’” (Broudehoux 2004: 26). The two terms of ‘place marketing’ and ‘place branding’ are often used interchangeably in both professional and academic literature. In any case, the production and diffusion of images is an absolutely central component because “the process of constructing visually based narratives about the potential of places [...] a process of brokering the best metaphor, in ways that will shift or consolidate public sensibilities and invent the possibility for new kinds of place attachments” (Bass Warner and Vale 2001: xv). The image of the city can thus be defined, in a simple way, as having two components: “the physical image of the city — the actual city itself, as it is produced, lived and experienced by people on an everyday basis and represented in a series of visual symbols, physical places, and social characteristics — as well as the rhetorical image of the city — the ‘idea’ or conceptual image of the city as it is imagined and represented in collective consciousness.” (Broudehoux 2004: 26)

In this sense, 2001 marked a turning point in Berlin’s post-unification history. In the wake of the exposure of a large-scale financial scandal involving Berlin’s public authorities, the Grand Coalition, which had ruled the city for a decade, was replaced with the new ‘Red-Red’ coalition between the Social Democrats (SPD, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) and the Left party (PDS, from 2007 renamed *Die Linke*). During its decades as a walled-in island surrounded by GDR territory, West Berlin was heavily subsidized by the Federal Republic and almost as socialist as the eastern part of the city, which was pampered by the socialist state, but the money dried up after unification. The legacy of this was a huge bureaucracy and an ingrained welfare mentality.

Post-reunification Berlin experienced a dramatic economic downturn. East Berlin’s inefficient industry — a legacy of its former communist times — crumbled, and West Berlin saw an exodus of companies that no longer received the same tax breaks granted while the Wall had isolated the city. Important firms that moved out after 1945, such as Siemens and Deutsche Bank, saw no reason to return. The state of the city’s finances was disastrous and the subsequent restructuring of the local state had a long-term impact on the public services and the welfare of Berliners. More recently, Berlin – not just as a city, but also an autonomous region within the

German federal system – remains heavily supported by the southern regions, which are constitutionally obligated to subsidize the poorer federal states in the north. The consequences of this financial situation are visible as soon as one moves beyond the smart government district around the Brandenburg Gate, or the posh neighborhoods located near the *Kurfürstendamm*. Signs of poverty are everywhere. One third of children in Berlin are poor. Yet in spite of the lack of financial resources, and the constraints on public spending that the new government inherited, the Red-Red coalition continued, and in some cases even intensified, the place marketing activities that had been developed by its predecessors.

3. Sex in the City: Utopian Desire

After the failure of the marketing visions of Berlin as an Olympic city and global service metropolis (Wolf 2000), city leaders struggled to find an alternative vision, but did not give up their search for a master narrative. The new mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, began to take a very proactive role in the external promotion of the city and worked to make Berlin's imagery support its economic promotion. Just before Klaus Wowereit became mayor in 2001, he coined one of his best-known catchphrases "I am gay and that's just fine" ("Ich bin schwul, und das ist gut so") delivering this announcement to the party convention (SPD) that nominated him for the capital city's top job. With his coming out, Wowereit wanted to beat the tabloids to it and prevent them from publishing wild, sensational and fabricated stories about his private life. This move ultimately strengthened his campaign. His election as mayor made Berlin one of three major European cities with an openly gay mayor, along with Paris, whose mayor at the time was Bertrand Delanoë, and Hamburg, whose mayor was Ole von Beust, who also took office in 2001. However, von Beust resigned in 2010 and Delanoë left office in 2014, making Wowereit the only gay mayor of a major European and German city. As the largest city in Germany and a German federal state in its own right, being the mayor of Berlin also made Wowereit a state premier. His openness on the subject helped foster an atmosphere of tolerance in the German mainstream. It also helped Wowereit to become the face of the tolerant, easygoing, and cool Berlin of the twenty-first century. "Wowi", as he was widely known, was a fashionable, charming mayor with a flamboyant nature and a penchant for rubbing shoulders with artists and celebrities. During his political mandate, he earned a reputation as a hard-working, hard-partying mayor and saw partying and networking as an official part of his job, showing a very human face of socialism.

