by such modes of thought. Our collective responsibilities to human nature and to nature need to be connected in a far more dynamic and co-evolutionary way across a variety of spatiotemporal scales. Issues like conservation of micro habitats, ecological restoration projects, urban design, fossil fuel utilization, resource exploitation patterns, livelihood protections, sustenance of certain geographically specific cultural forms, enhancement of life chances at everything from the global to the local level, all somehow need to be brought together and factored into a more generalized sense of how a political-economic alternative might arise out of the ecological contradictions of a class-bound capitalist system.

We can all seek to be architects of our fates by exercising our will to create. But no architect is ever exempt from the contingencies and constraints of existing conditions and no architect can ever hope, except in that realm of pure fantasy that does not matter, to so control the web of life as to be free of 'the contingent and unsought results' which flow from their actions. Architects and bees at least have that in common, even if what distinguishes them also clearly signals where and how the real political movement to abolish the present abysmal state of things can be set in motion.

CHAPTER 12

The insurgent architect at work

Imagine ourselves as architects, all armed with a wide range of capacities and powers, embedded in a physical and social world full of manifest constraints and limitations. Imagine also that we are striving to change that world. As crafty architects bent on insurgency we have to think strategically and tactically about what to change and where, about how to change what and with what tools. But we also have somehow to continue to live in this world. This is the fundamental dilemma that faces everyone interested in progressive change.

But what kind of world are we embedded in? We know that it is a world full of contradictions, of multiple positionalities, of necessary flights of the imagination translated into diverse fields of action, of uneven geographical developments, and of highly contested meanings and aspirations. The sheer enormity of that world and its incredible complexity provide abundant opportunities for the exercise of critical judgement and of limited freedom of the individual and collective will. But the enormity of apparent choice and the divergent terrains upon which struggles can be conducted is perpetually in danger of generating a disempowering confusion (of the sort that globalization, for example, has strongly promoted). Furthermore, it appears impossible to avoid unintended consequences of our actions, however well thought out. How are we to cut through these confusions and build a different sense of possibilities while acknowledging the power of the constraints with which we are surrounded?

Here are some conversation points in lieu of answers. In the last chapter I argued for a system of *translations* across and between qualitatively different but related areas of social and ecological life. The spatiotemporal scale at which processes operate here makes a difference. For this reason, Wilson considers scale as one of the most important differentiations within the unity of science. *The Communist Manifesto* notes the same problem as revolutionary sentiment passes from the political individual through the factory, political parties, and the nation state to a movement in which workers of the world can unite. Dialectics permits diverse

knowledges and practices to be rendered coherent across scales without resort to some narrow causal reductionism. This dialectical way of thinking echoes aspects of the theory of uneven geographical developments laid out in Chapter 5. I there suggested that the production of spatiotemporal scale is just as important as the production of differentiations within a scale in defining how our world is working and how it might work better.

I now take up these ideas in greater depth. I propose first that we consider political possibilities at a variety of spatiotemporal scales. I then argue that real political change arises out of simultaneous and loosely coordinated shifts in both thinking and action across several scales (either simultaneously or sequentially). If, therefore, I separate out one particular spatiotemporal scale for consideration, in order to understand its role in the overall dynamics of political change, then I must do so in a way that acknowledges its relation to processes only identifiable at other scales. The metaphor to which I appeal is one of several different 'theaters' of thought and action on some 'long frontier' of 'insurgent' political practices. Advances in one theater get ultimately stymied or even rolled back unless supported by advances elsewhere. No one theater is particularly privileged even though some of us may be more able, expert, and suited to act in one rather than another. A typical political mistake is the thoroughly understandable habit of thinking that the only theater that matters is the one that I or you happen to be in. Insurgent political practices must occur in all theaters on this long frontier. A generalized insurgency that changes the shape and direction of social life requires collaborative and coordinating actions in all of them. With that caveat in mind, I consider seven theaters of insurgent activity in which human beings can think and act, though in radically different ways, as architects of their individual and collective fates.

1 The personal is political

The insurgent architect, like everyone else, is an embodied person. That person, again like everyone else, occupies an exclusive space for a certain time (the spatiotemporality of a human life is fundamental). The person is endowed with certain powers and skills that can be used to change the world. He or she is also a bundle of emotions, desires, concerns, and fears all of which play out through social activities and actions. The insurgent architect cannot deny the consequences of that embodiment in material, mental, and social life.

Through changing our world we change ourselves. How, then, can any of us talk about social change without at the same time being prepared, both mentally and physically, to change ourselves? Conversely, how can we change ourselves without changing our world? That relation is not easy to negotiate. Foucault (1984) rightly worried that the 'fascism that reigns in our heads' is far more insidious than anything that gets constructed outside.

Yet we also have to decide – to build the road, the factory, the houses, the leisure park, the wall, the open space . . . And when a decision is made, it forecloses on other possibilities, at least for a time. Decisions carry their own determinations, their own closures, their own authoritarian freight. Praxis is about confronting the dialectic in its 'either/or' rather than its transcendent 'both/and' form. It always has its existential moments. Many of the great architects of the past made their personal political in incredibly decisive as well as authoritarian ways (with results both good and bad according to the partial judgement of subsequent generations).

It is in this sense, therefore, that the personal (including that of the architect) is deeply political. But that does not mean, as feminists, ecologists, and the innumerable array of identity politicians who have strutted their stuff these last few years have discovered to their cost, that virtually *anything* personal makes for good politics. Nor does it mean, as is often suggested in some radical alternative movements (such as deep ecology), that fundamental transformations in personal attitudes and behaviors are sufficient (rather than necessary) for social change to occur.

