ARCHITECTURAL MOVEMENTS, UTOPIAN MOMENTS: (IN)COHERENT
RENDERINGS OF THE HUNDERTWASSER-HAUS, VIENNA

by

Peter Krafft

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores some of the manifold entanglements of architecture and utopia. It takes as a case study a social housing block in Vienna: the Hundertwasser-Haus. The house was designed by the artist-architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser and has attracted enormous attention from the architectural press and tourists. I articulate a series of architectural 'movements', manifest in Hundertwasser's design philosophy, press reportage about the house, residents' experiences of living at the house, and visitors' activities outside it. I argue that from these movements, a series of essentially unconnected utopian "moments" emerged. The paper makes two contributions. First, it builds upon gathering interest in the geographies of utopia – specifically by moving beyond an emphasis upon utopian hope. It locates utopian impulses that are imbued with euphoria and joy, and which are not beset by a sense of lack. It also provides empirical examples of "unsettling" utopias of different registers (such as textual and experiential). Second, the paper contributes to recent geographical approaches to studying architecture. It uses the analytical motif of movements to gain a sense of how a material building – and the idea of that building – is constituted as much by tenuous relations and *disjunctures* (even non-relations) as by relations. Whereas contemporary geographies of architecture do not leave room for tenuous relations and disjunctures in their narratives, this paper tries to do so. It highlights how utopian moments at the Hundertwasser-Haus *are* proximate to each other: they are located metaphorically and/or literally at the house. Yet those moments neither conform to a coherent, singular narrative, and in some cases, nor do they relate to each other. The paper opens debate about the significance of non-relational socio-technical constituents to the geographies of architecture.

Keywords: Geographies of architecture; relational spaces; event and disjuncture; unsettling utopia; home; tourism.

The concept of disjunction is incompatible with a static, autonomous, structural view of architecture. But it is not anti-autonomy or anti-structure; it simply implies constant, mechanical operations that systematically produce dissociation in space and time, where an architectural element only functions by colliding with a programmatic element, with the movement of bodies, or whatever. In this manner, disjunction becomes a systematic and theoretical tool for the making of architecture (Tschumi 1996, pp. 212–213)

Introduction

The relationship between architecture and utopia is longstanding and widespread. Architecture has been termed ‘the most utopian of all the arts’ (Kumar 1991, p. 14). Utopias commonly find expression in architectural schema – from the fantasies of un-built, seventeenth-century ideal cities to the machinic aesthetic of Modernist tower blocks (Claeys and Sargent 1999; Fishman 1999). The relationship between architecture and utopia is by no means assured. Yet the nature of that relationship is enduring. For, overwhelmingly (at least as far as most histories, sociologies and geographies allow) architecture and utopia have been for centuries co-implicated in the designs of many architects (Eaton 2002). Admittedly, architects leave room for the unknowable exigencies of practice, interpretation and inhabitation (Lerup 1977). Yet most histories, sociologies and geographies of architectural utopias have relied upon architects, architectural theorists and architectural critics as their principal sources and foci for critique (Harvey 2000; Eaton 2002).

This latter generalization is beginning to look increasingly unstable, however. Recent social-scientific work on architecture (especially in geography and architectural history) has constituted a series of disruptions to earlier narratives which privileged architects’ designs. Although commonly not concerned with utopia *per se*, these disruptions have opened out a number of possibilities for more broadly-conceived narratives about architectural utopias. Four of these disruptive possibilities are considered in the next section of the article. Each contains nascent possibilities that allow for an extensive reconfiguration of the relationship between architecture and utopia. Concomitantly, there has been a significant re-ignition of interest in utopia by geographers, which I detail in various places throughout the article and in its conclusion.

This article's principal ambition is to develop a fuller theorization of the relationship between architecture and utopia, drawing upon contemporary geographies of both architecture and utopia. In order to do so, I narrate a loosely-conceived series of utopian moments at one building: the Hundertwasser-Haus in Vienna. I argue that these moments are characteristic of styles of utopianism that have been termed surreal, "unsettling", and/or euphoric (Pinder 2005; Kraftl 2007) – styles of utopianism that all move beyond and, especially, challenge a longstanding impulse for compensatory or "blueprinting" utopian visions (Sargisson 1996). These moments are drawn from analysis of three sources: archival materials pertaining to the house; interviews with residents of the house; and – to a lesser extent – observations made at the house. These utopian moments, I suggest, emerge from various styles of architectural "movement" associated with the three sources I analyse. I introduce these styles of movement in the next section of the article. The diversity of these movements extends Jacobs' (2006) use of the term beyond the circulation and local materialization of a global form such as the high-rise. In particular, I indicate both how buildings move their users (emotionally) and the kinds of practical, embodied movements and processes (both human and non-human) that constitute the construction and inhabitation of buildings.

However, whilst writing this article, I found that it became increasingly difficult – and problematic – to articulate the kinds of traceable "relations" which inform geographical work on architecture and beyond (e.g., Jacobs 2006). I identify utopian designs, texts, practices and emotions whose relationship with one another is unclear; similarly, I suggest that there is at best an ambivalent relationship between diverse architectural movements around the Hundertwasser-Haus. For, as I will show, the paths of visitors, tourists and journalists rarely cross – and when they do, they evoke quite different, even conflicting utopian registers and articulations of the utopian. This lack of clarity is something which I have found troubling: it does not allow me to write the kind of assured, smooth, lucid narrative about a building that most historians and geographers of architecture achieve. This results in a two-fold conclusion where, first, I summarize the contribution that my analysis of the Hundertwasser-Haus makes to re-interrogating architectural utopias, and, second, I critically reflect upon my assumption – perhaps a widespread one within contemporary human geography – that human endeavour is almost always characterized by *relations* and relatedness. That a single building cannot be confined to a single narrative is perhaps not surprising, given the "messiness" of materials, discourses and

practices that constitute “buildings” (Lees 2001; Jacobs 2006). Nevertheless, geographers’ accounts of buildings retain an inevitability about the relations that constitute their narratives (perhaps except Jacobs *et al.* 2007), displaying a desire to tie up loose ends. I discuss how multiple movements around the Hundertwasser-Haus – by its architect, residents, and visitors – evoked utopian moments that were constituted by relations of different kinds, qualities and consistencies (often tenuous or even absent and disjointed). I end by questioning whether as geographers – of architecture, utopia, and anything else besides – we could better acknowledge the sheer peculiarity of comparing and (re-)presenting sets of isolated experiences, discourses and emotions alongside each other when their taking-place might simply share the idea and materiality of a built form or bounded place – and very little else.

Narrating architecture: de-centring architects

Geographers and architectural historians have adopted diverse approaches to the study of buildings (compare, e.g., Goss 1988; Borden *et al.* 2001; Lees 2001; Jacobs 2006; Kraftl 2010). Few of these are singularly concerned with de-centring the architect as the prime meaning-maker of a building. Most architectural geographers have been concerned with questions around symbolism, place-making, materiality and dwelling rather than architects *per se*. Nevertheless, some narratives do – whether implicitly or explicitly – de-centre the architect in favour of a more (politically) inclusive methodology. Broadly conceived, four recent methodologies enact this de-centring, and inform the analysis presented in this article.

First, the symbolism of built form has been a pervasive interest for architectural historians and cultural geographers. During the 1980s, geographers argued that landscapes – like buildings – could be read as texts (Cosgrove 1998). It was argued that social meaning was inscribed into built form, and that those forms could be read for their meaning, in order to uncover the power relations that constituted their making. Hence, in Mona Domosh’s (1989) seminal study, early-twentieth century New York skyscrapers did not only concretize the whims of their architects. Instead – with some detective work – Domosh showed that the size, shape and decoration of buildings in Lower Manhattan reflected both the requirements of architects’ clients, and the prevailing socio-economic imperatives of the time. Moreover, there was acceptance that symbols and texts were not transparent windows onto a world of reality; rather, they were both contextualized and inter-textual (Goss 1993). A building was thus always more than simply an

expression of an architect's (utopian) vision; a building was a collective enterprise whose façades represented often powerful, and quite frequently utopian, intentions (Dovey 1999).

