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# **Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructures, Literature and Culture**

**Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies**

## **Introduction: The City Always Wins**

In the first pages of his debut novel, *The City Always Wins* (2017), Omar Robert Hamilton describes Cairo, the city of the title, as an urban space ‘of infinite interminglings and unending metaphor’:

Cairo is jazz: all contrapuntal influence jostling for attention, occasionally brilliant solos standing high above the steady rhythm of the street. [...] These streets laid out to echo the order and ratio and martial management of the modern city now moulded by the tireless rhythms of salesmen and hawkers and car horns and gas peddlers all out in ownership of their city, mixing pasts with their present, birthing a new now of south and north, young and old, country and city all combining and coming out loud and brash and with a beauty incomprehensible. Yes, Cairo is jazz. (2017: 10)

In this introductory passage and throughout the novel, Hamilton’s literary writing invites critical questions about the relationships between post/colonial urban infrastructures, literature and culture—questions that *this* book’s central, organising concept of ‘planned violence’ also sets out to explore. By way of introduction, the novel offers an emblematic window into the discussion of urban infrastructure and post/colonial resistance that this collection undertakes.

Beginning in Cairo ten months after the revolution of January 2011, the first section of Hamilton’s novel captures the heady period of urban resistance and democratic protest that centred on Tahrir Square, a huge public space in the heart of the city. In its second and third sections, however, the narrative turns to chart the suppression of this resistance, socially and spatially, by the Egyptian military’s use of planned infrastructures—barricades, roadblocks, barbed wire—designed to ‘zone’ and ‘confine’ protesters, ‘segregating them in limited spaces of war’ (Abaza, 2013: 127). These planned infrastructures crush the revolutionary movement

with which the novel opens, as state and private actors turn their militarized infrastructure and ‘weaponized architecture’ on their civilian populations (Graham, 2011: xiii-xv; see also Lambert, 2012). It is in this sense that the novel finds itself conceding that, in the end, ‘the city always wins’.

*The City Always Wins* thus raises some of the key questions that are taken up in the sixteen chapters and three creative pieces that constitute this edited collection, *Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure, Literature and Culture*. The contributors explore along a number of different vectors—metaphorical, linguistic, spatial, and historical—how urban infrastructures make manifest social and cultural inequalities, and how art forms including literature can speak back to these often violent coordinates. In Hamilton's opening description of Cairo, quoted above, the multiple layers of planned and unplanned urban life resemble the ricocheting notes of an improvised jazz score, suggesting something of the spontaneous effects and energies of everyday life as they play out over the underlying urban infrastructures designed to ‘order and ratio and martial’ city space. These are the ‘physical and spatial arrangements’ from which a society’s overarching values and prejudices can be read, and which, as Anthony King observes, are nowhere ‘more apparent than in the “colonial cities” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whether in Africa, Asia or middle America’ (1976: xii). Cairo’s urban development and spatial arrangements, forged during Britain’s occupation of Egypt from 1881, materialize this trajectory (see Mourad, 2017: 22), as do other cities examined in this collection: Johannesburg, Belfast, London, Delhi, New York, Oxford. As Frantz Fanon evocatively described in his account of the colonial city as ‘a world divided into compartments’, such segregationist infrastructural planning relied on ‘lines of force’ that brought ‘violence into the home and into the mind of the native’ (2001: 29). According to

Fanon, urban planning in Algiers, as in Cairo and other colonial cities, was a violent materialisation of colonialism's exploitative project: it was a 'planned violence', as this book terms it.

In this passage, Hamilton also points to countervailing aspects, however, including the contingency of these rationalist, geometric planning regimes. Reinterpreting and reclaiming this planned space are the interventions of ordinary people, 'the tireless rhythms of salesmen and hawkers and car horns and gas peddlers all out in ownership of their city' (2017:10). The array of informal social and economic activities that undercut and override the once-colonial city, captures a different and more enabling notion of infrastructure, recalling Abdoumalig Simone's notion of 'people as infrastructure', a concept that 'emphasizes economic collaboration among residents seemingly marginalized from and made miserable by urban life' (2008: 68). But, more than this, they also enact a fundamental repossession of urban space, what Henri Lefebvre would describe as 'the right to the city' (2000: 147-159). Through their physical, kinetic, aural and visual occupation of urban space, these city dwellers lay claim to 'some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanisation', demanding a participatory and democratic say 'over the ways in which our cities are made and remade' (Harvey, 2012: 5).

That Hamilton couches even the informal activities of 'hawkers' and 'peddlers' in such overtly politicized terms sets the context of urban protest and counteractive planned violence that plays out through the novel's fictional account of the Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath. The images of the huge public protests that took place in Tahrir Square in January 2011 have since become iconic symbols of urban resistance in the twenty-first century. Such movements mobilising against planned and other kinds of violence around the world concentrate very precisely on the reclamation of central, public urban spaces (see Franck and Huang,

2012: 3-6). We think here of the occupiers of Gezi Park in Turkey, Catalunya Square in Barcelona, and Zucotti Park in New York, all of which referenced Tahrir as a ‘transposable’ coordinate with which to foreground the political underpinnings of their causes (see Gregory, 2013: 243; Castells, 2012: 21). The ‘performance’ of the right to the city in Tahrir of course ‘depended on the prior existence of pavement, street, and square’, as Judith Butler notes, but, reciprocally, ‘it is equally true that the collective actions collect the space itself, gather the pavement, and animate and organize the architecture’ (2011: n.pag.). As this again suggests, resistance to privately-funded or state-sanctioned ‘planned violence’ is grounded in its strategic reclamation of the physical urban infrastructures of the city. It is through that embodied occupation of physical space, or what Butler calls ‘bodies in alliance’, that the imaginative reconfiguration of alternative urban spaces and modes of city-living might be generated.