While social change begins and ends with the personal, therefore, there is much more at stake here than individualized personal growth (a topic that now warrants a separate and large section in many bookstores in the United States) or manifestations of personal commitment. Even when it seems as if some charismatic and all-powerful person – a Haussmann, a Robert Moses, or an Oscar Niemeyer – builds a world with the aim of shaping others to conform to their particular and personal visions and desires, there turns out to be much more to it than just the vision of the person. Class interests, political powers, the mobilization of forces of violence, the orchestration of discourses and public opinion, and the like, are all involved.

But in reflecting on what we insurgent architects do, a space must be left for the private and the personal – a space in which doubt, anger, anxiety, and despair as well as certitude, altruism, hope, and elation may flourish. The insurgent architect cannot, in the end, suppress or repress the personal any more than anyone else can. No one can hope to change the world without changing themselves. The negotiation that always lies at the basis of all architectural and political practices is, therefore, between persons seeking to change each other and the world, as well as themselves.

2 The political person is a social construct

To insist on the personal as political is to confront the question of the person and the body as the irreducible moment (defined at a particular spatiotemporal scale) for the grounding of all politics and social action. But the individual, the body, the self, the person (or whatever term we wish to use) is a fluid social construct (see Chapters 6 and 7) rather than some absolute and immutable entity fixed in concrete. How 'social construction' and 'embodiment' is understood then becomes important. For example, a relational conception of self puts the emphasis upon our porosity in relation to the world of socio-ecological change and thereby tempers many theories of individual rights, legal status, and the like. The person that is political is then understood as an entity open to the innumerable processes (occurring at different spatiotemporal scales) that transect our physical and social worlds. The person must then be viewed as an ensemble of socio-ecological relations.

But an already-achieved spatiotemporal order can hold us to some degree apart from this fluid and open conception in our thought and practices. In the United States, private property and inheritance, market exchange, commodification and monetization, the organization of economic security and social power, all place a premium upon personalized private property vested in the self (understood as a bounded entity, a non-porous individual), as well as in house, land, money, means of production, etc., all construed as the elemental socio-spatial forms of political-economic life. The organization of production and consumption forges divisions of labor and of function upon us and constructs professionalized personas (the architect, the professor, and the poet as well as the proletarian, all of whom, as Marx and Engels point out in *The Communist Manifesto*, 'have lost their halo' and become in some way or another paid agents of bourgeois power). We live in a social world that converts all of us into fragments of people with particular attachments, skills, and abilities integrated into those powerful and dynamic structures that we call a 'mode of production.' Our 'positionality' or 'situatedness' in relation to that is a social construct in exactly the same way that the mode of production is a social creation. This 'positionality' defines who or what we are (at least for now). And 'where we see it from' within that process provides much of the grist for our consciousness and our imaginary.

But 'what and how far we can see' from 'where we see it from' also varies according to the spatiotemporal constructions and our choices in the world we inhabit. Access to information via the media, for example, and the qualities and controls on information flow play an important role in how we can hope to understand and change the world. These horizons,

both spatial and temporal, have simultaneously expanded and compressed over the past thirty years and part of any political project must be to intervene in the resultant information flows in ways that are progressive and constructive. But there is also the need to persuade people to look beyond the borders of that myopic world of daily life that we all necessarily inhabit.

In contrast, the fierce spatiotemporalities of daily life – driven by technologies that emphasize speed and rapid reductions in the friction of distance and of turnover times – preclude time to imagine or construct alternatives other than those forced unthinkingly upon us as we rush to perform our respective professional roles in the name of technological progress and endless capital accumulation. The material organization of production, exchange, and consumption rests on and reinforces specific notions of rights and obligations and affects our feelings of alienation and of subordination, our conceptions of power and powerlessness. Even seemingly new avenues for self-expression (multiculturalism being a prime recent example) are captive to the forces of capital accumulation (e.g. love of nature is made to equal eco-tourism). The net effect is to limit our vision of the possible. No less a person than Adam Smith (cited in Marx, 1976 edition, 483) considered that 'the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments' and that 'the uniformity of (the labourer's) life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind.' If this is only partially true – as I am sure it is – it highlights how the struggle to think alternatives – to think and act differently – inevitably runs up against the circumstances of and the consciousness that derives from a localized daily life. Most insidious of all, is the way in which routine, by virtue of its comfort and security, can mask the ways in which the jarring prospects of transformative change must in the long run be confronted. Where, then, is the courage of our minds to come from?

Let us go back to the figure of the insurgent architect. She or he acts out a socially constructed (sometimes even performative) role, while confronting the circumstances and consciousness that derives from a daily life where demands are made upon time, where social expectations exist, where skills are acquired and supposed to be put to use in limited ways for purposes usually defined by others. The architect then appears as a cog in the wheel of capitalist urbanization, as much constructed by as constructor of that process (was this not as true of Haussmann, Cerda, Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier, Oscar Niemeyer, as of everyone else?).

Yet the architect can (indeed must) desire, think and dream of difference. And in addition to the speculative imagination which he or she necessarily deploys, she or he has available some special resources for critique,

resources from which to generate alternative visions as to what might be possible. One such resource lies in the tradition of utopian thinking. 'Where we learn it from' may then become just as, if not more, important as 'what we can see from where we see it from.'

Utopian schemas of spatial form typically open up the construction of the political person to critique. They do so by imagining entirely different systems of property rights, living and working arrangements, all manifest as entirely different spatial forms and temporal rhythms. This proposed re-organization (including its social relations, forms of reproductive work, its technologies, its forms of social provision) makes possible a radically different consciousness (of social relations, gender relations, of the relation to nature, as the case may be) together with the expression of different rights, duties, and obligations founded upon collective ways of living.