Second, more recent "critical" geographies of architecture have articulated a (re)turn to human inhabitation of buildings (compare Jacobs 2006). Specifically, geographers sought to further de-centre the meanings, symbols and readings invested in a building during its design and construction (Lees 2001, pp. 56-57):

Traditionally, architectural geography has been practiced by putting architectural symbols into their social ... contexts to tease out their meaning. But if we are to concern ourselves with the inhabitation of architectural space as much as its signification ... we must [also] engage...actively with the situated and everyday practices through which built environments are used

Lees' lively conception of architecture exemplifies a shift towards the practices, subjectivities and meanings created by the *users* of buildings (Borden *et al.* 1998; Adey 2006, 2008; Datta 2006). Hence, the symbolic meanings apparent in a building are scrambled by the multiple meanings attached to a building by its users. More radically, nonrepresentational approaches to architecture deconstruct the dualism of symbol–referent, such that an inhabitant's haptic experience of a building cannot be reduced to the logics of representation. The implications of this latter point remain to be fully mapped by geographers (Paterson 2008). Yet the achievement of this approach is to enrol a far greater and more diverse population of agents as architectural meaning-makers. Hence, architectural geographies become open to the ways in which divergent, often politicized practices of inhabitation re-configure spaces and networks of power into alternative, radical, and on occasion utopian (Baeten 2002) or heterotopian orderings (Lees 1997).

Third, Jane Jacobs' rich, subtle and innovative work on the Modernist high-rise has moved beyond purely semiotic and/or practice-based approaches (Jacobs 2006; Jacobs *et al.* 2007). Her work accounts for the *form-ing* of artefacts that obtain coherence as buildings: in this case, "big" buildings. Such accounts share 'a common interest in the ways on which certain architectural

forms come to be in certain places' (Jacobs 2006, p. 3). Doing so enlarges our (geographers', historians', architects') explanatory field in terms of the production, inhabitation, materialization, management and dissolution of buildings (Jacobs 2006). A socio-technical lens for studying "thing-ness" recalls Actor–Network-style narratives that trace how assemblages of technologies and socialities co-constitute places (see also Gieryn 2002; Jacobs *et al.* 2007).

Jacobs provides a key insight for understanding how things and processes *become* architecture. She conceives buildings as 'building events' (Jacobs 2006, p. 11). Following Jenkins (2002), the *idea* of a building – and of professional architectural practice – is deemed to be unendingly mutable. Buildings therefore take place relationally: building events can be apprehended 'not simply by talking with or watching users, but by thinking about the diverse fields of relations that hold this building together over time and space, including pipes and cables, managers and users, owners and investors' (Jacobs 2006, p. 11).

In Jacobs' example – the residential high-rise – the utopian discourses of architects and the kinds of utopian symbolism that may be read from buildings are contextualized within more fully-conceived material-and-discursive networks that surround and literally make-up buildings as they take place (hence they are 'events'). As Jacobs (2006, pp.3-4) argues: 'The residential highrise has been variously drawn up into a range of indisputably big stories and organizational events: utopian visions for living, stellar architectural careers like that of Le Corbusier, bureaucratic machineries of mass housing provision, national projects of modernization [etcetera]'. It is worth remembering here, though, that in some contexts (notably the UK), the residential high-rise and broader social housing project of which it was a part have also become entangled in deeply and increasingly pervasive dystopian discourses about contemporary urban places (Baeten 2001).

Fourth, geographers have begun to interrogate the technologies of affect and/or emotion with which buildings become invested. This work has two sources: phenomenological work by geographers and philosophers beginning during the 1960s (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Relph 1976); and a more recent interest in affect and emotion in the social sciences (Williams 2001; Ahmed 2004; Anderson 2006; McCormack 2007). Nigel Thrift (2004), has argued that contemporary urban spaces are utterly imbued with affect: the power to manipulate affective dispositions should thus be a key artefact of critical geographical inquiry. Recent geographies of built form

have combined the three approaches above to explore how affects are produced, controlled and negotiated by built spaces, their architects, and their users (Holloway 2003; Saville 2008). For instance, Peter Adey (2008) demonstrates how airport architectures engineer affective possibilities such that passengers (must) move and be moved via variously overt technologies of control (see also Kraftl and Adey 2008). This work allows for a fuller exposition not only of the emotions attached *to* buildings, but the human and non-human agents complicit in the more-or-less knowing manipulation of affective dispositions and movements (Rose et al., 2010).

All four approaches share as many similarities as they do differences; indeed, there are significant disagreements within each that I have smoothed over for the sake of brevity. Nevertheless, each promotes an understanding of architecture that allows for the agency of those *other* than the master-architect. Inspired by Lees' and Jacobs' work in particular, I want to stress three things in the course of this article. First, how the de-centring of the architect might allow geographers to articulate how buildings *move* and are *moved* in multiple ways: in symbolisms and inter-textuality; in the practices of use and inhabitation that constantly criss-cross and elide stable meanings; in the translations and co-implications of design practices, building technologies and everyday praxes, at whatever scale; in the emotions/affects that circulate and stabilize in and around an architectural edifice.

Second, how some of these architectural movements are attached to utopian moments that are characterized by affective and emotional intensities. In other words: through which assemblages of people, materials and discourses can buildings *move* their human inhabitants, emotionally, to the extent that those assemblages become utopian? Whilst I flesh out a discussion of utopia later in the article, I want briefly to clarify my use of the term here. Utopia is traditionally defined – following Thomas More's satirical text – as the 'good place that is no place' (Levitas 1990). For Krishan Kumar (1991), utopia takes the form of fiction (usually a novel) that imagines in relatively great detail how society could be otherwise – how a given social world could become a better place. Utopia thus has a political function, acting as a form of critique that identifies a problem or lack in a contemporary social system and imagines an elsewhere whose constitutive elements might spark critical reflection and, possibly, social change towards a better future (Kumar 2003). Architectural practice figures prominently in these utopian visions – indeed, arguably, some of the great early-twentieth-century utopias were the product of architects, not

novelists (see Pinder 2005, for an excellent critical study of some of these utopian designs). Thus, I find Kumar's definition of utopia unnecessarily narrow. I prefer to follow a line of utopian thinking from Ernst Bloch (1995) through contemporary feminist and post-structural utopianism (Sargisson 1996) that allows for broader conceptions of utopia. Their versions of utopia are, on the one hand, far more generous in terms of the *form* of utopia – which for Bloch could range from music to moments of daydreaming, from architecture to art – and thus did not have to conform to the blueprinting or formal designation of a better or good place. On the other hand, then, Sargisson (2000) and other open up the *function* of utopia, recognizing the range of political and emotive effects that utopias produce upon those who read, experience, listen to or inhabit them (rather than simply mapping the content *of* a utopian text against the utopian tradition of writing). Utopia may function (and may function best) as an open-ended, unsettling and temporary moment – perhaps of transcendence (for Bloch), or a moment of heightened awareness of or within everyday life (cf. Gardiner 2004, and on which more below). Hence, including material from Hundertwasser's writings, press cuttings, interviews and observations, I retain a broad definition of utopia that allows for diverse spacings *and* timings of utopia (Harvey 2000). In order to bear witness to the ways in which each of these spacings/timings punctuate life at or around the Hundertwasser-Haus – often in particular times, places and regimes of practice – I term these utopian *moments*; moments that somehow evoke, represent or engender something that feels like the “good life”.

Third, I want to foreground how architectural movements always also involve *dissociation* and tenuous connection. In other words, as odd as it sounds, the idea of a building (or at least what happens to and within that building) may be characterized as much by disconnection and dissociation as a field of relations (compare Jacobs 2006, p. 11) or a ‘drawing together’ of socio-technical systems (Jacobs *et al.* 2007, p. 627). Although Jacobs accounts for those materials, agents and discourses that also contribute to the falling apart of a building, she does not *explicitly* account for the disjunctures and, even, non-relations that either constitute a building and/or, more pointedly, simply occur proximate to it without necessarily enabling a sense of relational coherence to coalesce.