Comparably, Rana Dasgupta’s *Capital* (2014), a love-hate song to Delhi and its singular brand of modernity—ribald, brutal, cacophonous, exhilarating—represents the city as a place of embedded inequalities through its non-fictional yet literary form, a genre explored in more detail by Ankhi Mukherjee in Chapter 4 of this collection. For Dasgupta, the city’s divisions and layerings are cross-hatched with a globalized mass-culture born out of post/colonial conflict (in this case the 1947 Partition). Meanwhile, interstitial subcultures also work to re-elaborate and reconstruct streets, markets and other spaces in ways that involve the city-dwellers themselves. Imitating Dasgupta’s own movement through the city, the book’s mostly untitled chapters rocket the reader through a series of formative post-1991 Delhi experiences from outsourcing and Americanization to corruption and the accumulation of waste. The chapters that dwell on formative moments in the city’s history are then themselves doubly threaded through with the author’s conversations with prototypical ‘Delhi-ites’, engaged varyingly along a spectrum of violent, corrupt and activist projects. By interspersing his movement

through and stoppages in Delhi's clogged motor-way system with the individual stories of his interviewees, Dasgupta lays out the city's chaotic street infrastructure while at the same time plotting intrepid individual routes through it, as indeed does Arundhati Roy's more recent 2017 novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, taken up by Alex Tickell in Chapter 9 of this collection.

Or, to take yet another example, the characters in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* (2010), a novel about the 1990s Civil War in Sierra Leone and its aftermath, recall how the fearsome rebel army, or Revolutionary United Front, swept through the capital Freetown, targeting and destroying with overwhelming violence the infrastructures of city streets, bridges, and government buildings, which to them functioned as oppressive symbols of colonial power. In the war's aftermath, characters like Kai therefore hold memories that are punctuated by painful, no-go areas: the conflict remains embedded in his mental map of the city's infrastructural coordinates. Yet, whilst Forna charts these personal maps of trauma, at the same time she overlays them with life-affirming through-routes that the characters have managed to carve out in spite of the prevailing historical violence. These new urban pathways, built on preferred, often more circuitous walks and drives that were once made for pleasure, allow Kai and others to repossess imaginatively the city they inhabit. The alternative geography allows them a kind of therapeutic movement through the city's lingering planned and re-planned violence.

In this collection, we take inspiration from creative works such as these to focus on the ways in which literary and cultural production can offer diagnostic and at times therapeutic tools for the critical excavation and exposure of planned violence, a concept we outline in more detail below. As importantly, we are interested in how literary and other cultural forms

contribute to processes of social re-imagination and reconfiguration, and therefore also include three pieces of diagnostic creative writing at turning points in the collection. In these ways we repeat and expand with respect to a range of cities the questions that cultural critic Sarah Nuttall asks specifically of Johannesburg: namely, how does the post/colonial city ‘emerge as an idea and a form in contemporary literatures of the city?’ What are the ‘literary infrastructures’ that help to give the city imaginary shape? What forms can build ‘alternative city-spaces’ (2008: 195)? And finally, what are the ‘disruptive questions’ that literary texts ask of urban infrastructure, ‘including in actual practice, on the ground’ (Boehmer & Davies, 2015: 397)?

For a powerful artistic response to revolutionary Cairo alongside and in dialogue with Omar Robert Hamilton’s, we might look to Julie Mehretu’s visual reflections on the heterogeneous, layered explosion of planned and unplanned movement, and formal and informal infrastructures, in her series ‘Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts’—‘Part One’ of which we have reproduced on this book’s cover. Here, the formally planned lines of the urban architect are disrupted by alternative topographical scales and shot through with erratic lines of flight. Through their bricolage-like assemblage these lines capture a descriptive failure to interpret the utopian moment of the Egyptian Revolution, as Nic Simcik-Arese also explores in Chapter 2 below. This failure to decode Cairo’s revolutionary urban space returns us to Hamilton’s literary depictions of the city’s incomprehensibility, especially one striking section of visually conceived dialogue in *The City Always Wins*. Here, his two protagonists, Mariam and Ashraf, are fleeing Tahrir Square after the military has opened fire on their protest:

Ashraf is running, they’re both running. They don’t know which streets are safe. [...] She takes off her kufiyyeh and feels it is heavy with blood.

“Which way’s the palace?”

“I’m sure it’s this way.”

“Which way did we  
come? I don’t recognize  
this street.”

“When we chased  
those boys did we  
turn right or left?”

(2017: 122)

Crucial to Hamilton’s evocation of urban navigation and the avoidance of the Egyptian military’s planned violence is the spatial layout of the text on the page, which is accurately reprinted here. As Mariam and Ashraf begin to flee, deciphering which streets are safe enough to escape down, the text fragments the ‘planned’, formal infrastructures of the page’s margins, translating the curved lines of Mehretu’s art into literary form. Breaking away from this spatial ordering, the text follows Mariam and Ashraf in a jagged dodge-and-weave, capturing their dialogue in stereo and in this way subtly but subversively rerouting urban space, even as the army attempts to deny them their right to the city.