Postulating such alternatives allows us to conduct a 'thought experiment' in which we imagine how it is to be (and think) in a different situation. It says that by changing our situatedness (materially or mentally) we can change our vision of the world. But it also tells us how hard the practical work will be to get from where we are to some other situation like that. The chicken-and-egg problem of how to change ourselves through changing our world must be set slowly but persistently in motion. But it is now understood as a project to alter the forces that construct the political person, my political person. I, as a political person, can change my politics by changing my positionality and shifting my spatiotemporal horizon. I can also change my politics in response to changes in the world out there. None of this can occur through some radical revolutionary break (though traumatic events and social breakdowns have often opened a path to radically different conceptions). The perspective of a long revolution is necessary.

But to construct that revolution some sort of collectivization of the impulse and desire for change is necessary. No one can go it very far alone. But positioned as an insurgent architect, armed with a variety of resources and desires, some derived directly from the utopian tradition, I can aspire to be a subversive agent, a fifth columnist inside of the system, with one foot firmly planted in some alternative camp.

3 The politics of collectivities

Collective politics are everywhere but they usually flow in constrained and predictable channels. If there is any broad swathe of insurgent politics at work in the interstices of urbanization in the advanced capitalist countries, for example, it is a mobilization in defense of private property rights. The violence and anger that greets any threat to those rights and values – be it

from the state or even from agents of capital accumulation like developers – is an awesome political force. But it typically turns inwards to protect already existing personalized 'privatopias.' The same force can be found in the militia or neo-fascist movements on the right (a fascinating form of insurgent politics) as well as within the radical communitarianism of some ecologists.

Such formations of collective governance preclude the search for any far-reaching alternatives. Most politics and collective forms of action preserve and sustain the existing system, even as they deepen some of its internal contradictions, ecologically, politically, and economically (e.g. the collective rush to suburbanize increases car dependency, generates greenhouse gasses, particulate matter pollution, and tropospheric ozone concentrations etc.). The gated communities of Baltimore are a symbol of collective politics, willingly arrived at, gone awry.

Traditional utopianism seeks to confront this prevailing condition. Communitarianism as a utopian movement typically gives precedence, for example, to citizenship, to collective identifications and responsibilities, over the private pursuit of individual advantage and the 'rights talk' that attaches thereto. This ideal founds many a utopian dream, from Thomas More to Fourier, and infuses many contemporary religious movements like those for a Christian Base Community or even the much softer (and some would say much weaker) cultivation of concepts of 'citizenship' as the basis for the good life (see, e.g., Douglass and Friedmann, 1998).

Distinctive communities are painstakingly built by social practices including the exercise of authoritarian powers and conformist restrictions. They are not just imagined (however important the imaginary of them may be). It is useful, therefore, to view an achieved 'community' as an enclosed space (irrespective of scale or even frontier definitions) within which a certain well-defined system of rules prevails. To enter into that space is to enter into a space of rules which one acknowledges, respects, and obeys (either voluntarily or through some sort of compulsion). The construction of 'community' entails the production of such a space. Challenging the rules of community means challenging the very existence of such a collectivity by challenging its rules. It then follows that communities are rarely stable for long. Abundant opportunities exist here for the insurgent architect to promote new rules and/or to shape new spaces. Our capacities as rule makers and rule breakers here enters fully into play. Part of the attraction of the spatial form utopian tradition is precisely the way in which it creates an imaginary space in which completely different rules can be contemplated. And it is interesting to note how the figure of the city periodically re-emerges in political theory as the spatial scale at which ideas and ideals about democracy and belonging can best be articulated.

It is not always easy here to define the difference between insurgent politics of a progressive sort and the exclusionary and authoritarian practices of, say, homeowner associations who defend their property rights. Etzioni (1997), a leading proponent of the new communitarianism, actively supports, for example, the principle of closed and gated communities as a progressive contribution to the organization of social life. Collective institutions can also end up merely improving the competitive strength of territories in the high stakes game of the uneven geographical development of capitalism (see, e.g., Putnam's 1993 account of the institutional bases of uneven geographical development in Italy). For the privileged, community often means securing and enhancing privileges already gained. For the underprivileged it all too often means 'controlling their own slum.'

Dialectical utopianism must confront the production of 'community' and 'coming together for purposes of collective action' in some fashion and articulate the place and meaning of this phenomena within a broader frame of politics. This means a translation to a different scale from that of the embodied political person. Community should be viewed as a delicate relation between fluid processes and relatively permanent rules of belonging and association (like those formally imposed by the nation state). The tangible struggle to define its limits and range (sometimes even territories and borders), to create and sustain its rules and institutions through collective powers such as constitutional forms, political parties, the churches, the unions, neighborhood organizations, local governments, and the like, has proven central to the pursuit of alternatives to the selfishness of personalized market individualism. But, as many have recently pointed out, the re-making and re-imagining of 'community' will work in progressive directions only if it is connected *en route* to a more generalized radical insurgent politics. That means a radical project (however defined) must exist. The rule-making that ever constitutes community must be set against the rule-breaking that makes for revolutionary transformations.

The embeddedness and organized power community offers as a basis for political action is crucial even if its coherence requires democratically structured systems of authority, consensus, and 'rules of belonging'. Thus, although community 'in itself' has meaning as part of a broader politics, community 'for itself' almost invariably degenerates into regressive exclusions and fragmentations (what some would call negative heterotopias of spatial form). Means must therefore be found whereby we insurgent architects can reach out across space and time to shape a more integrated process of historical-geographical change beyond the limits typically defined by some community of common interest. The

construction of collective identities, of communities of action, of rules of belonging, is a crucial moment in the translation of the personal and the political onto a broader terrain of human action. At the same time, the formation of such collectivities creates an environment and a space (sometimes, like the nation state, relatively stable and enduring) that shapes the political person as well as the ways in which the personal is and can be political.