His big task was to help Berlin avoid the 1990s fate of Washington, DC, which became a bankrupt city with a rich political ghetto. In spite of the nominally

left-wing political leaning of his new government, and despite a rhetorical commitment by the governing coalition to maintain social-democratic principles, including preserving high levels of social security, solidarity and welfare, cuts in public expenditure and administrative reforms were prioritized to create a 'service-oriented,' 'competitive' and 'business-friendly' city. These cuts were actually a continuation of the previous government's policies and the Red-Red coalition did not significantly shift away from urban entrepreneurial strategies.

With unemployment soaring to around 20 percent, Berlin had to reinvent itself. It was Klaus Wowereit who pushed "the visual and discursive urban frontier" (Smith 1996) in the official representation of the city for marketing and branding purposes in order to accrue distinct "collective symbolic capital" (Harvey 2001). In his discussion of the role of culture in urban entrepreneurialism, Harvey stresses the constantly changing, never-ending nature of the search to maintain a monopolistic edge over urban competitors via the appropriation of local culture(s). In order to support Berlin's transformation into the envisioned European metropolis, local policy-makers had to break away from the negative images associated with the city's turbulent historical past, and reinvent and spread a new image of the city to three main target groups: (1) investors, visitors, and potential tourists; (2) Germans throughout the Federal Republic; and (3) Berliners themselves. For this reason, the mayor turned to a concept of utopia to keep Berlin unique and particular enough "to maintain a monopolistic edge in an otherwise commodified and often fiercely competitive economy" (Harvey 2001: 396–397). In a country undergoing a process of transition between two political systems, and in a city haunted by the specters of its troubled past searching for economic competitiveness on the global stage, Wowereit dramatized emotional attachments to the daily details of a purposeful way of life for the future imagined city and replaced Berlin's financial squalor with the beauty and joy of sex, sketching the utopian scenario of a city that "is poor but sexy" ["Berlin ist arm, aber sexy"]. Under this slogan, lack or deficiency is not necessarily negative or deserving of pity. This is much in contrast to the general message from socialists, who work not only to critique the structural causes of poverty but to build a society that one day will abolish exploitation and poverty. Accordingly, nobody would expect a message from the unofficial crown prince of the Social Democrats that poverty is appealing, attractive, and even sexy.

4. Dreamscape: Selling Propaganda

In *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch argues that utopian desire — which, as the philosopher demonstrates, is ubiquitous and enduring throughout human history and culture — requires the guiding light provided by socialism, which

he calls “the practice of concrete utopia” and “the last chapter of the history of the world” (Bloch 1995: I, 17; 174). He believes in the infallibility of the Marxist analysis of history and society, and its inexorable trajectory towards revolution. His Marxist framework leads him to distrust the emphasis on the processual and open-ended dimension of utopian striving, one which his own work suggests. On the one hand, Bloch seems to acknowledge the fallibility of ideals and the need to mediate between the imagined goal of social change and the flesh-and-blood social reality that approximates this goal. He warns against the “reification of the goal dream” (I, 186), and against the denigration of reality because of its failure to measure up to ideals or dreams: “The dream as such does not realize itself, that is a minus, but flesh and bones are added to it, that is a compensating plus” (I, 187). On the other hand, Bloch also cautions against the opposite problem: the denigration or disregarding of an ideal or dream because of its distance from reality. Bloch may have insisted that Marxist revolutionary theory was the non-negotiable core of his utopian thinking. Yet his omnivorous account of the ubiquity of the utopian moment itself, with its emphasis on the subjective factor of hope, seems to resist being subsumed into a unitary perspective. So much of *The Principle of Hope* works against Bloch’s own insistence that could be a definitive path to, and an irrefutable definition of, the utopian “Heimat” or homeland “in which no one has been”.