These are just a few examples of the many case studies explored during the two years of the Leverhulme-funded Network, ‘Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure and Literature’, from which this edited collection developed. Throughout the project, we read a range of literary and cultural texts for their subversive reinterpretations of the post/colonial city’s urban planning.<sup>1</sup> By way of further illustration, we might think here, for example, of how Nazneen in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2004) is liberated from the oppressive gender hierarchies of her domestic confinement through her exploration of London’s ‘public realm’ (see Ziegler, 2007: 160); or of Ivan Vladislavić’s attempts in his memoir-collage, *Portrait*

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<sup>1</sup> A full description of the Leverhulme-funded ‘Planned Violence’ project, as well as an archive of recordings and summaries of its various associated talks and workshops, can be found on the network’s website at [www.plannedviolence.org](http://www.plannedviolence.org). Of this book’s co-editors, Elleke Boehmer was the Principal Investigator on the project, and Dominic Davies the Network Facilitator.

*with Keys* (2007), to ‘unlock’ the increasingly securitized and segregated landscape of Johannesburg using formally segmented narrative snapshots of urban mobility (see Mukherjee, 2012); or of the ways in which Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* (2009) renegotiates the post-imperial capital by following the pedestrian wanderings of its asylum-seeking anti-flâneur (see Boehmer & Davies, 2015: 403-404; Noxolo, 2014).

These postcolonial novels represent the ‘act of walking’ as invested with the capacity to reinterpret the infrastructural ordering of the city. They constitute what Michel de Certeau describes as ‘multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elide discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised’ (1988: 96); that is, in this context, the infrastructural field of the post/colonial city’s planned violence. As Caroline Herbert observes of the ‘identifiable urban turn’ in recent postcolonial literary studies, these texts ‘frequently place a “rhetoric of walking” at the centre of their narratives’, emphasising ‘that the postcolonial city is continually remade, reread, and recharted in ways that evade the surveilling gaze of the authorities’ (2014: 203), undermining the efforts of urban planning to constrict and circumscribe the lives of the city’s inhabitants.

However, in *The City Always Wins*, Hamilton’s Egyptian protagonists don’t walk—they run. The urgency of their movement repositions de Certeau’s ‘everyday’ practices of urban subversion within a more immediate and explicitly political context of participatory resistance to the infrastructures of planned violence, as several of this book’s contributors explore in relation to a variety of urban spaces. Art once again forms an important part of this resistance. Indeed, the phenomenon of the Egyptian Revolution in Tahrir underlines very clearly the centrality of cultural production and literary representation to effective urban protest, especially as it mobilizes around, and in resistance to, mechanisms of planned violence. As the

Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif observes in her memoir of this revolutionary period, ‘art galleries opened, and tiny performance spaces’ were created; ‘Mosques and cultural centres clutched at the derelict spaces under overpasses’ (2014: 36; see also Atlas, 2012: 149). Meanwhile, though ‘graffiti existed all over the city of Cairo well before January 2011, [...] these gained a mesmerising new dimension after the revolution’ (Abaza, 2013: 125). Intervening into (and onto) the infrastructural canvases of the city’s physical public spaces, graffiti and street art demonstrated ‘an irreverent disregard for walling infrastructure and a strategic re-appropriation of it’ (Davies, 2017a: 15).

If Hamilton’s novel concludes with the disillusionment of its revolutionary characters and the imprisonment of the movement’s organising members, it nevertheless retains elements of the utopian impulse that underpinned Egypt’s January 2011 revolution, as well as the democratically networked social movements that drove it forward (see Castells, 2012: 228). Dasgupta and Forna, for their part, also see an inventive and at times subversive energy shaping life on the street in Delhi and Freetown, no matter how restricted these spaces may be by the forces of neoliberal development or civil war. Postcolonial literary and cultural works such as these—from novels and memoirs through to dramatic performance and street art—thus also contribute significantly to the utopian work of urban reconstruction and the imagination of alternative futures—futures that are, perhaps, more democratic, socially inclusive and politically egalitarian. As the postcolonial critic Bill Ashcroft usefully observes:

In literature, the utility of utopia lies in hope itself, in its defining capacity to imagine a different world. Whether there is any political instrumentality in utopian thinking is the same question as the one that arises in all arguments about the book or the barricade—can literature change the world? (2015: 240)

It is in the evocative metaphorical shift between ‘book’ and ‘barricade’ that our concept of ‘planned violence’ is rooted and its utopian edge illuminated. Our hope is that, taken together,

the chapters below show that, indeed, literature and culture *can*, despite an often unavoidable complicity and even if sometimes only momentarily, conjure urban spaces resistant to the coercive measures of post/colonial planned violence.

It is for these reasons that, in this introduction, we have settled on the ‘slashed’ configuration, ‘post/colonial’. Throughout, the term draws out for us the historical continuities of the colonial *within* the postcolonial, especially in its infrastructural guises. ‘Post/colonial’ emphasizes the enduring infrastructural shapes of colonial urban planning that reproduce spatial violence in the postcolonial present. This being said, the term simultaneously refers to an emerging critical attention paid in all the essays collected here to the ‘proliferation of utopian hope’ in postcolonial texts (Zabus 2015:12-13).