4 Militant particularism and political action

The theory of 'militant particularism' argues that all broad-based political movements have their origins in particular struggles in particular places and times (see Harvey, 1996, Chapter 1). Many struggles are defensive – for example, struggles against plant closures or excessive exploitation of labor, the siting of noxious facilities (toxic waste dumps), the dismantling or lack of social or police protections, violence against women, the environmental transformations proposed by developers, the appropriation of indigenous resources by outsiders, attacks upon indigenous cultural forms, and the like. A widespread politics of resistance now exists, for example, to neoliberalism and capitalism throughout the world. But some forms of militant particularism are pro-active. Under capitalism this typically means struggles for specific group rights that are universally declared but only partially conferred (in the past this has usually meant the rights of entrepreneurs and owners of means of production to freely exercise their rights of ownership without restraint, but it has also extended to include the rights of slaves, labor, women, gays, the culturally different, animals and endangered species, the environment, and the like).

The critical problem for this vast array of struggles is to shift gears, transcend particularities, and arrive at some conception of a universal alternative to that social system which is the source of their difficulties. Capitalism (coupled with modernism and, perhaps, a Eurocentric 'Westernism') successfully did this *vis-à-vis* pre-existing modes of production, but the oppositional movements of socialism, communism, environmentalism, feminism, and even humanism and multiculturalism have all constructed some sort of universalistic politics out of militant particularist origins. It is important to understand how this universalization occurs, the problems that arise, and the role traditional utopianism plays.

Dialectics here is useful. It teaches that universality always exists *in relation to* particularity: neither can be separated from the other even though they are distinctive moments within our conceptual operations and practical engagements. The notion of justice, for example, acquires universality through a process of abstraction from particular instances and

circumstances, but becomes particular again as it is actualized in the real world through social practices. But the orchestration of this process depends upon mediating institutions (those, for example, of language, law, and custom within given territories or among specific social groups). These mediating institutions 'translate' between particularities and universals and (like the Supreme Court) become guardians of universal principles and arbiters of their application. They also become power centers in their own right. This is, broadly, the structure set up under capitalism with the state and all of its institutions (now supplemented by a variety of international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, the United Nations, GATT and the World Trade Organization) being fundamental as 'executive committees' of capitalism's systemic interests. Capitalism is replete with mechanisms for converting from the particular (even personal) to the universal and back again in a dynamic and interactive mode. Historically, of course, the primary mediator has been the nation state and all of its institutions including those that manage the circulation of money.

No social order can, therefore, evade the question of universals. The contemporary 'radical' critique of universalism is sadly misplaced. It should focus instead on the specific institutions of power that translate between particularity and universality rather than attack universalism *per se*. Clearly, such institutions favor certain particularities (such as the rights of ownership of means of production) over others (such as the rights of the direct producers) and promote a specific kind of universal.

But there is another difficulty. The movement from particularity to universality entails a 'translation' from the concrete to the abstract. Since a violence attaches to abstraction, a tension always exists between particularity and universality in politics. This can be viewed either as a creative tension or, more often, as a destructive and immobilizing force in which inflexible mediating institutions (such as an authoritarian government apparatus) claim rights over individuals and communities in the name of some universal principle.

It is here that critical engagement with the static utopianism of spatial form (particularly its penchant for nostalgia) and the loosening of its hold by appeal to a utopianism of spatial-temporal transformation can keep open prospects for further change. The creative tension within the dialectic of particularity-universality cannot be repressed for long. Mediating institutions, no matter how necessary, cannot afford to ossify, and traditional utopianism is often powerfully suggestive as to institutional reforms. The dynamic utopian vision that emerges is one of sufficient stability of institutional and spatial forms to provide security and continuity, coupled with a dynamic negotiation between particularities and universals so as to force mediating institutions and spatial structures to be as open as possible.

At times, capitalism has worked in such a way (consider how, for example, the law gets reinterpreted to confront new socio-economic conditions and how the production of space has occurred throughout the long history of capitalism). Any radical alternative, if it is to succeed as it materializes, must follow capitalism's example in this regard. It must find ways to negotiate between the security conferred by fixed institutions and spatial forms on the one hand and the need to be open and flexible in relation to new socio-spatial possibilities on the other. Both Jefferson and Mao understood the need for some sort of 'permanent revolution' to lie at the heart of any progressive social order. The failure to acknowledge that imperative lies at the heart of the collapse of the Soviet Union and seriously threatens the United States. The perspective of a permanent revolution (in, for example, the production of spatial forms) must therefore be added to that of a long revolution as we reach for the principles of a spatiotemporal and dialectical utopianism.

5 Mediating institutions and built environments

The formation of institutions and built environments that can mediate the dialectic between particularity and universality is of crucial importance. Such institutions typically become centers for the formation of dominant discourses as well as centers for the exercise of power. Many of them – medical care, education, financial affairs, and the state – cultivate a special expertise in the same way that built environments of different sorts facilitate possibilities for social action in some directions while limiting others. Many institutions (e.g. local governments and the state) are organized territorially and define and regulate activity at a particular spatial scale. They can translate militant particularism into an institutionalized spatial order designed to facilitate or repress certain kinds of social action and thereby influence the ways in which the personal can be political, encouraging some (like entrepreneurial endeavor, say) and discouraging others (like socialist communes).

Much the same can be said of the built environments that get constructed. Consider, for example, the form and style of urbanization and the consequences that flow therefrom. How can the personal be openly political when environmental conditions inhibit the free exploration of radically different lifestyles (such as living without an automobile or private property in Los Angeles)? The uneven conditions of geographical development that now prevail in Baltimore do not allow the personal to be political in anything other than rather restrictive ways (equally repressive, though in every different ways, for the affluent child of suburbia as for the child of inner-city poverty).