Key Blochian terms such as anticipation, expectancy, the not-yet-conscious, front, and horizon all demonstrate the importance of the processual and temporal dimension of the utopian: it is a future-oriented striving that seeks to attain the unknown by unfolding the possibilities latent within the known. Even where Bloch admits the possibility of a definitive arrival at a utopian goal, a tension remains between the goal as visualized and the goal as achieved. The aporia of fulfilment is about the dialectical relationship between the real and the imagined, about the risks involved in positing a goal: the goal petrifies, becomes static, and loses its connection to the reality towards which it strives. When this happens, the dialectical mediation between them breaks down. In a post-totalitarian age, utopian desire becomes a beginning that is denied an ending, a movement that is cheated of and yet continues to suggest its destination (Bauman 1991: 244; Frank 1979). The intransitivity that defines a movement without a goal captures a key feature of the utopian in its postmodern incarnation. The ‘intransitive’ refuses a definitive formulation of aims or objects, emphasizing instead the need to continuously revise these in an endless process of approximation. The intransitivity of postmodern utopianism stems from its insistence that while a definitive account of the destination is admitted to be impossible, the necessity of continuing the

journey cannot be denied. The object of utopian striving may recede from view or resist formulation, but this does not negate the striving itself.

A central problem identified by critics of utopianism becomes apparent in the contrast between modern transitivity (i.e. the static, potentially totalitarian vision of the end) and post-modern intransitivity: the problem of the relationship of means to ends. From Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002) to Ivan Illich (1973), several thinkers have identified the emancipation of means from ends as a key problem of the modern condition. The enlightenment that is to liberate man from myth itself takes on the oppressive qualities of myth; the tools man creates to replace slaves begin to enslave him. In these examples, the means become oppressive when they outgrow or become dissociated from the ends that they were originally developed to attain. The aporetic relationship of means to an end is formulated quite differently by antiutopian thinkers such as John Gray (2007). In the view of antiutopian thinkers, it is the end that is a source of tyranny when it is used to justify any means. From this perspective, the danger of utopia lies in the requirement that the present be sacrificed to the future.

In this sense, Wowereit's pragmatist approach treated Berlin as an imagined place where specific ways of life reconcile current problems while suspending commitments to many current constraints. His second famous, oft-cited catchphrase was "the negation of a negation", "the absence of radical evil" (Kateb 1973: 242, 240): the vision of a new land of Cockaigne where money does not matter, but joy is secured, a city that is cool and cheap, drunk and druggie, slightly anarchic and not pompous, penniless for the time being but open, young, and full of ideas with a radiant future — very unique and different, at least, from the rich but saturated and rather boring cities like Munich or Hamburg. It was the semiotician A. J. Greimas who made abundantly clear how the presence of any value in language must invariably produce its negation (Greimas and Courtés 1979: 308–311; Greimas 1983). In this sense, poverty becomes, in Wowereit's words, an important resource, a sign of distinction and of the arrival of a new "libidinal economy", to misappropriate a phrase used by Jean-François Lyotard (1993).

Selling utopia is one of the cultural roles of contemporary propaganda. Although this is hardly the obvious purpose of civic advocacy, it is indeed one of its inadvertent effects. The nature of the game requires that civic advertisements convey a yearning for a better world. This is an effective way to reach out to the public. Rarely can the sponsors promise the kind of tangible rewards that come with purchasing a brand and its image. They seek to educate people, encourage them to open their wallets, and often to alter their behavior, each a far more difficult task than simply shaping their choices as consumers. Accordingly, sponsors

strive to connect their messages to the broader utopian impulse or propensity in the public, to imply, and sometimes to show, how they will remedy a wrong, avoid some evil, confirm a value, and so on. Borrowing here from the language of Saint-Simon via Ricoeur, they try “to impassionate society” in order to “move and motivate it” (Ricoeur 1986: 296). Embedded within civic advocacy is that “inner dialectic of utopia, its rational and emotional sides” (Ricoeur 1986: 287). Appeals draw upon an eclectic variety of desires for abundance, community, power, freedom, and peace.