## **Planned Violence**

The ‘Planned Violence’ Network, that produced and gave shape to this essay collection, hammered out across the course of its two years a formulation of ‘planned violence’ that undergirds the book, as we will now outline. The concept is rooted in the idea of ‘structural violence’ first defined by Johan Galtung in his groundbreaking article, ‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’ (1969). According to Galtung, ‘violence is built into the structure [of society] and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’ (1969: 170-171). These structural forms of violence usually remain invisible, deeply embedded within the spatial and infrastructural configurations of contemporary city life. Nevertheless, such ‘invisible’ forms of violence can often produce ‘directly visible [...] violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent’ (Žižek, 2008: 1)—a point taken up by Zen Marie in Chapter 5, for example. This making visible also involves a call to ‘step back’, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, so that we

might better ‘perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts’ (1). It is in that process of stepping back that ‘the diagnostic effects of the literary’ are again highlighted:

the literary is here invested with a capacity to respond to and potentially rewrite urban infrastructures and the planned violence inscribed within their contours, generating alternative ways of viewing, understanding and inhabiting those cityscapes. (Boehmer & Davies, 2015: 398-399)

For several urban theorists, focusing on infrastructure provides the occasion for a more nuanced understanding of planned violence, especially in interdisciplinary contexts.<sup>2</sup> The anthropologist Brian Larkin argues persuasively that infrastructures ‘need to be analysed as concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles oriented to addressees’ (2013: 329). Meanwhile, in their discussion of infrastructural violence, ethnographers Dennis Rodgers and Bruce O’Neill argue that infrastructures provide an ‘ideal ethnographic site for theorising how broad and abstract social orderings such as the state, citizenship, criminality, ethnicity and class play out concretely at the level of everyday practice’ (2012: 402). In an observation that is especially pertinent for this book, they contend that a critical focus on violent infrastructures might also open up ‘a concrete way of discussing society’s responsibility for this harm’ (405).

Similarly, architect Eyal Weizman conceives of architecture as a ““political plastic”—social forces *slowing* into form’ (2012: 7). He emphasizes the diagnostic component of this architectural analysis through an emphasis on forensics, which he interprets as ‘the art of the forum’: ‘Because objects cannot actually speak, there is a need for a “translator” or an “interpreter”—a person or a set of technologies to mediate between the thing and the forum’ (8-9). Transposing these architectural observations into the physical world of urban infrastructure,

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<sup>2</sup> As Bechir Kenzari has observed, ‘the phenomenon of violence is still understudied as an architectural subject’ in large part because of ‘the boundaries between disciplines’ (2011: 13).

as we did in our 2014-16 workshops on ‘forensic’ and other infrastructures, encourages the unpacking of the social and political forces that have solidified in the urban planning of post/colonial cities.

Infrastructure, as Ara Wilson further recognizes, often functions as a commons: ‘much of what counts as infrastructure is associated with utilities or public goods’ (268). Or, as one of our contributors Michael Rubenstein notes, infrastructural development is often undertaken as ‘public works’, with ‘water, electricity and gas’ supplies being a case in point (2010: 5-6). Infrastructure thus often ‘remains apart from commoditisation’, though its association with ‘the common good’ is a site of ‘constant struggle’ (Rubenstein et al., 2015: 577). The public underpinnings of infrastructural development also correspond directly to public *spaces*, those urban arenas contained by and built from urban infrastructure that operate as civic platforms for democratic political engagement, with Tahrir Square once again being a case in point. As a number of urban theorists have shown, public space, and the publicly owned infrastructure through which such spaces are constituted, are a fundamental component of the construction of the right to a more ‘socially and spatially just’ city (see Mitchell, 2003; Harvey, 2009; Soja, 2010).

Most of the chapters that make up this book illuminate the interconnections of ‘planned violence’ with specific infrastructural developments such as walls (Chapter 6), motorways (Chapter 8), and even football clubs (Chapter 3). The essays also demonstrate how coercive forces like kettling and canalizing delimit and condition urban social relations. Though a number of critics have emphasized the extent to which infrastructure is supposed to remain ‘invisible’, reducible to nothing more than a ‘taken-for-granted background hum’ and noticeable only when it ‘fails’ (Wilson, 2015: 270; see also Graham, ed., 2010), in the post/colonial context this is often not the case. Indeed, colonial planners often made explicit the grandeur

of their infrastructural projects, which offered ‘imperial administrators, financial speculators and colonial writers alike a symbolic reference point of supposed “civilisation” and “modernity”’ (Davies, 2017b: 2). Within specifically *urban* colonial contexts, infrastructural development functioned as one of the ‘most spectacular showcases of imperial modernity’, a process of which the Raj’s early-twentieth-century construction of New Delhi is an exemplary case in point (see Nightingale, 2012: 219-225). As Stephen Legg writes, with reference to Fanon’s conception of the divided colonial city, against ‘the sterile, geometric spaces of New Delhi, “Old Delhi” was depicted as an organic space’ bereft of ‘extensive modern sanitation and infrastructure’ (2007: 1). Whilst such uneven and segregationist infrastructural planning was continually subverted by everyday practice, including social movements and the labour routes of colonized populations, urban spatial templates from colonial times linger on into the present.