The creation of mediating institutions is deeply fraught and frequently contested (as one might properly expect). The chief difficulty is to bring multiple militant particularisms (in the contemporary US this might mean the aspirations of radical ecologists, the chamber of commerce, ethnic or religious groups, feminists, developers, class organizations, bankers, and the like) into some kind of institutional relation to each other without resort to arbitrary authority and power. The Porto Alegre experience (see Abers, 1998) suggests that this sort of thing can be done. But decisions have to be made and arbitrary authority and power are invariably implicated in the process. With the best will in the world these cannot be eliminated. The effect is to render the mediating institutions sites of power and thereby sources of distinctive discourses and constructions which can be organized in a system of dominance which individual persons find hard to resist let alone transcend. The capture or destruction of mediating institutions (such as the state, the financial sector, education) and the re-shaping of built environments has often, therefore, been the be-all and end-all of insurgent radicalism. While this is one crucial theater in the long frontier of insurgent politics, it is far from being the whole of the story.

6 Translations and aspirations

The insurgent architect with a lust for transformative action must be able to translate political aspirations across the incredible variety and heterogeneity of socio-ecological and political-economic conditions. He or she must also be able to relate different discursive constructions and representations of the world (such as the extraordinary variety of ways in which environmental issues are discussed). He or she must confront the conditions of and prospects for uneven geographical developments. The skills of translation here become crucial. For James Boyd White (1990, 257–64):

> [Translation means] confronting unbridgeable discontinuities between texts, between languages, and between people. As such it has an ethical as well as an intellectual dimension. It recognises the other – the composer of the original text – as a center of meaning apart from oneself. It requires one to discover both the value of the other's language and the limits of one's own. Good translation thus proceeds not by the motives of dominance and acquisition, but by respect. It is a word for a set of practices by which we learn to live with difference, with the fluidity of culture and with the instability of the self. (257)

> We should not feel that respect for the other obliges us to erase ourselves, or our culture, as if all value lay out there and none here. As the traditions of the other are entitled to respect, despite their oddness to us, and sometimes despite their inhumanities, so too our own tradition is entitled to respect as well. Our task is to be distinctively ourselves in a world of others: to create a frame that includes both self and other, neither dominant, in an image of fundamental equality. This is true of us as individuals in our relations with others, and true of us as a culture too, as we face the diversity of our world . . . This is not the kind of relativism that asserts that nothing can be known, but is itself a way of knowing: a way of seeing one thing in terms of another. Similarly it does not assert that no judgments can be reached, but is itself a way of judging, and of doing so out of a sense of our position in a shifting world. (264)

This, in itself, has its own utopian ring. It is not hard to problematize such an argument, as Said did so brilliantly in *Orientalism*, as the power of the translator (usually white male and bourgeois) to represent 'the other' in a manner that dominated subjects (orientals, blacks, women, etc.) are forced to internalize and accept. But that historical understanding itself provides a hedge against the kinds of representational repressions that Said and many feminists have recorded. This links us back to how the personal is always political. As White notes: 'to attempt to "translate" is to experience a failure at once radical and felicitous: radical, for it throws into question our sense of ourselves, our languages, of others; felicitous, for it releases us momentarily from the prison of our own ways of thinking and being' (1990, 257). The act of translation offers a moment of liberatory as well as repressive possibility. The architects of spatiotemporal utopianism must be open to such possibilities.

But as real architects of our future we cannot engage in endless problematization and never-ending conversations. Firm recommendations must be advanced and decisions taken, in the clear knowledge of all the limitations and potentiality for unintended consequences (both good and bad). We need to move step by step towards more common understandings. And this for two compelling reasons. First, as Zeldin (1994, 16) among others remarks, we know a great deal about what divides people but nowhere near enough about what we have in common. The insurgent architect has a role to play in defining commonalities as well as in registering differences. But the second compelling reason is this: without translation, collective forms of action become impossible. All potential for an alternative politics disappears. The fluid ability of capitalists and their agents to translate among themselves using the basic languages of money, commodity, and property (backed, where necessary, with the theoretical language of a reductionist economics) is one of their towering class strengths. Any insurgent oppositional movement must do this just as well if not better. Struggle as we may, it is impossible to conduct politics

without an adequate practice of translation. If reductionism of the Wilsonian sort is rejected, then the only option is translation. Thomas Kuhn, in his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, considers translation (rather than reduction) as the privileged and perhaps sole means by which fundamentally different paradigms of scientific knowledge might be related, and Judith Butler (1998, 38), under pressure from her critics as to the fragmenting effect of identity politics, argues:

> Whatever universal becomes possible – and it may be that universals only become possible for a time, 'flashing up' in Benjamin's sense – will be the result of the difficult labour of translation in which social movements offer up their points of convergence against a background of ongoing social contestation.

The omnipresent danger in any dialectical utopianism is that some all-powerful center or some elite comes to dominate. The center cajoles, bullies, and persuades its periphery into certain modes of thought and action (much as the United States has done since World War II, culminating in the infamous Washington consensus through which the United States sought to institutionalize its hegemonic position in the world order by gaining adhesion of everyone to certain universal principles of political-economic life). As opposed to this, the democratic and egalitarian rules of translation should be clear. But so should the universal principles that, however much they merely 'flash up' as epiphenomena, emerge from the rich experience of translation to define what it is we might have in common.

7 The moment of universality: On personal commitments and political projects

The moment of universality is not a final moment of revelation or of absolute truth. I construe it, in the first instance, as a moment of existential decision, a moment of 'either/or' praxis, when certain principles are materialized through action in the world. It is, as it were, a nature-imposed condition of our species existence that we have to make decisions (individually and collectively) and we have to act upon them. The moment of universality is the moment of choosing, no matter how much we may reserve judgement on our actions afterwards. How we come to represent those decisions to ourselves in terms of principles or codes of action that act as guidelines for future decisions is an important cultural value that gains power over us as it becomes instantiated in discourses and institutions. It is here that abstract universal principles operate as plays of power.