5. Berlin as a Creative Place

Given the poor state of the city’s public finances, Wowereit’s utopian scenario operated on three levels: (1) as fantasy and escape; (2) as an alternative, a challenge, a reaction to the existent; and (3) as innovation, exploring the possible, a source of extreme novelty. Utopia is simultaneously an ideal, desire, and critique. That ideal is concrete; or, rather, it is expressed in ways that give it specificity, at best making the ideal appear both unique and bold, an aesthetic triumph. It bears a signature: “Utopias are assumed by their authors”, claimed Paul Ricoeur, “whereas ideologies are denied by theirs” (Ricoeur 1986: 2). It was the French philosopher who argued the significance of contemporary life, utopia as fancy, as an alternate to the present power, as the exploration of the possible. Berlin’s carnival of sex referred to an erotic urban paradise ruled by the priority of appetite, a place fascinated with sin and excess, committed to play and indulgence. It presented an alternative realm of existence where people might escape the trials and tribulations of their everyday lives. The new urban regime of stimulation would soon prove to be a much more pleasing mode of governance than the earlier brand of repression, largely due to the fact that it allowed room for play and pleasure, even a modicum of rebellion. Perhaps more striking, Wowereit’s Eros project served, like so much of pop culture, to reinvigorate a world rendered prosaic and dull by the rise of logic and industry.

Urban image construction is “an objective and productive social force, with real material effects, playing an integral role in shaping modern forms of production, consumption, and collective ‘dreamscape’” (Greenberg 2008: 20). “A utopia is not only a dream but a dream that wants to be realized. It directs itself toward reality; it shatters reality” (Ricoeur 1986: 289). Adopted by Berlin’s Red-Red coalition as master narrative of the ‘creative city’ discourse of urban policies and place marketing, utopia invited the audience to journey to a unique ideal place, leaving behind the current troubling details of the present. Berlin as an imagined space for settlement and investment casts the difficult situation in the present as form and type of accomplishment that can replace familiar problems with new ways of life,

and distinguish itself on the global economic stage. In this sense, a special emphasis is put on providing active support (and marketing) to the creative industries or the creative economy (of which cultural production is an important part). The theme of creativity has been adopted as a focus of local economic development policy and as a marketing slogan by many urban policy-makers across the world on the basis of the analysis and police recommendations made by Charles Landry (2000) and Richard Florida (2002).

Initially developed with regard to the cities in the United States, Florida's main argument is that economic growth and innovation are now driven by the "creative class", which he divides into the "supercreative core" of professionals "whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or creative content" (ibid., 8) in the fields of the natural sciences, engineering, computer programming, education and research, the arts, design and media; and the "creative professionals", workers in the knowledge-based industries such as business, finance, law, healthcare. In the new "creative economy", he argues, cities, not nations, compete for highly mobile 'talent', meaning that workers can choose the places where they would like to live. The characteristics of a city sought after by the members of the "creative class" are, among others, a vibrant cultural life, and a tolerant and unique atmosphere. The policy implications of this thesis are that urban policies should assist in creating the conditions for attracting the creative classes by supporting the formation of a "creative milieu" "that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and interventions" (Landry 2000: 133). While Florida's thesis, assumptions, definitions and arguments have been widely criticized by academic studies (Montgomery 2005; Peck 2005; Markusen 2006; Krätke 2010), his ideas have had a spectacular impact on urban policymakers. Berlin's mayor was no exception, and he began to work to promote Berlin as appealing and "creative" on the basis of the strong growth of the cultural industries in the city.