The Hundertwasser-Haus, Vienna

The Hundertwasser-Haus (completed 1986) is a social housing block containing 52 apartments. The house is situated fifteen minutes' walk from the centre of Vienna, in an area of predominantly nineteenth-century housing, although many buildings surrounding the house were (re)built as Modernist social housing blocks during the mid-twentieth century, providing a stark contrast with the Hundertwasser-Haus (Plate 1). As a social housing block, it is owned and managed by the Vienna City *Gemeinde* (Council). To be eligible to live in the house, residents must meet the City's social housing criteria.¹ All of the residents rent their flats from the City.

[PLATE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Some flats in the house are single storey, some two storey; some are for couples, whilst one family I interviewed had six children living in one flat. Some have terraces with lawns and trees, others have balconies. Others have no private access to gardens, however can use communal terraces, the *Wintergarten* (an indoor garden), laundry room and children's play rooms. The house also contains a café and shop (Plate 2) at ground floor level: both cater for the thousands of tourists who visit the house each year. Whilst tourists are no longer allowed inside the house, a renovated tyre factory directly opposite the house affords visitors the opportunity to experience first-hand some Hundertwasser architecture.

[PLATE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The Hundertwasser-Haus is one of several buildings in Austria, and a dozen elsewhere, built by Austrian Artist-Architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser. Like its architect (on whom more below), the house has attracted considerable attention: 70,000 people queued to view the house on the day it opened. Since 1986, it has become a top-five tourist destination in Vienna, and attracted ongoing criticism in both architectural and popular presses. The house is – perhaps always has been – more than simply another social housing block. This sense of extraordinariness is, of course, most evident in the Hundertwasser-Haus' façade (Plates 1 and 2). Certain features of its exterior have become motifs for Hundertwasser's work and, indeed, for many anti-Modernist architects: most notably, the wavy lines, bulbous columns, eclectic ornamentation, bright colours and trees placed in the windows.

Following architectural movements: methodology

All of the details above provide a little context about the house. But most of these details are also important – in different ways – to utopian discourses, practices and emotions that have been evoked with/in the Hundertwasser-Haus. In recognizing their largely ephemeral character – and for ease of expression – I term these discourses, practices and emotions utopian moments. These utopian moments include reference to social housing, dwelling in the flats themselves, tourism and the house's unusual façade.

This article is based upon a wider research project, which sought, after Lees (2001), to effect a critical geography of ecological buildings – of which the Hundertwasser-Haus is one example. The project necessitated a mixed-methods approach for two reasons. First, in combining the symbolic/textual, performative, material and affective conceptualizations of architecture outlined earlier in the article. Second, in attending to the diverse actors and texts involved with the Hundertwasser-Haus itself: architect, archive, press coverage, tourists, residents.

The first element of the methodology involved working in the Hundertwasser-archive in Vienna. The archive is ostensibly a collection of Hundertwasser's writings, the vast majority of which have now been published (Hundertwasser 1997; Schmied and Fuerst 2003). It also contains his original drawings and press cuttings about his artistic and architectural projects. I read Hundertwasser's texts and associated press articles thematically, concentrating upon four recurring themes in his work: ecology; architectural style and process; residents' agency; utopia (or 'paradise', as Hundertwasser frequently terms it). To aid reference – and since most material in the archive has since been published (in Schmied and Fuerst 2003) – I confine discussion of Hundertwasser's written work to that available in published collections. All press excerpts, however, are from material collected directly from the archive.

The second element involved a series of taped interviews with eleven residents (eight women, three men). Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and two hours, all in residents' own flats. All of the interviews were conducted by the author, in German, and were transcribed into both German and English. For the sake of simplicity, I use only English translations of quotations

from interviews in this article. The residents I interviewed had lived in the Hundertwasser-Haus for varying periods: six since 1986, and the others for between four and seventeen years. Given the broad scope of the project, I adopted a relatively open interview schedule, allowing residents to recount their “(life-)stories” of living in the Hundertwasser-Haus. In order to do this, I observed some of the ways they had used and decorated their flats: many took me on “tours” around their homes, which I also recorded and transcribed. I did prompt on certain specific themes (especially the impact of living in the house on their everyday lives, their relationship with tourists, how they had “made home”) but since each interview was essentially a life-story of their time at the house I allowed residents to talk relatively freely. The idea of utopia was approached implicitly in questioning about residents’ initial, and ongoing, reflections about the house. Unless indicated in the following verbatim quotations, residents brought up ideas of utopia (and related terms like paradise) without prompting. As with any qualitative study, I have also added an extra layer of interpretation through analysis, identifying in particular emotional responses to the house (especially joyful and euphoric) that resonate with previous writing on everyday utopian affects (e.g. Anderson 2006). For each quotation in this article, I provide significant detail as to how and why different responses to the house could – and should – be viewed as utopian. In this article, all respondents’ names have been altered to protect their anonymity.

In order to access the multiple meanings of the Hundertwasser-Haus, I included a third element in the research: covert observation and observant participation (cf. Thrift 2000). For four weeks, I lived in an apartment a few minutes’ walk from the house, which enabled me to make multiple visits each day. Outside the house, I observed and talked briefly with tourists, spent time outside the house where tourists mingled, wandered around the shopping village, and talked (on occasions in depth) to café owners and shopkeepers. I recorded “vignettes” of activity in my notebook (Lees 2001), noting key moments and happenings as well as making basic observations about the routine rhythms and circulations and performances occurring outside the house’s façade.

Architectural movements, utopian moments

The Hundertwasser-Haus has been subject to what I term diverse architectural movements: from the circulation of critiques in the architectural press, to the flow of tourists outside its colourful façade, to the (perhaps) more intimate, daily practices of inhabitation undertaken by residents. In

Jacobs' (2006) terminology, each of these movements is in some sense constitutive of the Hundertwasser-Haus – constitutive of its fame, its meaning, its materiality and its everyday lives. Architectural movements around the house were related with one another to varying degrees. As the following sections illustrate, texts, practices and emotions about the Hundertwasser-Haus were sometimes strongly inter-connected, sometimes tenuously linked. Others seemed completely isolated from one another, the simple idea (or rather loosely-related ideas, in the plural) of the Hundertwasser-Haus being their only common ground. Some of these movements were patterned around what I interpret as utopian ideals, practices and emotions – diverse utopian *moments* that evoked space-times which felt hopeful, euphoric, ideal, nostalgic and/or radically creative. I use the term moment to encapsulate two distinct, utopian temporalities. First, to highlight the very ephemeral, almost ineffable experience of bodies-spaces *being affected* by utopian emotions in and through a particular event: for instance, through 'hope as a type of relation emergent from particular encounters [that] takes place, and therefore enacts space-time' (Anderson 2006, p. 741). Second, to indicate the recursive action of a past experience, narrative or form of knowledge (such as nostalgia) or a future ideal *upon* the present – upon living in, talking about or returning to the Hundertwasser-Haus as a resident or tourist. In both cases, utopia inflects, distends and throws into sharp relief a present moment in which one's sense (and sensing) of everyday life is heightened or even questioned – a form of critical awareness and challenging of the present that is for some scholars profoundly utopian (Gardiner 2004).

I focus upon the co-implication of architectural movements and utopian moments in the rest of this article. The following sections of the article witness three of these kinds of movements/moments: the material processes involved in building the house; the circulation of press attention about the house; the affective, embodied and everyday practices of living in the house.

Movement 1: Hundertwasser, architectural process and utopias of ruination

Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928–2000), the architect of the Hundertwasser-Haus, began his working life as an artist. Working in Vienna, Paris, and later in New Zealand, his painting was initially inspired by early-twentieth century artists such as Klimt, Schiele and Klee. Schmied (1997) depicts the impetus behind Hundertwasser's painting as a kind of mole-like, infantile regression into both the artist's self and into a highly nostalgically-conceived "nature".

Hundertwasser's painted works sit within certain broader trends of (Central European) art, many of which were relatively radical. These trends include: Jugendstil and Seccesionstil (Germanic versions of Art Nouveau); surrealism; Modernista design and especially the organic Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi; the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism (for details, see Schmied 1997; Restany 2001). Some geographers may have encountered Hundertwasser's paintings before: examples of his work adorn the covers of three of Ed Soja's books (e.g., Soja 2000).