To bring this post/colonial trajectory of urban infrastructure full circle, twenty-first century neoliberal urban development appears once again to be increasingly drawn to the construction of explicitly *visible* infrastructural projects (see Easterling, 2014: 1). Most obvious in this regard is the proliferation of ‘corporate skyscraper headquarters’ as ‘symbols of the aggressive, centripetal pull of capitalist urbanism’, as urban theorist Stephen Graham observes (2016a: 152). As he writes, we now live in ‘a world where competition between rival cities and states becomes indexed and fetishized through the relative size and scale of vertical urban forms and spectacles’ (161-162). D. Asher Ghertner further explores the ‘aesthetic’ component of this process of ‘world-class city making’, which combines ‘a mental image’ of the neoliberal city with a dramatic rebranding of urban space as part of ‘a speculative project of attracting capital investment’ (2015: 24). The result is what Graham and Simon Marvin have called ‘splintering urbanism’, an ‘unbundling’ of infrastructure networks that stratifies

cities through increasingly complex layers of privatization (2001: 33-34). Such processes limit—if not entirely eradicate—urban public spaces, thereby placing increased and increasing restrictions on those who are able to assert their claims upon the city (see Harvey, 2012: xv).

Faced with this privatized urbanism, it is politically imperative that our discussions of ‘planned violence’ also emphasize the resistant flip-side of infrastructural analysis, something that once again often finds expression in literary, and other cultural and linguistic forms. As Edward Soja comments, ‘writing the city can contribute to an understanding of urban life in an era of globalisation’ (2003: 272). Concurring, Mike Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins and Sophia Beal, the editors of a special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* entitled ‘Infrastructuralism’, ‘begin with the assumption that [...] new ways of thinking will find powerful forms of expression in literary fictions, where speculation and experimentation beyond the factual are made uniquely possible’ (2015: 575). That they undertake this project by focusing ‘on literary fictions that try to make infrastructure, as well as its absence, visible’ (576), is indicative of a wider infrastructural turn in post/colonial literary and cultural studies. So, too, in *Imperial Infrastructure*, his book-length study of Britain’s imperial infrastructural development, Dominic Davies has argued that representations of infrastructure in colonial literature not only ‘reveal imperialism’s underlying dynamics’, but also how these ‘developments are intimately linked to forms of resistance’ (2017b: 6, 262). Graham meanwhile has interrogated ‘the sci-fi visions of Wells, Lang, Ballard and various cyberpunk authors’ to stress ‘the impossibility of some binary opposition between “factual” and “fictional” cities’ (2016b: 389), an entanglement further highlighted and unpicked by Terence Cave below, in his exploration of China Miéville’s fictional cities in Chapter 14.

In related terms, the environmentalist critic Rob Nixon also draws directly on Galtung's work to call for narratives that 'plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time':

The representational challenges are acute, requiring creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency. (2011: 10)

Nixon's qualificatory renaming of 'structural violence' as 'slow violence' introduces a temporal dimension that highlights the connections between the structural policies of the neoliberal order and its catastrophic consequences, which are often felt in distant geo-historical spaces. In so doing, he avoids the 'static determinism' of which Galtung's theory of structural violence might be accused (10-11). But Nixon's renaming also emphasizes the resistant agency of literary and cultural responses to infrastructural violence as it occurs in post/colonial contexts, an issue also addressed by Zen Marie, Hanna Bauman, and Louisa Layne in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this collection, respectively.

If 'the city is a vast narrative structure that constantly re-presents itself', as Nuttall suggests (2008: 216), then the essays brought together here can be said to offer a forensic analysis of those precise, intimate relations through which urban structural violence manifests and comes apart in a range of narrative structures. Together, the essays diagnose the violence embedded in contemporary post/colonial urban infrastructures, but they also participate in the utopian project to reimagine and even rebuild more spatially and socially just cities. As Edward Soja writes:

Seeing justice spatially aims above all at enhancing our general understanding of justice as a vital attribute and aspiration in all societies. It seeks to promote more progressive and participatory forms of democratic politics and social activism, and to provide new ideas about how to mobilize and maintain cohesive coalitions and

regional confederations of grassroots and justice-oriented social movements. (2010: 6)

Collectively, the essays brought together here demonstrate how literary writing and other forms of cultural production can make sharp interventions into the post/colonial world's unevenly developed, varyingly segregated and ever violent city spaces. Shifting between the diagnostic components of literary mappings and the reimagined pasts and futures produced by all kinds of creative cultural work, these essays strive to challenge in at once forceful and forensic ways the planned violence exerted by post/colonial urban infrastructures.

### **Chapter Breakdown**

*Planned Violence* is divided into three sections, each composed of five chapters: Section I, 'Planned/Unplanned Cities'; Section II, 'Forensic Infrastructures'; and Section III, 'Structural Violence, Narrative Structure'. To conclude each of these sections we include a creative response by a contributing author: James Attlee, at the end of Section I, Selma Dabbagh, at the end of II, and Courttia Newland, at the end of III. All three contributed as keynote speakers and performers during the 'Planned Violence' network between 2014 and 2016, and their interventions in turn scrutinize the urban environments in which they or their characters find themselves. The collection in this way remains attuned to the centrality of creative literary writing, both fictional and non-fictional, and to the diagnostic and forward-looking project of this collection as a whole. Moreover, though the essays are divided into the different themed sections, these core themes are also threaded spatially throughout the book, as they are taken up and analyzed from different critical angles by the chapters' respective authors.