According to the first comprehensive study of these industries carried out by the Senate Department for Economics in 2005 (which encompassed the sectors of publishing, print media, film and TV production, fashion, design, software and games development, telecommunications, music, advertising, architecture and exhibition arts), this sector has been the fastest growing sector in the city's economy since the late 1990s, at rates higher than in other German *Länder* (SenWi 2005). An updated report on Berlin's cultural economy published in 2008 estimated that by 2006, the sector accounted for 10 percent of the workforce and 21 percent of the city's GDP (SenWi 2008). Looking more broadly at the growth of knowledge-intensive industries in Berlin, researchers have shown that Berlin has developed

a comparatively strong position at the European and even global level in several subsectors such as media, software and the life sciences (Krätke 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b). Krätke argues that Berlin has become an “alpha world media city”, “a center for cultural production and the media industry with a world-wide significance and impact” (Krätke 2003: 618; Krätke and Taylor 2004) on par with Los Angeles, New York, Paris, London, Munich and Amsterdam.

Given this, there is a noteworthy discrepancy between Berlin’s rather low position in the global system of strategic economic centers and its leading position in media production of cities around the world. Indeed, Berlin has become a hotbed of cultural innovation not despite of, but perhaps because of its weak economic performance in the conventional sense (Bader and Scharenberg 2010). The growth in cultural industries in Berlin was largely unplanned, facilitated by the availability of affordable working and living spaces, by a tolerant and liberal culture inherited from the 1970s and 1980s, and supplied with preexisting concentrations of cultural producers, artists and networks of alternative culture (e.g. the techno music scene).

As the Berlin Senate became increasingly aware of the role and potential of the cultural industries in the local economy, it began to develop various programs and policy initiatives to support new business startups, and the city produced some globally recognized tech startup successes, including the music sharing service SoundCloud and games company Wooga. It also promoted interfirm networking, and encouraged ‘creative clustering’ in underutilized urban spaces (Ebert and Kunzmann 2007). The targeted sectors included Information and Communication Technologies, film, TV and radio, print and digital media, music, fashion, design, art and architecture. Creative industries have been valued as an economic sector in their own right, as a location factor for (other) knowledge-oriented companies, young creative entrepreneurs and their workers, and as an attraction for (young) urban tourists.

6. Berlin as the New Neverland

Apart from hard location factors (such as the availability of affordable spaces), the city’s lively club and music scene, gay culture, hedonistic nightlife, multiculturalism and tolerance were increasingly integrated into the mainstream marketing discourse as unique selling points for Berlin. Mayor Wowereit (2006) quoted Florida’s trio of urban virtues, (“technology, talent, and tolerance”) in his inaugural speech to the House of Representatives at the beginning of his second term. In the case of Berlin, this process of symbolic appropriation has been fueled by the media, as illustrated by *Time Magazine*’s November 16, 2009 headline “Hip Berlin,

Europe's Capital of Cool". The combination of a changing policy focus and of changing cultural and consumption practices explains why new sites and spaces have become integrated into the formal representation of the city to the outside world, accompanied by a narrative of 'creativity', 'diversity', 'tolerance' and 'hipness'. Berlin's poverty, marginality, and purported misery, which were previously seen as weaknesses, were reimagined in different and interesting ways and promoted as strengths to specific target audiences. If the elitist character of the subculture (e.g. through secretive happenings with restricted access) "fits the self-stylization of the new urban middle-classes" (Bader and Scharenberg 2010: 84–85), then the possession of "subcultural capital" signals status in the form of "hipness" (Thornton 1997), which is based on a constant renegotiation and extension of the boundaries of legitimate culture to include new, previously illegitimate artistic and cultural forms. Gradually, symbols of youth and alternative cultures such as the Love Parade, Christopher Street Day or the Carnival of Cultures were integrated into tourism and place marketing. These urban festivals initially emerged from relatively marginalized groups (techno fans, gays and lesbians, and migrant organizations), but were later officially marketed as part of the desire to present Berlin as a young, tolerant and cosmopolitan city (Kalandides and Lange 2007: 128). The urban voids and wastelands — vacant or abandoned lots that suffered from war damage, Cold War era division, poor planning decisions, demolitions by successive political regimes or deindustrialization — were previously left out of the promotional imagery as signs of desolation and traces of unwanted past. As part of the new Berlin imaginary, these spaces were domesticated by virtue of their utopian innovative temporary potential, and as new playgrounds for artistic production, consumption, creativity, entertainment and leisure for creative pioneers providing a unique selling point for Berlin. The city alongside the river Spree and the canals were turned into a long beach complete with sand, deck chairs, exotic decorations and music or an outdoor swimming pool (*Badeschiff*), and the abandoned lots were occupied by new bars and clubs, which became particularly popular images of a new German Neverland. Berlin's rather ordinary, socially mixed neighborhoods (such as Kreuzberg), with their comparatively high concentrations of unemployment and poverty, high proportion of foreign-born or minority background residents (e.g. Turkish, Arabic, Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European) and their authentic as well as alternative and counter-cultural lives, have increasingly been portrayed in marketing campaigns and publications as tourist attractions or potential settings for young creative entrepreneurs. The promotion of 'cosmopolitanism' through particular spectacles of identity, such as the Carnival of Cultures or the Turkish Parade, employs markers of ethnicity,