Universals cannot and do not exist, however, outside of the political persons who hold to them and act upon them. They are not free standing nor do they function as abstracted absolutes that can be brought to bear upon human affairs for all times and places. They are omnipresent in all practices. But to the degree that we begin to shape and order them for given purposes they take on the guise of abstract principles (even written codes and laws) to which we adhere. And if we find in them successful guides to action (as we do, for example, within the corpus of scientific understandings) so they shape our world view and become institutionalized as mediating discourses. They tend to cluster and converge as dominant paradigms, as hegemonic discourses, or as pervasive ethical, moral, or political-economic principles that inform our beliefs and actions. They become codified into languages, laws, institutions, and constitutions. Universals are socially constructed not given.

While social construction can betoken contestation, it is more often the case that the dominant principles handed down to us so limit our conceptions as to inhibit alternative visions of how the world might be. A wide range of possible universal and unifying principles has in fact been bequeathed to us (the fruit of long and often bitter experience). But, as many commentators point out (usually with critical intent), many of these principles have their origins in the Western Enlightenment when theorists of the natural and social order had, unlike now, no hesitation in expressing their opinions as universal truths and propositions. It is fashionable in these times to denigrate these (at least in the humanities) while at the same time leaving crude versions of them fully in play in society in general. But we can never do without universals of some sort. We can, of course, *pretend* to do without them. Much of what now passes for radical argument in the humanities and some segments of the social sciences resorts to much dissimulation and opacity (when it is not engaged in downright chicanery) with respect to this point.

It is therefore important at the outset to exhume the traces of universal principles expressed in the ways the personal is and can be political. This is so because without certain criteria of judgement (explicit or implied), it is impossible to distinguish between right and wrong or between progressive and regressive lines of political action. The existential moment of do I or do I not support this or that line of action entails such a judgement. Even though I may prefer not to make it, not to decide is in itself a form of decision (one that many Americans now prefer at the ballot box with specific consequences). So though the moment of universality is not the moment of revelation, it is the moment of *judgement and decision* and these willy-nilly entail *expression* of some universal whether we like it or not. It is only in these terms that we are able to say that *this* form of insurgent

politics (embedded, say, in a movement for environmental justice) is progressive and worthy of support while *that* form of insurgent politics (like the militia movement in the Michigan woods) is not. The moment of the universal is, therefore, the moment of political judgement, commitment, and material praxis.

For this reason it is, paradoxically, the moment that gets argued over in the most abstract of terms. In effect, we seek to create a generalized discourse about rights and wrongs, about moral imperatives and proper and improper means and ends, through which we try to persuade ourselves as well as others to certain consistent lines of action, knowing full well that each of us is different and that no particularity is exactly the same as any other.

Such arguments can easily seem redundant, but when connected back across all the other theaters of action on the long frontier of insurgent politics, they can acquire a stronger force and even provide some sort of political and emotive thread that helps us recognize in what ways the personal, the collective, the mediating institutions can relate to each other in dynamic ways through the activities of the translator and the insurgent architectural imagination. Furthermore, it is also the case that universals draw their power and meaning from a conception of species being (it is only in terms of species rights that universal principles of conduct can make sense). It then also follows (as I argued in Chapter 11) that acceptance of some sort of 'unity of science' is a necessary condition for the promulgation of universality claims. Conversely, discussions of universality crucially depend upon critical engagement with notions of species being and the unity of science.

So what universals might we currently embrace as meaningful ideals upon which to let our imaginations roam as we go to work as insurgent architects of our future? I have already referred in Chapter 5 to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights as a document that expresses such universal principles in problematic but to some degree persuasive terms. The application of these principles has often been contested and their interpretation has had to be fought over in almost every particular case. Can we add or re-formulate those universals in interesting ways? My own preferred short-list of universal rights worthy of attention runs as follows:

1. The right to life chances
   This entails a basic right to sustenance and to elemental economic securities. Food security would be the most basic manifestation of such rights, but a general system of entitlements – as Sen (1982) would call them – is also fundamental. This re-affirms the UN Declaration (Article 23, Section 3) that 'everyone has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.' The universal right to a 'living wage' and to adequate social security is one way to both demand and problematize such a universal package of rights.
2. The right to political association and 'good' governance
   Individuals must have the right to associate in order to shape and control political institutions and cultural forms at a variety of scales (cf. Articles 20 and 21 of the UN Declaration). The presumption is that some adequate definition can be found for properly democratic procedures of association and that collective forms of action must offer reasonable protections to minority opinions. The presumption also exists that some definition of 'good' governance can be found, from the local to the global level. Here, too, the demand highlights problems and differences (the definition of 'good governance' is far from homogeneous) at the same time as it takes up universalizing claims. But individuals plainly should have rights to produce their own spaces of community and inscribe their own rules therein, even as limitations on such rights become critical to restrict the narrow exclusions and the internal repressions to which communitarianism always tends.
3. The rights of the direct laborers in the process of production
   The rights of those who labor to exercise some level of individual and collective control over labor processes (over what is produced as well as over how it shall be produced) is crucial to any conception of democracy and freedom. Long-standing concerns over the conditions of labor and the right of redress in the event of unreasonable burdens or sufferings (such as those that result in shortened life expectancy) need to be reinforced on a more global scale. This entails a demand for the radical empowerment of the laborer in relation to the production system in general (no matter whether it is capitalist, communist, socialist, anarchist, or whatever). It also highlights respect for the dignity of labor and of the laborer within the global system of production, exchange, and consumption (on this point, at least, a variety of Papal Encyclicals as well as the UN Declaration provide supportive materials).
4. The right to the inviolability and integrity of the human body
   The UN Declaration (Articles 1 to 10) insists on the right to the dignity and integrity of the body and the political person. This presumes rights to be free from the tortures, incarcerations, killings, and other physical coercions that have so often been deployed in the past to accomplish narrow political objectives. The right of women to control their own reproductive functions and to live free of coercions and violence (domestic, cultural, and institutionalized) must also lie at the core of this conception. Violence against women and the subservience of women to patriarchal and paternalistic systems of domination has become a major issue for which universal rights claims have become deeply plausible and

compelling (though often in conflict with claims for autonomy of cultural traditions).