To highlight the visual component of creative efforts to interpret post/colonial urban infrastructures, we have also prefaced the book's three sections with photographs of London taken by the self-described 'place-hacker' Bradley Garrett. Garrett's research into urban exploration in the British capital and elsewhere has revealed this subterranean practice as motivated in part by a desire to 'infiltrate' the city, to lay 'bare' the sedimented layers of its used and disused infrastructural arrangements—almost literally to 'hack' into the spatial and vertical history of a place, as literary writers and artists do also. As Garrett's photographs suggest, there is more to place-hacking than simply the physical occupation of abandoned, forgotten or forbidden spaces. Garrett's images suggest that in fact the urban explorer is something of an 'explorer-documentarian', or 'guerrilla preservationist, conserving, through video footage and photographs, a record of a particular time and place—preserving what will inevitably change and braiding themselves into those transitions' (2013: 56). Whether peering over the precipice of multi-storey buildings or tunneling through bundles of infrastructure cabling, Garrett's photographs encourage readers to insinuate themselves into the urban environment, to reflect on the geometry and the physics of the place-hack, and to witness the urban form as both a material and narrative structure.

The chapters in the first section, 'Planned/Unplanned Cities', begin by focusing on the ways in which formal urban planning in post/colonial cities has been recorded, disrupted, transgressed and reinterpreted by informal, unplanned modes of urban living. The essays analyze how these are recorded in literary fictional and non-fictional writing, as well as exploring how such informality is initiated by other kinds of artistic and community-led dramatic cultural production.

Loren Kruger's opening chapter, 'World Fairs and Local Streets: Global Aspirations, Structural Violence and the Cultural Imagination of Chicago and Johannesburg in the Era of

Segregation', shows how *art moderne* architecture on Chicago's streets and its Century of Progress Fair in 1933 influenced the Empire Exhibition and urban form in Johannesburg in 1936. By tracing these connections, she shows how in the shadow of the two white cities, black lives were threatened by planned and unplanned violence, and so emphasizes the counter-intuitive fact that Chicago's black South Side was more segregated than Johannesburg's inner districts in the 1930s. Her chapter then compares critical responses to segregation by African-Americans and black South Africans, and the literary expression of these tensions in fiction. In particular, she compares Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Modikwe Dikobe's *Marabi Dance*, which combine sociological and ethnographic research with melodrama and life-writing to depict black women and men who claim more fully the right to their native cities.

Building on these tensions between planned and unplanned urban forms, Nic Simcik Arese's chapter, 'A Sayi' and the "Deep State": Conspiracy and Bureaucracy in Julie Mehretu's depictions of Tahrir Square, Cairo', explores the relationship between conspiracy and the city by drawing together, in comparative analysis, Julie Mehretu's already-mentioned painting series 'Mogamma: A Painting in Four Parts', the author's own ethnographic research in 2011-2013 revolutionary Cairo, and sustained reflection on urban-based critical theory. By demonstrating how Mehretu represents the 'grey space' or 'thirdspace' of symbolic urban fora such as Tahrir Square through a process of marking, layering, and erasing, Simcik Arese shows how the city becomes defined by the gap between that which is spontaneous and that which is planned. The resulting effect of sociopolitical disorientation, he argues, can be connected both to Bruno Latour's landmark essay, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', and the logic sustaining many of Egypt's conspiratorial and often violent tropes. Indeed, the chapter grounds these characteristics of urban conspiracy and violence in revolutionary Egypt,

showing how, especially when times are uncertain, they thrive in the gap between planned and spontaneous space.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the first section focus closely on two highly contrasting urban spaces, the relatively small but socially divided British city of Oxford, and India's vast city of Mumbai, which is marked by some of the sharpest inequalities in the world. In Chapter 3, Will Ghosh considers sport as a lens through which to clarify Oxford's histories of planning and urban infrastructure, focusing on media baron Robert Maxwell's life in the city and his ownership of Oxford United Football Club. Ghosh situates the role of the football club in the changing urban landscape in order to think about the way civic institutions—sporting or cultural—reciprocally impact upon urban life and a sense of regional identity. In the following chapter, Ankhi Mukherjee turns to the more obviously postcolonial city of Mumbai to read narrative non-fiction such as Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, Siddhartha Deb's *The Beautiful and the Damned* and Sonia Faleiro's *Beautiful Thing*, examining the ways in which these genres of aberrational fiction defy the naturalistic and neo-realist documentary style generally associated with humanitarian narratives on the urban poor. Drawing on the Freudian concept of the uncanny, she shows how works such as these push against the limits of social justice discourse—as well as creative literature on poverty—and cultivate physical proximity with the objects of inquiry through the sustained and destabilizing encounters they document.

Concluding, Zen Marie's chapter also brings the section full circle, returning to Johannesburg and the Drill Hall, an historic site in the city's central business district that since 2004 has been re-appropriated as a space for hosting a range of cultural organisations, charities and collectives. This chapter focuses in particular on the resident arts collective Keleketla! in order to explore how planned violence and city-making impact one another in the post-apartheid

African metropolis. Central to this account is once again the question of the ability of the creative arts and related imaginative processes to work as diagnostic and critical emancipatory tools, not least in making links between direct violence and more abstract forms of planned violence. Marie explores the extent to which the performative force of arts and cultural activism re-imagine and make city space more humane in the face of encroaching neoliberal machinations and divisions. Yet, whilst *Keleketla!* offers an example of a city mobilizing the arts in an attempt to achieve ‘world class’ status, the chapter concludes that such efforts ultimately fail to implement long-term sustainable systems due to layers of structural and bureaucratic violence, and the withdrawal of basic infrastructure such as water and electricity.