During the 1950s, Hundertwasser began to turn his attention to architecture. Inspired by natural forms – especially trees, ferns and other uncultivated plants – he developed a series of vehement critiques of Modernist architecture. He concentrated upon particular architects and motifs that he argued typified Modernist design philosophies. He reserved most criticism for the “straight line”, for functionalism (in particular Adolf Loos) and for the machine-aesthetic of the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 266):

The absolutely straight, dead skyline is an ignominious heirloom of the Bauhaus.

Hundertwasser argued that Modern architecture was lifeless and that the straight line foreclosed creativity. For him, Modern buildings precluded the health and happiness of their residents. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he expressed his critique through a number of speeches and architectural installations (Restany 2001). Thereafter – despite a lack of formal training – he turned to designing his own buildings. He produced a series of models for schools, apartment blocks, industrial buildings and leisure complexes (see Hundertwasser 1997). Between 1975 and 2000, several of these designs were realised in Austria, Germany, the USA, Japan and New Zealand.²

Rather than provide further, broader context about Hundertwasser's life and work, I want to concentrate upon Hundertwasser's conception of the *movements* of architectural design and construction. Although his buildings are visually striking and symbolically eclectic, it is in his discussion of these processes that Hundertwasser provided his most lucid and politicized expressions of utopia. Principally, Hundertwasser located architectural design as a creative-

artistic endeavour that took cues from – and involved the materiality of – natural forms and processes. He located the inspiration for his own design praxes within natural processes.

I will fight to help nature gain back her rights, including her part in colouring architecture. If we let nature paint the walls, the walls will become natural, the walls will become humane, and then we can live again. We need beauty impediments. Beauty impediments are non-regulated regularities (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 70)

The good intention has been completely missed. Nature has been told again what to do. ... I therefore urgently request: to be allowed to change the tree at my expense. I am thinking of indigenous trees Untended. Uncut ... just like between the walls of old ruins” (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 84)

When rust sets in on a razor blade, when a wall starts to get moldy, when moss grows in a corner of the room ... we should be glad, because ... life is moving into the house (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 48)

Hundertwasser displayed commitment to movements and gestures peculiar to the kinds of nature(s) that Modernist aesthetes had – according to him – been so keen to banish from architectural design. His buildings are suffused with key motifs gleaned from a love of uncultivated trees, mould and rust: recurring motifs such as spirals, viral repetition and ruination. Hundertwasser was not simply taken by a mouldy, ruinant architectural aesthetic. He was also keen to devolve his role as architect to certain natural processes themselves (i.e. allowing buildings to run to rust or mould). To do so would be to enliven – via non-human agents – a kind of contingent, almost accidental, creativity in architectural form-making.

Hundertwasser’s aesthetic – but also materially dynamic – valorisation of natural forms and processes evokes two broader points. First, a number of scholars inspired by Bruno Latour’s work have sought to understand how non-human technologies and objects (from written plans to pipes and cables) are key components of the socio-technical networks that constitute buildings (Gieryn 2002; Jenkins 2002; Jacobs 2006). Hundertwasser extends the already-enlarged list of possible actors into architectural form-making with and by nature in a way that recognizes that

that there ‘is nothing a-priori unnatural about produced environments like cities’ (Swyngedouw 2006, p. 118). Moreover – although considering other kinds of waste and, I would suggest, un-anticipated ruination – I agree precisely with Swyngedouw (2006, p. 118) about the possible ecological politics whose visioning must recognize and enable ‘socio-spatial processes [that] are invariably also predicated upon the circulation and metabolism of physical, chemical, or biological component.’ Hundertwasser wanted to allow for these very processes; those that most architects would seek to banish from the socio-technical accomplishment of “sound”, safe buildings – undesirables like mould, rust, ruin and the chaotic growth of weeds that the architectural ‘edifice should keep outside’ (Kaika 2004, p. 266; also Edensor 2005). Hundertwasser (1997) was adamant that these kinds of processes were crucial to more primitive but more creative and, in his words, humane kinds of architectural form-making.

Second, then, Hundertwasser’s emphasis upon natural forms and processes was also a straightforwardly political statement (Hundertwasser was an ardent and active environmentalist, helping, for instance, to found the Austrian Green Party). That is, that a properly ecological architecture was not simply reliant upon the kinds of architect-designed sustainable technologies that were and are becoming increasingly common. Rather, that the very processes of ruin, rust and mould themselves – which involved the de-centring of the architect and therefore of intentional human-controlled design – would allow for a radically new kind of ecological building practice. As I outline below, Hundertwasser conceived that this political and practical de-centring of the architect could allow for all kinds of novel, creative and especially utopian architectural practices.

In tandem with his valorisation of natural processes, Hundertwasser devolved the role of architectural producer to two further groups of significant others: contracted builders and residents themselves.

The workmen on the project ... are an amazing discovery to me, for they can immediately make use of the freedom of creativity. True joy in one’s work is the liberation from the constraints of the machine, from the terror of the assembly line, from the dictatorship of prefabricated parts, from being raped by the straight line and the so-called rational grid system (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 294)

The individual's desire to build something should not be deterred! ... Functional architecture has proved the wrong road to take Only when architect, bricklayer and tenant are a unity, or one and the same person, can we speak of architecture. (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 46)

Ideally, then, Hundertwasser theorised that real architecture could only happen when architect, builder and resident were the same person. At the Hundertwasser-Haus – and in his other projects – this was rarely the case, however. Typically, his projects were completed following the traditional, linear process from procurement to occupation. Nevertheless, within these constraints, workmen at the Hundertwasser-Haus (about whom Hundertwasser is writing in the quotations above) were afforded an unusual degree of freedom. For instance, many were able to design tiled mosaics on the house's interior walls and to dictate the contours of the cobbled pavements outside the house – the same pavements that visitors stand on when viewing the house.

Hundertwasser was, however, adamant that the process of building *really* began upon its occupation by residents. Consequently, a “window-right” is enshrined in the legal rental agreement for tenants of the Hundertwasser-Haus (*Mietvertrag*, i.e., rental agreement, re-printed in Koller 1996, p. 10):

a resident must have the right to lean out of their window, as far as their arm will reach, and to re-decorate everything on the outside wall

The right insinuates that any tenant of the house can reach out of their window and paint whatever they like on the building's façade. However: none of the residents I interviewed had exercised this right, nor knew of anyone else who had done so since 1986. They explained that their willingness to do so was compromised by the City's (standard) requirement that apartments be returned to their original state upon leaving the house to live elsewhere. Many residents *did*, however, exercise this right on interior corridor walls which – when I visited – were full of drawings and political slogans, predominantly by children.

Hundertwasser's conception of architectural process was thus shot through with particular kinds of *movements*, of which the window-right is just one example. His performances, writings and installations signalled radical ways of producing architecture via certain embodied practices. Those practices combined design with inhabitation – much like the better-known experiments of the Surrealists and Situationists (Bonnett 1992; Pinder 2005). Yet, unlike the Situationists and other radical artists of the time, Hundertwasser drew inspiration from very specific natural processes and the aesthetic movements and disruptions they could introduce into buildings – from the viral spread of mould to the chaotic bubbling of rust upon an exposed iron surface. His manifesto for architectural design valorised a combination of the above with the un-trained, for-the-moment creativity of builders and inhabitants. Their everyday movements with/in a building – specific banal acts like brick-laying, tiling, painting, scribbling on walls – would in his view introduce an alternative, perhaps even radical, re-negotiation of the meaning of architectural spaces. Hence Hundertwasser's injunction echoes recent critical geographies of the inhabitation of buildings, albeit framing the 'situated and everyday practices through which built environments are used' (Lees 2001, p. 56) as a still-more involved act of material architectural production than that meant by Lees.

Whilst working at the Hundertwasser-Haus and thereafter, Hundertwasser framed the active involvement of nature, builder and resident into a series of polemical statements about architectural design. Concurrently, his writings began to offer brief glimpses of a utopian impulse. It may be argued that much of Hundertwasser's work is utopian; indeed, recent exhibitions of his architectural models continually suggest the very same.³ His definition of utopia (or paradise, to use his term) is particular, and draws largely upon the nature/builder/resident constellation described above.