5. Immunity/destabilization rights
   Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, according to the UN Declaration (Articles 18 and 19). On this point the Declaration is definitive and clear. But I here think Unger's (1987b, 524–34) argument for a system of immunity rights that connects to a citizen's rights to destabilize that which exists is even stronger, for it insists on the right to critical commentary and dispute without fear of retaliation or other loss. It is only through the exercise of such rights that society can be both re-imagined and re-made (Unger's arguments on this point are persuasive).
6. The right to a decent and healthy living environment
   From time to time legislation in particular countries has been predicated on the right of everyone to live in a decent and healthy living environment, one that is reasonably free from threats and dangers and from unnecessary hazards (particularly those produced through human activities, such as toxic wastes, dirty air, and polluted waters). The spreading cancers of environmental injustice throughout the world and the innumerable consequences for human health and well-being that flow from environmental degradations (both physical and social) indicate a terrain where the proper establishment of universal rights is imperative, even if it is surely evident that the meaning, interpretation, and application of such rights will be difficult to achieve.
7. The right to collective control of common property resources
   The system of property rights by which capitalism has typically asserted its universalizing claims (actively supported in Article 17 of the UN Declaration) is widely understood as both defective and in some instances destructive with respect to our physical and social world. This is nowhere more apparent than in instances of common property resources (everything from genetic materials in tropical rain forests to air, water, and other environmental qualities including, incidentally, the rights to control built environments for historical, cultural, or aesthetic reasons). The definition of such resources and the determination of who is the 'collective' in whose name rights of control will be vested are all deeply controversial issues. But there are widespread arguments now for alternative systems of property rights to those implied in a narrowly self-serving and myopic structure of private property rights that fail to acknowledge any other form of public or collective interest to that given through a pervasive market (and corporation-dominated) individualism.
8. The rights of those yet to be born
   Future generations have a claim upon us, preferably to live in a world of open possibilities rather than of foreclosed options. The whole rhetoric of sustainable environmental development rests on some sense (however vague and undefined) of responsibilities and obligations that stretch beyond the ken of our own immediate interests. *In extremis*, this right also recognizes our volitional role in the evolutionary process and our responsibilities not only to our own species but also to the innumerable others whose prospects for survival depend upon our actions (see Item 11).
9. The right to the production of space
   The ability of individuals and collectivities to 'vote with their feet' and perpetually seek the fulfillments of their needs and desires elsewhere is probably the most radical of all proposals. Yet without it there is nothing to stop the relative incarceration of captive populations within particular territories. If, for example, labor had the same right of mobility as capital, if political persecution could be resisted (as the affluent and privileged have proven) by geographical movement, and if individuals and collectivities had the right to change their locations at will, then the kind of world we live in would change dramatically (this principle is stated in Article 14 of the UN Declaration). But the production of space means more than merely the ability to circulate within a pre-ordained spatially structured world. It also means the right to reconstruct spatial relations (territorial forms, communicative capacities, and rules) in ways that turn space from an absolute framework of action into a more malleable relative and relational aspect of social life.
10. The right to difference including that of uneven geographical development
    The UN Declaration (Articles 22 and 27) states that everyone should be accorded 'the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality' while also pointing to the importance of the right 'freely to participate in the cultural life of the community' and to receive protection of 'the moral and material interests resulting from scientific, literary or artistic production.' This implies the right to be different, to explore differences in the realms of culture, sexuality, religious beliefs, and the like. But it also implies the right for different group or collective explorations of such differences and, as a consequence, the right to pursue development on some territorial and collective basis that departs from established norms. Uneven geographical development should also be thought of as a right rather than as a capitalistically imposed necessity that diminishes life chances in one place in order to enhance them elsewhere. Again, the application of such a principle in such a way that it does not infringe upon others in negative ways will have to be fought over, but the statement of such a principle, like that of the living wage, provides a clear basis for argument. The recent UN extension of cultural rights (particularly those specified in Article 27 of the original UN Declaration) to encompass those of minorities (cf. Phillips and Rosas, 1995) provides an initial opening in this direction.
11. Our rights as species beings
    This is, perhaps, the vaguest and least easily specifiable of all rights. Yet it is perhaps the most important of them all. It must become central to

debate. If we review our position in the long history of biological and social evolution, then plainly we have been and continue to be powerful evolutionary agents. If we are now entering a phase of volitional and conscious interventions in evolutionary processes (interventions that carry with them enormous risks and dangers), then we must necessarily construe certain universals to both promote and regulate the way we might engage upon such interventions. We all should have the right freely to explore the relation to nature and the transformative possibilities inherent in our species being in creative ways. This means the right to explore the possibility of different combinations of our evolutionary repertoire – the powers of cooperation, diversification, competition, the production of nature and of different dimensionalities to space and time. But that right to free experimentation (made much of by Unger) must also be tempered by duties, responsibilities, and obligations to others, both human and non-human, and it most certainly must accord strong protections against the potential powers of a non-democratic elite (or a capitalist class) to push us down technological, social, and evolutionary pathways that represent narrow class interests rather than human interests in general. Any concept of 'species interests' will inevitably be riven by rampant divisions of class, gender, religion, culture, and geography. But without some sense of where our common interests as a species might lie, it becomes impossible to construct any 'family of meanings' to connect or ground the incredible variety of partial claims and demands that make our social world such an interestingly divided place. On this point Naess and Rothenberg (1989, 164–70) have much to offer, by insisting that 'the universal right to self-unfolding' is related to the recognition of that same right across all species, and that 'the unfolding of life' in general is as important as the unfolding of our own personal trajectories of self-discovery and development.