culture, gender, youthfulness, hip and coolness to celebrate cultural particularisms within an imaginary of diversity.

The prioritization of urban tourism and the growing demand from tourists for encounters with remnants from the Nationalist-Socialist and Cold War eras of Berlin has led city marketers to integrate into the promotional imagery historical sites and traces (authentic or purposefully recreated) that were largely left out or even concealed in the marketing discourse of the 1990s. A new 'memory district' has emerged in the center of Berlin, which includes the Jewish Museum (opened 2001), the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe (inaugurated in May 2005), and the topography of terror, a site where the unearthed remains of the Gestapo headquarters have been on public display since 1987, and since 2010, a new documentation center provides information on the National-Socialist past. Although the 'memory district' was not planned or marketed as such, it gradually evolved as a coherent tourist concept, as stressed by Till (2005: 200). It is a perfectly magical stage of remembrance. The remains of the Wall also slowly transformed from "sites of dispute" to "sites of memory" (Dolff-Bonekämper 2002). In this way, the dark periods of Berlin's past were reframed within the utopian scenario of a sexy, creative city as a very open interaction with its own history that creates hyper visible space within the city for new ways of thinking.

7. Conclusions

In this analysis of political and cultural forces behind the slogan heralding a "poor but sexy" Berlin, a surprisingly grim side to paradise is revealed. There is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of this process of pushing the discursive and visual urban frontier in Wowereit's branding strategy: "using a city's subculture may enhance the city's symbolic value, but simultaneously undermines the everyday conditions necessary to sustain the creative process itself" (Bader and Scharenberg 2010: 80); reducing interim and small-scale users to a marketing tool for real estate in the city is detrimental to a proper long-term creative city policy. This, in turn, generates resistance on the part of cultural producers and users who are affected by the process, and leads to localized conflicts around the spaces promoted as 'creative' in public policies and in official marketing discourse. Kreuzberg, before the fall of the Wall, was already a hub for Berlin's alternative, multicultural and bohemian scenes, and as such has attracted visitors not only from Berlin, but also from the rest of Germany and abroad since the 1970s (e.g. Iggy Pop and David Bowie). After the fall of the Wall, the district underwent an intensive process of urban renewal, social transformation and, of course, gentrification. There was and is a discrepancy between the mayor's and senate's promotional rhetoric of ethnic

diversity and sexy cosmopolitanism on the one hand, (a central element of Berlin's marketing narrative in the 2000s), and its actual management of ethnic-cultural diversity and inequalities on the other (Kosnick 2009). Finally, the increasingly popular and profitable marketing of memory has normalized the darkest periods of Berlin's history and passed over in silence the negative consequences of German unification on (East) German society and the failures of the process.

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