One can't flee to paradise One can only create paradises oneself, with one's own creativity, or with nature. In paradise, there is light *and* shade, bad *and* good, poor *and* rich ... ugly *and* beautiful (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 69)

Paradises can only be made by the individual, with his [*sic*] own creativity, in harmony with the free creativity of nature (Hundertwasser 1997, p. 70)

[s]ensitive as much to his painting as to his theoretical statements, the local councillors offered Hundertwasser the opportunity to realise his utopia. ... [T]he Vienna City Council did not turn to an architect but to a dealer in happiness, passing him an order for a complex of happy spaces (Restany 2001, p. 45)

Hundertwasser's utopia certainly has little in common with the static designs typical of architectural utopias – what David Harvey (2000, p. 164) terms 'utopias of spatial form'. His alternate articulation of utopia *is* simplistic and brief. Moreover, it is imbued with aesthetic as much as social concerns over dualisms such as 'light and shade...poor and rich'. Nevertheless, Hundertwasser's utopian impulse has two features which speak to contemporary theorisations of utopia.

First, utopia is imminent and immanent to everyday life (Gardiner 2004). Hundertwasser was adamant that paradise was almost within grasp – that glimpses of utopias were located within the ongoing exigencies of everyday lives. Most generally, his is a utopia of immanent spatial process (Garforth 2009). Architectural utopias are found not in buildings *per se*. Rather, as Hundertwasser states above (*contra* Restany's view, also above) they are located in moments of creativity stretching from initial conception to inhabitation, whose spatio-temporal logic Hundertwasser wants to scramble (see also Sandercock 1998; Grosz 2001). Accordingly, he is content that the house provides pleasure and a sense of home. Individual flashes of creativity or pleasure *might* offer ephemeral moments of hope or desire that are so tantalisingly near utopia achieved. For Hundertwasser, these utopian flashes are located in architectural praxes of design/inhabitation undertaken in harmony with nature. His buildings – or rather the process of creating them – should leave room for such emergent moments rather than foreclose them in "finished" utopias of spatial form.

Second, Hundertwasser's utopias are potentially ruinant, unsettling and disruptive of more stable, comforting utopias of spatial form (Kraftl 2007). Hundertwasser promotes an uncanny mix of desirable utopian objects (light, good, beautiful) with undesirable, perhaps dystopian artefacts (dark, ugly, bad). He specifically valorises and desires qualities that most utopians would find (literally) distasteful – ruined walls, rust, mould. The action of ruination is crucial to the creative-disruptive aesthetic and movement of Hundertwasser's ideal architecture. Yet it is also central to

the vision of architectural utopia he values. In one sense, Hundertwasser's is a utopia which 'tend[s] to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time' (Mannheim 1960, p. 173). Remembering that his utopia is also ephemeral and elusive, this valorisation of ruin and previously dystopian objects mirrors those which, in Lucy Sargisson's (1996, p. 9) words, are 'profoundly utopian [...and] also profoundly unsafe'. This is – I suggest – a *creative-political* utopian *desire* to disrupt comfort which has been repeatedly recognized by the many architects and architectural theorists who have desired the euphoric terror of ruination, haunting and the architectural uncanny (cf. Vidler 1992, p. 12) – not just a subversive or emancipatory act (Kaika 2004, pp. 281-282) but a more fundamentally affective gesturing that finds enjoyment, pleasure and euphoria in an aesthetics of ruination.

Hundertwasser's architectural movements presage utopian moments that are both ephemeral and uncanny. Yet it remains to be seen whether or how such moments are translated or experienced at the Hundertwasser-Haus. The next sections of the article sketch out the responses of, first, the architectural press and, second, residents and tourists who inhabit(ed) the house.

Movement 2: press reportage about the Hundertwasser-Haus

Hundertwasser's inflammatory views on Modern architecture gained him many critics in the architectural profession (see Schediwy 1999). Once it became clear that this artist – not trained as an architect – would be afforded the opportunity to realize some of his designs, attention from architectural journalists simply intensified. Many journalists derided and ridiculed the house as a publicity stunt, or as a beautified façade simply painted onto an ordinary social housing block (Krause 1991, p. 21):

The "Bio-Burg" [eco-castle] runs the risk of diminishing into just a completely normal housing project, with a beautified façade and a couple of trees on the roof

Whilst many commentators questioned the quality of the design, others – even Hundertwasser's supporters – unleashed a torrent of jibes about the symbolism of its exterior:

In the fanciful world according to Hundertwasser, individual apartment façades look like strung-out concrete cliff dwellings, laced with painted black lines and crooked ribbons of gold and silver tile. Rooftops are grassy knolls where trees grow and copies of Venus de Milo statues linger. Corridors sprout walls with ceramic sunflowers, butterflies and cactuses, their brick floors literally undulating in ‘a symphony for the feet’ (Brown 1987, unpaginated)

The majority of press reportage about the Hundertwasser-Haus focused upon certain (symbolic) elements of its façade – the colours, the golden towers, the trees. They made constant references to other fantastical palaces like Schloss Neuschwanstein⁴ (Santner 2002), whose designers were deemed to be equally as “mad” as Hundertwasser. If Hundertwasser’s speeches, installations and critical artistic praxes had begun to stir attention and divide opinion, then the Hundertwasser-Haus created shockwaves throughout the architectural press. For a social housing block, the house has attracted an extraordinary degree of press coverage which has ensured its place as both a concretized provocation and, consequently, a top Viennese tourist destination – with visits apparently exceeding those to longer-established buildings in the city such as the Karl-Marx-Hof (Kraftl 2009).

The fantastical symbolism reported in some reviews of the house bears utopian undertones. Yet this deployment of utopianism is meant in the derisory, anti-utopian sense which has become commonplace in contemporary Western cultures (Kolnai 1995). Hundertwasser – according to Santner – had realized his dreams, but the in-joke was that his (anti-modern, nature-inspired) dreams were so irrelevant as to render the house an escapist, anemic, dysfunctional utopia.

Living with the plants – art or utopia, absurdity or utopia? Hundertwasser’s ‘Eco-house’ is nearly finished, is stirring emotions, and is above all – no eco-house (Khitl 1985, no pagination)

It is an architectural wow-experience, for all the tourists who come to the 3rd district all year as pilgrims, to see how life can be otherwise (Flatscher 1991, unpaginated)

The dream world is now one of Vienna’s most popular tourist attractions, drawing hundreds a day who are officially confined to viewing it from the sidewalk. Some visitors do get past

the security system, though, making their way into the snaking passageways to aim their cameras at innocent tenants (Brown 1987, unpaginated)

The Hundertwasser-Haus has thus *provoked* quite different architectural movements from those surrounding its architect and the meanings he had attached to its design. Press critique engaged with Hundertwasser's ideas in various ways, criss-crossing and circulating around the *idea* and aesthetic of the Hundertwasser-Haus as much as its concrete materiality as a built form. The house itself (or rather images thereof) was literally and metaphorically mobilized as it gained notoriety around the world *through* the types of reaction represented above.

Additionally, though, the house moved in other ways. Interpreted via Hundertwasser's architectural philosophies, it 'stirred emotions'. It moved architectural critics to impassioned commentaries and polemical critiques (such as those of Khittl and Flatscher, above). Later, and as a result of this furore, the house attracted thousands of tourists from around the world through the promise of a 'wow-experience'. For them, as Flatscher and Brown both suggest, the attraction was also utopian: the house provides an exemplar of an-other life, a dream-world. Whether this other life is positive in Flatscher's reading is debatable – the figuring of tourists as pilgrims might seem to suggest a certain flippancy and ambivalence about the popularity of the Hundertwasser-Haus and its utopian promise and, again, the use of utopian language as one of derisory ridicule.

Significantly, the very *particular* utopian values inscribed in the house by Hundertwasser were re-read (or deliberately mis-read) through press representations of the house as more *generic* utopian space. Utopia was thus mobilized as an empty descriptive container: not only for derision and ridicule, but as a simplified way to signify the affective import of the house as a harbinger of 'how life can be otherwise', without specifying whether that otherwise is politically good or bad. These were not, then, the particular creative-political utopian impulses that Hundertwasser necessarily sought to propagate. There was a disjuncture and dislocation between his utopian architectural mo(ve)ments and those of the architectural media, not merely in attitude but in substance.