This interlocking and oftentimes conflictual system of universal rights, I insist, is not the be-all and end-all of struggle, but a formative moment in a much more complicated social process directed towards socio-ecological change that embraces all the other distinctive theaters of social action. But the insurgent architect has to be an advocate of such rights. At the same time he or she must clearly recognize that their formulation arises out of social life and that they remain otiose and meaningless unless brought to bear in tangible ways upon mediating institutions, processes of community formation, and upon the ways in which the personal is construed and acted upon as the political.

8 Shaping socio-ecological orders

The dialectical utopianism to which I aspire requires the perspective of a long and permanent historical-geographical revolution. Thinking about

transformative political practices as manifestations of a dialectical and spatiotemporal utopianism is helpful. But it will only be so if we understand how activity and thought in the different theaters of social action relate, combine, and dissolve into each other to create an evolving totality of social action.

Unfortunately, much that passes for imaginative architectural and political practice often stays immobilized in only one or two of the theaters I have here defined. Our mental and practical divisions of labor and of perspectives are now so deeply ingrained in everything we do that it becomes impossible for any one of us to be fully present in much more than one of these theaters of thought and action at any one time. The problem is not that this cannot work. Indeed, it may work far too well as it so patently has in the past (as, for example, dominant mediating institutions use divisions of mental and practical labors to dictate the terms of universality and the ways it is admissible for the personal to be political). The errors of that past always threaten to return and haunt us (though perhaps in different ways). By seeing the seven moments I have described as integral to each other, by recognizing how they are all internally related, and by seeking to flow our analysis, our thinking, and our practices across their entire range, we may better situate our capacities as insurgent architects of some alternative possible dynamics. Any aspiring insurgent architect must learn, in association with others, to collate and combine action on all fronts. Universality without the personal is abstract dogma if not active political hypocrisy. Community without either the personal or universal becomes exclusionary and fascistic. Mediating institutions that consolidate their powers and oppress the personal or translate universals into bureaucratic systems of despotism and control subvert the revolutionary impulse into state authoritarianism. The translator who assumes omnipotence represses. The great individual (the architect/philosopher) who becomes detached from the masses and from daily life becomes either an irrelevant joke or an oppressive and domineering figure on the local if not on the world stage.

It is open dialogue and practical interactions across theaters on this long frontier that counts. And it is to dialectics rather than Wilsonian reductionism that we must appeal to make the connexions, however putatively, across these different scales. Only then can the impulse towards dialectical utopianism be prevented from dissolving into the arid and ultimately self-destructive utopianism of either closed spatial form or of temporal processes of perpetual creative destruction.

But aspirations must be tempered by a sense of limitations and of vulnerability. There are necessary limits to even the most vaunting of ambitions. If, as I have argued, dialectical utopianism must be effectively

grounded in historical-geographical realities and achievements, if, to return to Marx's celebrated formulation, we can always aspire to make our own historical geography but never under historical and geographical conditions of our own choosing, then the leap from the present into some future is always constrained, no matter how hard we struggle to liberate ourselves from the three basic constraints of (1) where we can see it from, (2) how far can we see, and (3) where we can learn it from.

And as we make that leap, we also have to acknowledge that it is a speculative leap into the unknown and into the unknowable. There is a level at which, no matter how hard we try, we simply cannot know with certainty what kind of outcomes will emerge. Both the social and the ecological orders, particularly when taken together, are open and heterogenous to the point where their totality can never quite be grasped let alone manipulated into predictable or stable states. No matter how hard we try to construct and reconstruct the socio-ecological order to a given plan, we inevitably fall victim not only to the unexpected consequences of our own actions but also to evolutionary contingencies (those 'accidents' to which Marx referred) that impinge upon us at every twist and turn and at every scale. It is precisely for this reason that the ideals of community, of utopias of spatial form, exercise such an attraction because they depict a closed world of known certainties and rules where chance and contingency, uncertainty and risk, are resolutely locked out.

Herein lies perhaps the most difficult of all barriers for the insurgent architect to surmount. In facing up to a world of uncertainty and risk, the possibility of being quite undone by the consequences of our own actions weighs heavily upon us, often making us prefer 'those ills we have than flying to others that we know not of.' But Hamlet, beset by angst and doubt and unable to act, brought disaster upon himself and upon his land by the mere fact of his inaction. It is on this point that we need to mark well the lessons of capitalist historical geography. For that historical geography was created through innumerable forms of speculative action, by a preparedness to take risks and be undone by them. While we laborers (and philosophical underlaborers) may for good reasons 'lack the courage of our minds,' the capitalists have rarely lacked the courage of theirs. And, arguably, when they have given in to doubt they have lost their capacity to make and re-make the world. Marx and Keynes, both, understood that it was the 'animal spirits,' the speculative passions and expectations of the capitalist (like those that Zola so dramatically depicted) that bore the system along, taking it in new directions and into new spaces (both literal and metaphorical). And it is perhaps no accident that architecture as a supremely speculative and heroic profession (rather than as either a Platonic metaphor or a craft) emerged in Italy along with the merchant

capitalists who began upon their globalizing ventures through commercial speculations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was that speculative spirit that opened up new spaces for human thought and action in all manner of ways.

The lesson is clear: until we insurgent architects know the courage of our minds and are prepared to take an equally speculative plunge into some unknown, we too will continue to be the objects of historical geography (like worker bees) rather than active subjects, consciously pushing human possibilities to their limits. What Marx called 'the real movement' that will abolish 'the existing state of things' is always there for the making and for the taking. That is what gaining the courage of our minds is all about.