In the collection’s first ‘interlude’, creative non-fiction writer James Attlee reflects on his book-length project, *Isolarion* (2007), which mapped the multicultural interactions and encounters of Oxford’s Cowley Road, ten years after its original publication. Zooming in on the wider map traced earlier by Will Ghosh, Attlee offers both an anecdotal and psycho-geographical account of a local street that in turn is embedded in much wider, global dynamics, from travel and terrorism to imperialism and gentrification. Through his visits to Cowley Road’s numerous hairdressing salons and his conversations with homeless buskers, he unpacks the everyday narratives that give shape to this microcosmic cross-section of urban life.

Attlee’s close attention to the details of urban life is extended into the critical perspective of the book’s second section, ‘Forensic Infrastructures’. Here, the five constituent chapters attempt to ‘read’ infrastructural development for the social and political forces that have solidified in their contours. They also make use of a range of literary and artistic projects as interpreters of post/colonial urban forms.

In the second section’s first essay, Hanna Bauman explores the ‘intimacy’ of infrastructure, focusing in particular on vulnerability and abjection in Palestinian Jerusalem. Bauman

argues that though colonial infrastructures can serve to appropriate territory, they just as often exclude populations from access to the most basic of resources they need to survive, including food and water. Combining the work of Palestinian visual artist Khaled Jarrar with findings from her on-site research, Bauman highlights the embodied and affective impact of violent infrastructures, focusing in particular on the Israeli Separation Wall. Where most accounts view the role of infrastructure in Israel/Palestine in terms of geopolitics or military strategy, her essay shows how cultural engagements with its personal, embodied and symbolic affects can help us understand how this planned violence operates.

Building on Baumann's analysis of infrastructure as both coercive and intimately embodied, Louisa Layne in chapter 7 discusses how the work of British dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson explores the often confrontational relationship in the 1970s and '80s between sound systems in London and the Metropolitan police. Johnson's poems often document the shutting down by the police of a sound system event—the sub-cultural space of the Caribbean party—and how this has been resisted through the medium of music. As this shows, though the sound system is a relatively closed off or autonomous aesthetic space within the city, it is nevertheless constantly impacted by London's wider political context and in turn pushes back against it. Johnson's portrayal of the sound system therefore functions as a metaphor for what Kobena Mercer describes as the black artist's 'burden of representation' (1990). This 'burden' plays out in Johnson's poetry, particularly his sound-system poems, to illustrate how the at once politicized and polemical mode of black art is often not primarily a result of the artist's own formal choices. Rather, it is determined by the invasive state infrastructure that forces it into a defensive position, but from which it then mobilizes the various aesthetic and structural components at its disposal in order to fight back.

In chapter 8, 'Throwing Petrol On the Fire', Stephen O'Neill continues the focus on invasive urban infrastructures in an historical account of the planning, protest and violence that shadowed the building of the Belfast Urban Motorway. The essay explores the relationship between this development and the marginalization of the working-class areas of the city, such as the Lower Falls and Shankill, but it also highlights the wide-ranging opposition to the scheme, which came both from local community activist groups as well as paramilitaries. The collaboration of the Motorway planners with the security forces offers a clear instance of deliberately planned violence used as a method of social segregation, while the literary representations of the scheme, including Gerry Adams' memoir *Falls Memories* (1982), and novels such as Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street* (1996) and Glenn Patterson's *The International* (1999), document a range of cultural-political responses to the marginalizing logic of the motorway's planning.

Alex Tickell in chapter 9, 'From the Nation to the Civic: New Reading Strategies for the Indian City', also considers how an urban imaginary might be reflected in fiction, in this case Indian fiction in English. Specifically, he asks how rapid changes in Indian cities after economic liberalization in 1991 modified and challenged the 'civic aesthetics' of the Indian Anglophone novel. To pursue this question, he focuses on work by Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga, both writers who have critically responded to the Indian ideal of the 'World-Class City'. Tickell deftly balances the developing urban aesthetics of their fiction with the rise of a form of governance by aesthetics as theorized by Ghertner, concluding that the 'planned' violence of the city is expressed as much in the struggle over its aesthetic meaning as in its material transformation.

In chapter 10, 'Blue Johannesburg', Pamela Gupta takes a different aesthetic gauge for material transformation than the novel, looking at how certain colonial Portuguese urban

traces were enlisted in the making of post-apartheid Johannesburg. The chapter experiments with an alternative format for writing (and visualizing) the city that is offered by the perspective of the automobile, and entwines various Portuguese materialities including blue azulejo tilework and overlooked monuments to characterize this thriving diasporic community's infused urban presence. It suggests that these material adaptations provide an important aesthetic undertow to contemporary life in Johannesburg, a city often still depicted as violent and segregated.

In the second 'interlude', a fictional vignette 'Take Me There', British-Palestinian novelist Selma Dabbagh considers how invasive infrastructures—in this case the Israeli Separation Wall—impinge on personal lives and domestic intimacies, so giving further life to the divisions that Bauman also discusses. The anonymous couple featured in this short piece of fiction relate to each other by both sharing accounts of their everyday lives and re-narrating historical moments of successful resistance to other instances of planned violence. For Dabbagh's female character in particular, planned violence is both visible and invisible, physical and psychological, as the landscapes she longs for mostly lie beyond the wall that by day obstructs the view from her window and by night invades her dreams. In the story's concluding geographical overlaying, Dabbagh conflates this violent infrastructure and its hauntings with another historically notorious instance of planned violence, the Berlin Wall.