Crucially, though, there *were* also *commonalities* between Hundertwasser and the press that were not confined to the idea(l) of the Hundertwasser-Haus. These commonalities centre around the ambiguous, unsteady and profoundly *unsettling* status of the house. It is simultaneously an artwork, a tourist attraction, a ecological-political statement, an architectural manifesto and – lest we forget – a home. It has been argued elsewhere that this renders the Hundertwasser-Haus extraordinary (Kraftl 2009). Yet this uncanny combination – this provocation, this unhomey home, this disruption – is a key constituent – perhaps *the* key constituent – of the Hundertwasser-Haus’ utopian allure. At least on this point, both Hundertwasser and his critics were more-or-less agreed.

Movement 3: inhabiting the Hundertwasser-Haus

Living here, you are at home even before you walk into the house It really has a lot to do with ‘coming home’ when your feet feel the trusted unevenness of the ground, the gently swinging hills and valleys – your body has them all within its memory. ... A special magic comes over you here, creating a mood of connectedness. ... The statements made by visitors [from the visitor books] simply document how emotionally people react to this house (Koller 1996, pp. 9-11; former resident of the Hundertwasser-Haus).

Koller’s account of ‘coming home’ to the Hundertwasser-Haus presents, in one sense, an image of the house *as a utopia*. He identifies certain architectural elements – the uneven pavements and corridors – that embody the ‘special magic’ of the house. Not by coincidence, in this case, Koller’s narrative about encountering the house mirrors in substance and style that of Hundertwasser’s (1997, pp. 259-260), reproduced earlier in the article. Yet, in a similar way to Hundertwasser, Koller opens out a utopian potential not simply confined to the material-symbolic spaces of the house itself. It is rather in the *experience* of *moving through* and *encountering* the house in which a kind of magical homeliness is located. Koller signals another distinct set of architectural movements through which utopian moments might obtain. Those movements are contained in the praxes of inhabitation: in haptic interactions with the house; in becoming-connected with its swinging contours; in the emotional and embodied experiences of coming home which, I think Koller suggests, tug at visitors as much as residents. Here is an uncanny, magical homeliness that is – for tourists – far from home. I suggest that this sense of magic is

utopian precisely in the doubly-temporalized sense I indicated earlier. On the one hand, Koller suggests a kind of affordance or affect that evokes in visitors a momentary sense of connection with the house that is both aesthetic and haptic – an inexplicable (hence magical) tingle of feeling as one’s feet and eyes roam over the house. On the other, it is precisely a sense of homeliness-*beyond-the-home* – an unerring spark of familiarity with that which is, for most tourists, a first visit – which ushers an unsettling challenge to the comfortable assumptions most visitors might have about “being at home”. The house scrambles the utopian temporalities assumed by nostalgia: for, in feeling at home, Koller is suggesting that the house evokes feelings of nostalgia for that which has not-yet been experienced. Hence, the *magic* of such a utopian moment is in evoking both another place and a past time *yet to be visited*.

Koller’s quotation offers the barest of hints to the more routine movements and very occasional utopian moments implicated in some of those movements that emerge in the course of inhabiting the Hundertwasser-Haus. Through interviews with residents and observations of tourists outside the house, I attempted to build a picture of how such diverse actors inhabited the house – however ephemerally. I had hoped that these words and actions would translate into a set of unifying themes, or better, a cogent narrative. Some of the moments below connect with each other; some relate quite explicitly and intentionally to Hundertwasser’s writings and/or press reportage about the house. Yet in sum, I was left with a series of more-and/or-less disconnected moments: brief insights into personal histories; incomplete verbal renderings of emotion; thin slices of action; narrative dead-ends, some of which simply did not connect with another time or place. I want to present a selection of movements towards, around, within and from the house, each of which at least intimate a utopian impulse but certainly do not add up to any summative, coherent statement about either architectural or utopian mo(ve)ments at the house.

At the beginning of our interviews, I asked every resident to explain how it felt to move into the Hundertwasser-Haus. I also asked them to characterize their first few weeks living in the house. I was struck by how several respondents looked back on this time with an overt, nostalgic utopianism that was evoked *both* by the house itself and the exigencies of their everyday lives. The first two quotations – from John and Danielle – were from a married couple whom I interviewed separately. Neither had moved into the house *because* of its fame or its architect and confessed to

only a very sketchy knowledge of Hundertwasser's work. They had moved into the house in July 1999 and were married a month later:

Peter: Can you think back now to the first few weeks here?

John: I've got to tell you about this, when we moved in, we had a flat in the other side of the building. And it was a really brilliant time, and, it was in high summer. We had a flat with a terrace – a big terrace – with cherry trees, yeah? And that was the time, we moved in in July and got married in August, yeah? And it was a *heilige*⁵ time!, and this new flat, in this extraordinary house... . We experienced it, it felt like the whole environment was part of it ... there was loads of work ... but it was totally beautiful, the whole thing in the new house. ... And I must add to that, we had a window to the North, where the tourists are. And as we had so much *time*, we sat there and talked with the tourists down on the street, yeah? It was really grand [*Grandios*]. And on top of that, I must also say, our neighbours had a garden next door and we really got to know them ... perhaps closer than we would in other houses ... and it was all probably a bit more than we expected.

Peter: Can you think back to the first few weeks here?

Danielle: Yeaah! It was absolutely fantastic, as it was just after our wedding. And we had our wedding presents, and flowers in our new flat, yeah? And it was a completely different way of life, we only had the most important things there then, and the flowers, it was a flower world, the whole flat was flooded with them, it felt like paradise, we were on holiday, and we were up there for about one and a half weeks – I didn't want to come out again, it was just, with the *garden* ... and it was in summer ... and, it was paradise.

Danielle found it particularly difficult to re-present the powerful euphoria she had felt upon moving into the Hundertwasser-Haus. The house was *not* a utopian space. Rather, this couple had found the experience of moving into the house at the same time as being married to be 'brilliant', '*heilige*', 'grand' and – relatedly – 'paradise'. They cited a network of specific spaces, materials and events that constituted this paradise: the terrace, the cherry trees, the flowers, the tourists and the neighbours. Another resident, who had moved into the flat in 1986, recounted a similarly affecting experience:

Claire: The first thing I can remember – there was [just] so much It looked very different from now, for example under the terrace it was full of sunflowers, the grass was over a metre high! And it was *wonderful, wonderful*.

Peter: It was summer time?

Claire: It was in May. Unbelievable numbers of sunflowers ... the trees were smaller of course – and, I thought I was on another planet. ... It was strange, exciting, and unbelievable, and that we had the luck to get this flat, yeah, with this terrace, it was ... I thought – it can't be me!

Peter: Could you use the word paradise?

Claire: Paradise – yeah, absolutely.

Claire's story is particularly striking for two reasons. Firstly, unlike John and Danielle, she was a self-confessed admirer of Hundertwasser's art. An artist herself (again, unlike John and Danielle), she was well-informed about Hundertwasser's writings on architecture. In this context, her overwhelmingly enthusiastic account of moving into the house is less surprising, as she *had* expected to be moved in some ways by the house, if only through a sense of anticipation of living *in* a piece of Hundertwasser's art. Her move to, and inhabitation of, the house was strongly influenced by Hundertwasser's work, as in some ways was the utopia of finally moving in. Yet, secondly, at the same time, the emotions she had experienced in were almost ineffable and unpredictable to her – both now and in 1986. In her own words, she could not quite believe that this was *her* paradise. The opportunity to call the Hundertwasser-Haus her own was, for her, 'strange, exciting' and yet 'wonderful'. To repeat an earlier point: whilst the house itself might have been a utopian dream for Claire, the momentary *experience* of a kind of other-planetary paradise was located precisely in the uncanny combination of 'strange, exciting' and 'wonderful' that came from being at home in such an extra-ordinary house.

Although John and Danielle knew Claire, their experiences of and attachments to the house were very different. By definition, in living different family lives, and with varying knowledge about Hundertwasser's work, their ways of relating to the house were only tenuously linked. Nevertheless, in their own, discrete ways, they had drawn upon relatively long-term residency at the house in order to make partial sense of the emotions they had felt upon moving in as utopian.

Such long-term engagement with the house is not a luxury afforded to tourists. Most visit the house for around fifteen minutes; some stay for a couple of hours, although there is little to actually do besides wandering around outside and in the shopping village opposite. Yet for some visitors, a visit to the Hundertwasser-Haus is suffused with an intense, momentary euphoria. This was best characterized by the owner of the café on the ground floor of the Hundertwasser-Haus, whom I interviewed.

Harold: There must be something about this place ... if you don't like a picture, you walk past it with your eyes shut, like I did. If you don't like music, you turn it off. ... But you always have to live with architecture. Hundertwasser knew that, [he] knew how you must feel well there. It's not psychological, or psychoanalytical, but psychosomatic. How you feel when you sit here, or there, if the curtains are closed It's usually women who come into my café. They tend to come here on their own, or drag their men in here. They are the ones who want to spend longer here, and leave comments in my guestbook. You can see the house has an effect on them, they start hugging their boyfriends, some of them even start crying [goes on to list further actions]. Some know lots about the house, others want to know more and others just be here.

Unlike the majority of residents and tourists, Harold was well-versed in Hundertwasser's architectural philosophies. I cannot substantiate his observations about the gender bias to visitors' reactions. Gender notwithstanding, Harold had – over a period of years – observed that a tiny minority of visitors were deeply affected by the house. For Harold, these reactions were characterized by specific bodily movements such as hugging, crying and simply *being* outside the house for a while. These bore a tenuous relation to the unsettling mixture of euphoria and strangeness felt by Claire upon entering the house. Although similar in feel, this *was* a tenuous relation: Claire's experiences were spatio-temporally and qualitatively disconnected from those of visitors. Furthermore, Harold was careful to suggest that only some of those reactions were provoked by prior knowledge of or investment in Hundertwasser's work: some simply found, seemingly from nowhere, an instant, affective, 'psychosomatic' bond with *something* about the house.

I too observed some striking activities outside the house. Most tourists followed the same routine, moving around outside the house, walking over the undulating pavements, taking photographs and disappearing into the shopping village. Yet particular vignettes of action stood out for me. I have no way of knowing whether these related in any way to Harold's observations; I simply suspect that they might, and that a fleeting moment of euphoria was contained therein.

Hardly anyone is outside at the moment, although it is now sunny. An English-speaking couple hang around for over twenty minutes, hugging and having a good time. I don't hear what they are saying, but they run up and down the hills, and she jumps off the top of one, into his arms. They are both laughing all the time (extract from notebook, February 2003)

A young woman with a little girl comes around the ... corner, child, holding one hand, dressed in bright pink, camera in the other. The girl gets excited upon seeing the house, constantly looking up, running onto one of the "hills" in the pavement. The mother looks at me, smiling. ... Another tourist catches my eye – as I turn back...the mother takes a picture of the girl. Then they wonder up the steps of the café, stay on the terrace a few minutes, come back down, and disappear under the arch (extract from notebook, February 2003)

These two excerpts are taken from hundreds of vignettes I collected during my fieldwork. They simply illustrate two slices through the constant flows, circulations and situations that occur outside the Hundertwasser-Haus, and which add to its extraordinary feel (Kraftl 2009). Each incident was totally unrelated, and, other than occurring outside the Hundertwasser-Haus, unrelated as far as I know to anything else I have described in this article. The two vignettes simply bespeak two collections of movements and moments that afforded momentary inhabitation of the space outside the house. Whilst accepting that observation does not beget explanation, I want also to suggest that, even if the young couple were ardent Hundertwasser fans, the moment I recorded also took place in and for itself – simply for the temporary joy of running around, hugging and laughing.

Finally, I want to shift back to residents inside the house – to a time and place *almost* completely disjointed from the two moments in the previous excerpts. Indeed, I place them next to each

other in this article simply to make the point that these two moments *were almost unrelated* from the next. *Almost* disjointed because some interviewees suggested that their everyday lives at the Hundertwasser-Haus were afforded an ongoing, banal, low-key kind of utopianism by the constant presence of tourists outside the house – not necessarily (in fact highly likely *not*) the visitors described in the notebook extracts above but perhaps engaged in similar activities outside the house:

Anna: I love coming home, it's a lovely feeling! ... Having the tourists outside, it's always a joyful experience ... they are relaxed and having a good time and because they're in the way – and some of us [residents] are annoyed by this too – they make you slow down, so you get this background feeling that you're always on holiday too! It's hard to explain – you know they are always there and there's a buzz outside which you sometimes get when you come home.

Other residents were distinctly critical about, and frustrated by, the tourists. Yet for Anna, they simply added to the 'lovely feeling' that was repeated when she entered the house. This was a sense of 'coming home' that was qualitatively different from Hundertwasser's and Koller's poetic narratives. The architecture of the house was important in itself – but more so in that it attracted countless, nameless tourists whose appearance outside the house prompted the constant feeling of being on holiday – surely a utopian desire for many people. Residents rarely related to tourists and certainly only to a tiny minority of visitors for very brief snatches of time – indeed, apart from John's story above, only two other residents mentioned brief encounters with tourists. Hence it is with confidence that I suggest the moments of euphoria experienced by tourists and by Anna occurred proximate to the Hundertwasser-Haus but were virtually unrelated – and, however, I frame it, it seems inappropriate to try to narrate them both together into a coherent representation of the house other than to juxtapose them here.

Discussion: utopia and disjuncture

Utopia

In recent years, socio-spatial theorists have sought to articulate a multiplicity of utopian hopes and desires (Harvey 2000; Baeten 2002; Anderson and Fenton 2008). Significantly, much of this work has centred around the recognition of specific political, social and affective intensities that

constellate around hope. In the course of this article, I too have sought to identify multiple ways in which the Hundertwasser-Haus has moved and mobilized particular utopian impulses. I suggest that some of these impulses are not merely hopeful, however, and that, rather, they share something that can best be characterized as *unsettling* and/or euphoric.

Hundertwasser's philosophical approach to building practices – and his special attention to the productive role of natural processes, building workers, and inhabitants – was indicative of an unsettling utopianism whose aesthetic politics is both creative and disruptive. As I highlighted, Hundertwasser's valorisation of *ruin* recalls a slew of painful, discomforting, even terrifying utopian desires. Press coverage about the house rehearsed quite different – but more familiar – utopia discourses. Their coverage elided utopia with fantasy and value-less escapism, in order to deride and ridicule Hundertwasser's architectural style. Yet commentators shared with Hundertwasser a sentiment that his disruption of the architectural *status quo* was profoundly affecting and strangely enticing. Stemming from Hundertwasser's fame and increasing press attention, it was the gathering *idea* of the Hundertwasser-Haus that disrupted common understandings of social housing, art, tourist destination, etcetera. Somewhat contingently – and unintentionally – the uncanny combination of those architectural movements imbued the house with an unsettling utopianism that has been strangely enticing for thousands of visitors, which, according to at least one interviewee, causes female visitors to break into tears.

During the course of much broader discussions about the house, individual residents identified isolated (and sometimes more enduring) utopian moments, emotions and senses of nostalgia that were of a different register from, but *sometimes* tangentially related to, those contained in Hundertwasser's work or press coverage. Theirs were everyday utopian moments, each constituting 'an active passivity ... founded on the rhythm of passions, little daily gestures, tiny imaginary or fantastic productions' (Gambacorta 1989, p. 121). I want to foreground the moments of *euphoria* and nostalgia that several residents spoke of, because these are specifically *not* implied in the forward-facing temporalities of Bloch's (1995) 'not-yet'. They are set apart from the intending subject who hopes *for* utopia, because these moments – long since gone – were not characterized by a sense of lack or longing, but by intensities which produced euphoric paradises lived of and for a spatio-temporal moment. As Garforth (2009, p. 17) suggests, 'at

issue here is the body's potential refusal to be restricted to rational intentions, plans and orderings, in whose unintending, excessive desires the possibility of dis-alienation is discernible'.