The first three essays of Section III, 'Structural Violence, Narrative Structure', return to Indian writing, though this time to explore, conversely, the diasporic northern city, histories of past dissidence, and the uneven development of literary forms. Ruvani Ranasinha in "'A shadow class condemned to movement": Literary Urban Imaginings of Illegal Migrant Lives in the Global North', examines how urban infrastructure and *de facto* segregation shape the physical and psychological experiences of Third World illegal migrants in Kiran Desai's *Man*

Booker-prize winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). While the lack of rights of Third World labour often remains officially undocumented, Ranasinha shows that the novel can give us insight into the exclusion, containment and marginalization experienced by the global underclass in metropolitan New York. Meanwhile Ole Birk Laursen in his chapter returns us to questions of terrorism and planned violence in the early twentieth century, reading W. Somerset Maugham's short story 'Giulia Lazzari' (1928) alongside the revolutionary reminiscences of the Indian nationalists Virendranath 'Chatto' Chattopadhyaya and M. P. T. Acharya. In contrast with the policed borders of Desai's novel, as discussed by Ranasinha, Laursen shows that revolutionary infrastructures in place in Europe in the early twentieth century allowed dissidents to travel frequently across borders in pursuit of Indian freedom.

Underlining several of the collection's overarching concerns, Pablo Mukherjee's chapter, 'Detecting Uneven Development: Clues, Cities and the Global Nineteenth Century', explores the relationship between different types of power and violence, organisations of planned space, and literary form as registered in the popular world-literary genre of crime fiction. Drawing on Galtung, Mukherjee argues that the uneven distribution of power underpinning structural violence has taken its most intense form over the past half millennium, a time when capitalism became globally dominant as a single but internally differentiated way of organizing human society. Among the three outstanding features of this 'capitalocene' epoch are colonialism as political practice, urbanization as spatial practice, and textual literacy as cultural practice. This chapter joins with other contributions in this collection by unspooling the common thread that ties them together—that is, structural violence in general, and infrastructural violence in particular.

In Chapter 14, Terence Cave offers an in-depth overview of the prolifically experimental novelist China Miéville, who constantly challenges the linguistic and generic expectations of

his readers. Cave shows how the ‘weird’ creatures, landscapes and urban configurations Miéville relishes appear from a cognitive perspective as a series of impacted collocations that violate this-worldly norms. Beginning with an account of collocation as a linguistic phenomenon, this chapter explores violent or counter-intuitive conjunctions of bodies and spaces (especially urban spaces) across a wide range of Miéville’s fictions, from the political world of the Bas-Lag series, via the impacted cityscape of the procedural noir novel *The City & the City*, to the weird linguistics of *Embassytown*. It demonstrates both the robustness of Miéville’s collocations and inventive storyworlds, but also how these strategies warp and break down when placed under intense fictional pressure. Underscoring the book’s interest in literary subversion, the chapter argues that the power of Miéville’s writing comes not so much from his ideological critiques or his self-referential games with generic tropes, as it does from his ability to exploit the explosive power of barely possible linguistic collocation.

In the collection’s final chapter, Michael Rubenstein returns us to the debate concerning the infrastructural commons, which he roots in the global financial crisis of 2008. Entitled ‘Aquacity Versus Austerity: the Politics and Poetics of Irish Water’, Rubenstein’s chapter shows how the policies of austerity and privatization enacted by European governments in response to the financial crisis have brought the even deeper crisis of the commons into sharper relief. When the Irish government resolved to privatize its water infrastructure in 2013, an unexpectedly strong popular resistance movement took to the streets in protest. Water supply is often symbolic of the commons, and in Irish literature in particular there is a strong tradition of thematizing and formalizing waterworks as an exemplary instance of what Bonnie Honig calls a ‘public thing’ (2017). Rubenstein thus recounts the recent political history of Irish Water alongside the century-long literary history of Irish water in Irish fiction, from James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) to Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* (1967) and, most

recently, to Mike McCormack's *Solar Bones* (2016). In the figure of Irish water and its infrastructures, Rubenstein contends, the Irish literary tradition speaks with urgency to the Irish neoliberal condition.

Finally, in the collection's third creative interlude, Courttia Newland explores through the use of dystopian techniques the increased militarization of post/colonial city spaces and its uneven effects on different racial demographics. His protagonist, Danny, walks through this dystopian city as a way to open up and transgress its regimes of planned violence, even as these encroach with increasing severity and violence on his right to the city and his ability to move through urban space. By speculatively creating a world in which latent regimes of planned violence are brought to the fore, Newland's story offers creative fiction as both a tool for diagnosing the dangerous effects of increased urban militarization and the expansion of oppressive state infrastructures, as well as offering an ominous forewarning of such processes.

Throughout, *Planned Violence* reads a range of literary and cultural responses to a diverse set of post/colonial urban infrastructural conditions in order to shed light on their at once diagnostic and subversive powers. As the essays and fictions together demonstrate, it is through the linguistic and symbolic torsions of writing across a range of genres and forms that new ways of responding to planned violence may emerge. As Sarah Nuttall concludes in her Afterword to the collection, 'the infrastructures of our places and our times are sites of violence, planned and unplanned, as well as modes of re-opening, repair and occupation. In all of these ways they demand our urgent occasion for thinking'. It is on this journey of diagnosis, repair and resistance that *Planned Violence: Post/colonial Urban Infrastructures, Literature and Culture* embarks.

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