Recent work on trans-individual flows of hope with/in everyday lives does indeed scramble the futurity associated with hope (Anderson 2006). Yet hope may distinguished from other utopian affects (such as euphoric, joyful moments) because hope *must* still take a determinate object. That object is either a lack or longing-for; or it is a vaguely-defined future, where things could be better: posing 'the question of what will come to be by dimly outlining the contours of something better' (Anderson 2006, p. 749). Bloch suggested that architecture constituted one of many fields of human endeavour in which the hope-ful not-yet might be implicated (Levitas 2007). Yet I suggest that the Hundertwasser-Haus provoked utopian impulses that were rendered differently from the hope-ful not-yet, specifically in euphoric moments-for-themselves. The euphoric moments expressed by residents of the Hundertwasser-Haus constituted modest, perhaps self-centred, certainly for-the-moment utopianisms erupting from and folded back into the narratives of their memories and their lifecourses, and – at least in Anna's case, buzzing in and modulating with the banal background spaces of her existence to occasionally enliven her daily life at the house. Like some visitors to the house, and like some residents, Anna experienced what Bennett (2001) terms a form of 'enchantment' – a magical resonance with the banal details of the house that enfolded past, and often indeterminate, un-nameable affective tendencies towards nostalgia into a somatic sense of joy. These moments may not predicated upon determinate hopes for a better *future* – although, certainly, I would agree with Bennett (2001) that moments of enchantment hold kernels of potentially affirmative social change, in particular as they entail intense affective connections with human and non-human others, and because they illuminate 'a heightened awareness of utopian possibilities ... through defamiliarizing processes' (Gardiner 2004, p. 245) that, in the case of this article, query the distinctiveness of feeling at home. Thus, these moments suggest how bodies were moved in and by the house in visceral, aesthetic experiences of a (slightly) better *life* – if only briefly.

Disjuncture

In closing this article, I want to return to the issue of architectural relations, for relations and relationality have suffused much recent geographical thinking (Massey 2005). I want to stress that the utopian moments I identified in this article do not draw together or relate within a single

narrative that constitutes the Hundertwasser-Haus, and nor can one always speak sensibly of identifiable “relations” between each of the moments exemplified here. They do share certain similarities: proximity with one another, in and around the house; sometimes intimate, sometimes tenuous connections with Hundertwasser’s written work; a sense of uncanniness; a sense of euphoric joy rather than hopefulness. Yet between each of these moments lay diverse relations of different qualities and intensities. In some cases such moments were simply proximate in being *about* the Hundertwasser-Haus; similarly, they are simply proximate within the narrative of this article. On the latter of these points, the seemingly tenuous or dissociated linkages between the moments in this article is, of course, a function of the always–already partial engagement that a researcher can have with any building. Indeed, in some senses, I have simply sought to acknowledge this partiality a little more fully in this article.

Yet, in thinking about the way in which I wanted to narrate and tie together the disparate examples presented here, I was struck that the relationships between the people, experiences, texts and ideas expressed herein *were* variable in quality and depth. Those relations (specifically between utopian moments) were sometimes intimate – for instance in the case of a resident and artist who was a fan of Hundertwasser’s work. In other cases, those relations sometimes tenuous, sometimes absent or at least disjointed – sometimes all three. There *were* occasional meetings between residents and tourists, brief chatterings, a vague awareness of one-another constitutive of a holiday feeling– but sometimes, usually, complete ignorance of residents to tourists or vice-versa. Here, there was a sense of Massey’s (2005, p. 149) ‘throwntogetherness’: co-presences characterized by vastly different forms and intensities of relatedness and responsibility, and by vastly different ideas and experiences of what the Hundertwasser-Haus was.

Bernard Tschumi (1996) proposes a conception of the architectural event that supplements Jacobs’ (2006) notion thereof. Tschumi’s event is more indicative of the kinds of architectural *movements* I argue presaged the various utopian moments included in this article. For him, architectural events are characterized by dissociation and disjuncture acting both *as a supplement to* and *as a kind of* deconstructive relationality. Tschumi (1996, pp. 256-257) argues that events be viewed not as a single action or activity (or a giving of material consistency) but a ‘turning point’. Following Foucault, events entail movements of collapse, erosion and dislocation. His deconstructivist apprehension of space renders architectural events as instances of

defamiliarization that open up space for the *new*: for something radically different. In what I read as a rather utopian move, in order to ‘dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society’ (Tschumi 1996, p. 259), he seeks to disrupt the *relations* that connect form and function, event and space: all those relations that allow a building to *cohere*.

Tschumi’s position is actually far from opposed to Jacobs’ (2006) understanding of building events. Indeed, Jacobs seeks to consider the ‘precarious conditions of alliance that allow it [a big building] to cohere (or not) into a built form, housing, architecture’ (Jacobs 2006, p. 22). Yet, like Tschumi, I want to supplement this position by suggesting that the idea (or plural ideas and experiences) of the Hundertwasser-Haus enabled and was enabled by *both* intimate relations *and* tenuous, even absent relations; by coherences and incoherences; by conjunctions and disjunctions, that, somehow, partly intentionally, partly contingently, allowed diverse utopian moments to emerge. Rather than observing that those precarious relations result in a coherent form, I want to suggest that the many, cross-cutting movements of the Hundertwasser-Haus were often constituted *only* by literal co-presence and proximity around the house and neither amounted to nor can be corralled by a grand orchestrating set of relations that linked tourists to one another, or to residents, or to Hundertwasser, or to press coverage, in the name of the Hundertwasser-Haus. They may not dislocate conservatism, but the radical contingency, euphoric newness and un-graspable incoherence of this series of moments followed precisely from unsettling, disruptive, combinative *potentialities* within the house and precisely from the fact that they do not fall within any neat, singular, coherent (and hence predictable) architectural/utopian narrative or idea about the house.

This contribution has attempted – however partially in itself – to bear witness to some of the complexities and contradictions that are entailed in some architectural movements at one building. But I hope that, for geographers at least, it both allows for further study of buildings and other phenomena whose constituent elements do not quite weave together coherently; whilst an acknowledgment of those diverse movements might also expand the range of utopian emotions, experiences and discourses whose import is – I believe – critical to uncovering a fuller range of more optimistic dispositions to the world.

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Peter Kraftl
Department of Geography
University of Leicester
Leicester LE1 7RH
United Kingdom
Email: pk123@le.ac.uk

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Plate 1. The Hundertwasser-Haus (right). Note obvious contrast with mid-twentieth century social housing to its left. Author's photograph.

Plate 2: The Hundertwasser-Haus, showing the café (bottom left) and *Wintergarten* (inside large arch, middle right). Author's photograph.

Endnotes

¹ Applicants must be Austrian or EU citizens, or a “recognized other” and have lived with a Viennese address for two years. The maximum income limits for eligibility are as follows for 2003 (year of study): for a one person household, EUR 25,000 a year (GBP 17,000); for a four person household, EUR 48,000 a year (GBP 33,000). Rent in the house varies by size of apartment. However, the standard Viennese rates are EUR 2.08 per m² per week for a category B (large- to medium-sized) flat, which works out at around EUR 50 per week.

² Images of Hundertwasser’s completed buildings are most easily accessible via the web site of KunstHausWien (2008).

³ See, e.g., two exhibitions in 2008 organized by the Hundertwasser Archiv and KunstHausWien: (1) *Realisierte Utopien – Hundertwasser Architektur* [Realised utopias – Hundertwasser architecture], various locations in France and Switzerland, 3 March–4 October 2008; (2) *Hundertwasser’s Paradiese* [Hundertwasser’s Places of Paradise], photographs by Erika Schmied, Halbtorn, Burgenland, 26 July–31 August 2008. Information obtained from Hundertwasser Archiv, personal communication, 15 July 2008.

⁴ Schloss Neuschwanstein is a fairy-tale royal castle in southern Bavaria, Germany. It is widely believed to be the inspiration for Disney’s castle.

⁵ *Heilige* means holy, but also moving or spiritual. Whilst used colloquially in this instance, the suggestion is here of a magical, euphoric intensity – a time of (literally) remark-able pleasure, heightened by (and in detailed recognition of) certain of the house’s architectural features.